The Cursor

Monthly Newsletter of the
Washington Area Computer User Group

Presidential Bits

September 2006 Meeting

By Paul Howard

Jim Brueggeman gave a brief tutorial, showing us some of the vast range of options in Microsoft's PowerPoint computer presentation program during our August meeting. The program is so extensive that unless you use it constantly, it's tough to keep in mind all the techniques you can use to prepare a real eye-opening presentation. There's a substantial number of companies that provide templates and a wide assortment of tools for making PowerPoint presentations even more powerful.

Our September 16th meeting will feature Bruce Fries, a writer and business consultant who lives in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is an associate of the Audio Engineering Society and the author of Digital Audio Essentials—a comprehensive, reader-friendly guide to the world of music on computers and the Internet. When he's not writing books or tinkering with hi fi equipment, he's just as likely to be fixing up old cars or helping small businesses with marketing and public relations. His latest book is available from O'Reilly Publishing. http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/digaudio/index.html

Bruce will do a live demonstration of recording audio from a scratchy vinyl LP and then remove the noise, in preparation for conversion from the old vinyl format, to a variety of digital media. We'll be inviting members of other local user groups to join us for this timely presentation.

On Saturday, September 30th, WAC members will be staffing a booth at "Fall for Fairfax," a fall festival held at the Fairfax County Government Center, our primary meeting place. http://www.fallforfairfax.com/ Mark your calendar now, and plan to stop by. We're sure to need help enticing new folks to join WAC !!

If you're a retiree, don't miss the educational opportunities available from the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University. There are a surprising range of courses and activities for seniors, offered near the GMU campus in Fairfax, at Lake Anne in Reston, and soon at the GMU Loudon campus. See: http://www.olli.gmu.edu/

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Lloyd Johnson's Web Sites for September

by Lloyd Johnson, WACUG member

http://www.wacug.org – This is the URL for the Washington Area Computer User Group web site. Visit it for past versions of Lloyd's Web Sites with hyperlinks.

1. The next 2 Astronomy URL's are from Chuck Roberts. Thanks Chuck
   http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/archivepix.html
   http://antwrp.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap060807.html

2. Some ideas on how to get control on your many computer wires.
   http://www.cableorganizer.com/

3. Need audio books for a driving trip? This URL will ask a. How long is your trip? b. Who's going to be listening? c. And what kind of books you enjoy?
    www.audiowizard.randomhouse.com

4. You can find out how Barcode's work and generate one yourself.
   www.milk.com/barcode

5. Many many words ranging from the complete works of Shakespeare to script of a lost episode of Star Trek.
   www.etext.org

6. Enter the name of one of your favorite songs or bands and the site will begin playing a succession of songs similar to your choice. Scary huh?
   www.pandora.com

7. John Wayne narrates great pictures of the USA. This is a patriotic presentation.
   www.sagebrushpatriot.com/america.htm

8. CIA world factbook. Click on World Fact Book for most countries essential statistics.
   https://www.cia.gov

9. Get the lowdown on a New World Leader Every weekday at this site.
   www.whoyoushouldknow.com

10. Uncle Sam is looking for the owners of about $13.5 billion in mature savings bonds issued since 1941.
    www.treasurydirect.gov/indiv/tools/sbtdhunt.htm

GNU/Linux SIG

By Geof Goodrum

Sun Plans to Open Source Java

After years of speculation and pressure from the developer community, Sun Microsystems announced at the 2006 JavaOne conference in May their intention to release the official platform for the Java programming language, the Java Development Kit (JDK), under an Open Source license. At the time, Richard Stallman, founder and President of the Free Software Foundation (FSF), pointed out how Sun fell short of delivering on the claim (http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/sun-in-night-time.html). However, Sun officials followed up with statements at the August LinuxWorld conference (http://lwn.net/Articles/194792/) and on Sun's web site (http://java.sun.com/developer/technicalArticles/javaopensource/OS_qa/) that some of the Java environment will be released under an Open Source license by the end of 2006.

Sun was reluctant to release control over the Java language out of concern that the Open Source community would break Java's most important characteristic, the ability to run the same code on a wide variety of computer systems. Now that Sun seems to have accepted the concept of community control, they still need to work out the legal issues, including a review of the source code, deciding which Open Source license to use, and establishing governance for the community project. The selection of an Open Source license is particularly tricky, since some licenses are incompatible with those used for related Open Source projects like FSF's GNU Classpath.

Distribution News

GNU/Linux distribution vendors have made a number of announcements over the past two months.

On August 10th, Novell announced the rebranding of their community Linux project from SUSE® Linux to openSUSE™. The current release is version 10.1, with an alpha 3 release of version 10.2 available and a final 10.2 release expected by the end of 2006. More information is on the project website at http://www.opensuse.org/.

Users of Mandriva Linux LE2005 are reminded that this product reached end of support on July 13th. However, Mandriva announced the third beta release of Mandriva Linux 2007 on August 16th, available in four downloadable live/install CD variants (KDE or Gnome, i586 or x86-64 bit) and a dual architecture DVD. Features in the new beta include: 3D desktop support (both AIGLX and Xgl, with drak3d configuration tool); new rpmdrake software package management; Gnome 2.16 RC1; kernel 2.6.17; KDE 3.5.4; new VPN configuration tool; new firewall. Download information is provided at http://www.mandriva.com/en/linux/2007/mandrivalinux-2007beta.

Jesse Keating, Fedora Core release engineer, announced the availability of Fedora Core 6 Test 2 for i386, x86-64 bit and PowerPC systems, with a Test 3 release scheduled for September 11th. The community is encouraged to download and evaluate test releases, filing bug reports as necessary. The official Fedora Core 6 release is scheduled for October 9th. The download page is at http://torrent.fedoraproject.org/ for BitTorrent users with web and ftp download sites listed at http://fedora.redhat.com/Download/mirrors.html.

On August 30th, the Gentoo Release Engineering project announced release of the 2006.1 profile for the Gentoo source code based distribution, which updated the base software configuration to include the GNU Compiler Collection (gcc) 4.1, glibc 2.4, and improved startup scripts. Gentoo 2006.1 is available on AMD64, HPPA, x86, SPARC, SuperH, PowerPC, and 64-bit PowerPC architectures. Live/installation CDs are now available (http://www.gentoo.org/main/en/mirrors.xml). The complete press release can be found at http://www.gentoo.org/proj/en/releng/release/2006.1/2006.1-press-release.txt.

Linspire announced that their "click and run" (CNR) basic software delivery service for the commercial Linspire distribution is now free, providing single click access to over 2,000 free software titles. A CNR Gold service is also available for $49.95 per year, providing steep discounts on commercial software, priority support, free operating system upgrades and other benefits. More about CNR and a comparison chart for the free and Gold services are on the Linspire web site at http://www.linspire.com/products_

cnr_whatis.php.

Cable Modem Follow-Up

As I noted in the August Cursor, I ordered a D-Link DCM-202 DOCSIS 2.0 certified cable modem to replace my original Toshiba PCX-1100 (DOCSIS 1.0). I registered the new modem with Comcast's customer service before installation, the only snag being they wanted to be on the phone while I switched to the new cable modem. I use a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone service, so this wasn't possible.

I ran several before and after speed tests using the tool at www.broadbandreports.com with the following typical results:

See the top of colums 2 & 3...

While the download speed improved noticeably, the upload speed improved dramatically. The upload improvement is particularly noticeable when sending large e-mail attachments.

I also hope that the Quality of Service (QoS) support on the new cable modem improves the performance of my VoIP phone service. QoS allows voice connections to have priority over data connections on the Internet connection. However, I have not been able to verify an improvement.

Linux CD of the Month

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

Discs are available only by pre-or-

Geof's Speed Tests

Modem	Download Rate (kbps)	Upload Rate (kbps)
Toshiba PCX-1100	5342	350 kbps
D-Link DCM-202	6116	692 kbps

der. Contact Geof Goodrum by phone (703-370-7649) or e-mail (ggoodrum@bigfoot.com) 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.

September 2006

Bastille – v3.0.9. Free GNU General Public License script packages for Mandriva, SUSE, Fedora Core and Debian by Jay Beale et al. The Bastille Hardening program locks down an operating system, proactively configuring the system for increased security and decreasing its susceptibility to compromise. An interactive option describes and provides a recommendation on each security setting with a menu interface. Bastille can also assess a system's current state of hardening, granularly reporting on each of the security settings.

OpenOffice.org – v2.0.3. Free GNU Lesser General Public License source code, executable and Fedora Core 5 packages by the OpenOffice.org Project. OpenOffice.org (OOo) is an integrated office applications suite, including full-featured word processor, spreadsheet, database, presentation and graphics programs. OOo uses the new OASIS [OpenDocument](http://) format, the future-proof international standard for office software (ISO/IEC

26300), but also reads and writes Microsoft® Office file formats.

Sudoku Tool – v1.0. Free GNU General Public License source code by Eric Akers. Sudoku tool can help you create, play and solve sudoku games. The games can be randomly generated or manually input to start the game. Some of the features also include pencil marks and a save game option. Requires SDL and OpenGL, included with most distributions.

GNU/Linux Distibution Updates - Security and bug fix monthly updates for Fedora Core 5.

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

Keeping Up

By Paul Howard

It Takes Technology to Get Skinny

Much like a New Year's Resolution, when I retired, I swore I was going to take one of those hours I used to spend in traffic every day while working and exercise. Yeah, the road to heck is still paved with all them good intentions <grin>!

Last month, at my almost-annual physical, after Doc got done throttling me with his stethoscope, I got number 26 - the overweight speech. Followed by "Just one more pound, and you'll be officially obese!" And then he berated me 'cause none of my excuses for not getting enough exercise were good enough so he could borrow them for his physical the following week! My sentence - an hour's exercise a day, and no more triple decker Five Guys greaseburgers and fries.

Last year, I bought a 13" TV to help while away the exercise hours - gotta multi-task, after all. But even with the built in VHS recorder, watching yesterday's *Nightly Business Report* - "there goes my portfolio, right down the porcelain appliance, thanks to Bernanke's latest pronouncement," followed by the last *BBC News* from the previous night, never seemed to be enough to keep my New Balance walkers pounding out the miles.

Then I remembered that APCUG Regional Rep Gabe Goldberg mentioned that he was doing two hours a day on his treadmill, and was watching movie DVDs while doing it. Aha, another alternative while making the treadmill slog! So, I invested in a cheapy DVD player, and a bunch of five buck movie specials, and watch Dirty Harry chase bad guys while toting up the miles.

But nothing's ever easy – the audio output from the TV's 2 inch speaker just wasn't enough to to be heard over the pounding of my treadmilling feet. So I found a set of PC speakers, and managed to kludge together enough adapters and assorted cables to get the DVD sound through those speakers – but the volume still wasn't enough. After three hours dancing on top of various stools and step ladders, I had a new electrical outlet installed for the PC speakers' wall wart power supply, and moved the speakers four feet closer to the treadmill. With the speakers installed at about head level, I can now hear Clint Eastwood's under-the-breath muttering about police department bureaucracy. Treadmill Nirvana! Time for a snack - Linny, where's the ice cream scoop?

Pardon me, but your Mapi32.dll is showing

Earlier this year, I was getting the following error message on booting my laptop: "Ccapp.exe: Ordinal not found. The ordinal 129 could not be found in the dynamic link library Mapi32.dll." I couldn't detect any problems – the laptop seemed to do everything I wanted it to, which in truth, isn't much. I use it to get email when traveling, and for demos at user group meetings.

I was catching up on my reading one day, and ran across an item in *Smart Computing's* Examining Errors column for May, '06. The column revealed that Ccapp.exe was part of Norton AntiVirus, and performs the automatic email scanning function. The error can be associated with any email program, and most often is related to Outlook and Outlook Express, but can affect any mail clients. The real culprit is the Mapi32.dll, which, it seems, fre-

quently becomes corrupted.

And, (can it be coincidence?) there's a fix for this right within Windows! So, depending on your version of Windows, slide on over to the WINDOWS\SYSTEM or WINDOWS\SYSTEM32 folder, where you'll find the Mapi32.dll file. Right click on the file, select Properties from the PopUp menu. On the General tab, make sure "read only" is deselected, and save the change by clicking OK. Then, look in the same directory folder for the file: Fixmapi.exe – double click on the file, and the corrupted Mapi32.dll is instantly replaced. No more error messages – until the next time Mapi32.dll gets corrupted.

I've since found several things that caused the error message to reappear on various computers. I use both Norton AV and Personal Firewall, components of Symantec's Internet Security Suite. After downloading Intrusion Detection Signatures for the firewall program, I've had the installer complain that it couldn't update the Signatures. Going to the Symantec Knowledge Base, and following the various suggestions, led me to uninstall and reload the software. After doing so, I began to get the error message noted above. A quick dose of "Fixmapi.exe" cured the illness.

I've also had the same "ordinal 129" message pop up after uninstalling and reinstalling the latest versions of Quicktime and Real "players" –same medicine chased away the error message.

Basic DVD Recording

By Bob Elgines, Editor, Colorado River Computer Club, Arizona
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http://www.crccaz.com/

DVDs are like CDs, but with greater capacity; you can record sound, video, or data. The latest CDs allow 700MB of data, or 80 minutes of sound or video (mpeg1 format) whereas the DVDs allow 4.7 GB or 120 minutes of sound or video (mpeg2 format). Then you have Double Layer DVDs which allow 9.6 GB or approximately 3.7 hours of video. As we probe into the basics you will find approximately 10% of the room on your disk is used by Titles, Menus, and Directories.

First, what do we need to accomplish the recording of data, and sound:

A computer with a minimum of 1 Ghz, 512 MB of RAM, 40 GB hard drive, CDR optical drive, video with 32 MB RAM for 1024 x 768 screen mode, and recording software such as "NERO" by Ahead Software. Second, we need all the above plus the items below for Video:

A DVDR optical drive, an input device such as ADS' InstantDVD (USB input) or equivalent for recording from VHS tape, and a VCR. A firewire input card can be used if you are recording from a digital camcorder (DV).

To record data and sound on DVDs is very similar to CDs, but video is different only because we use a different format. A CD may be used with this for-

mat and would hold approximately 30 minutes of mpeg2 (MP2) video. This CD would be called a "VCD" (Video CD) and would be played on a DVD Player.

There are several different video formats such as WMV, MPE, MPG, MP1, MP2, MP4, etc. MP1 (352x480) is fine for B&W video, but size and quality is too low for color. MP2 (720x480) is the most common format used at this time for doing video DVDs. MP2 can be recorded in low (3382Kbits per sec), medium (5073Kbits per sec), and high (9716Kbits per sec) quality.

Before you start recording video, you may want to shut down all the programs running in the background to gain the maximum amount of System Resources in order to acquire the greatest performance when recording video. You will use 4 to 20 GB of your hard drive for recording a two hour video depending on the format you use.

"**NERO**" (Version 6 or 7) is the cheapest way to go for software. This program will do just about everything for you (two hours plus on DVD, some editing, excellent recording). I also have used "MyD-VD v4 or5" by Sonic (easy to use, some editing, up to 1.9 hours on a DVD), "MyDVD v6" by Sonic (up to 3.5 hours on a DVD, but SONY players do not like the recording format), "Premiere Elements" by Adobe (easy editing is great, but recording is only good for one hour, jumps around with movement and going more than one hour really destroys it by also getting choppy), "Movie Factory2" by Ulead (not bad, but very time consuming and hard to use, 1.9 hours on DVD) and "Studio Plus 10" by Pinnacle (very

demanding, needs more memory and high quality video card; very hard to use!).

I am using an INTEL P4, 3.06 Ghz, 512 MB RAM @ 800 MHz, GeForce FX5200 128 MB RAM video card, and a Digital Research model DDVD116DL (DVD Recorder with NERO software), an ADS Instant DVD VHS input device, which converts the antilog video to digital Mpeg2 format via a USB port, and an IEEE firewire port for my DV Digital Camcorder.

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.

Editor comments: *Based on next month's presentation, I felt this article offered some good perspective on DVD recording with various applications.*

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Tech Corner – SP1 Abandoned in the Fall

By Chuck Thomas, member of the Bowling Green Area Microcomputer User Group, KY. Chuckt(at)insightbb.com http://www.bgamug.org/

A popup message from Windows Update has been alerting me recently to the fact that Microsoft is ending its support for Windows XP Service Pack 1 (SP1) as of October 10, 2006. It offers a free download of SP2, which will continue to be supported once installed.

If, like me, you are still running SP1, you might think that it is no big deal since you never call or write Microsoft for support anyhow! But the one big problem is that there will no longer be any security updates for the old version of XP. As you know, Microsoft is regularly learning of security holes in their OS and issuing updates (patches for the holes) that you should be installing to keep your computer some-what safe from hackers. These security updates will continue to be available to XP users with SP2 installed, but they will end in October for SP1.

If you don't know whether or not SP2 is installed, simply click Start/ My Computer (or the My Computer link on your desktop) and then on the left side of the My Computer window under System Tasks, click View system in formation. The System Properties window that pops up will show basic information about your computer, including the installed Service Pack for XP.

If you need to upgrade to SP2, go to this Microsoft web page:

http://www.m icrosoft.com/windowsxp/sp2/default.mspx. You'll find a link in the Get Windows XP SP2 Now box to receive the huge file on a CD by mail for only the cost of mailing. This saves you the trouble of a long download and provides a CD for quick reinstall if it should be necessary. The page also provides "quick tips for a successful upgrade" under the How link.

Similarly, support is finally ending on the same date for Windows 98, ME, and NT. But I doubt that many of you are running these operating systems these days, and if you are you long ago ceased to worry about support from Microsoft!

Some of you may have heard that Microsoft announced (on their web site) that support for Windows XP Home and Media Center Edition would be discontinued at the end of 2006—regardless of which service pack is installed. But that was an error, according to Microsoft. Here is the full story on that Microsoft gaff from ZD Net news:

Until Tuesday night, a posting on Microsoft's Web site stated that support for Windows XP Home and Windows XP Media Centre Edition would end on 31 December, 2006. That would mean no more security fixes or any other support items, such as warranty claims, for users of those operating system products.

But the posting was incorrect, Ines Vargas, a program manager at Microsoft, told ZDNet UK sister site CNET News.com. The software maker has now updated the online information to reflect that the consumer Windows XP editions, along with XP Professional, will be supported until two years

after Vista ships, she said. Vista, the long-delayed next update of Windows, is expected to arrive by the end of the year.

"This was brought to our attention late last week, and since then, we have worked diligently to make the change on the site, which was effective Tuesday night," she said. "It was not a change in sup-port policy. It is reflective of the policy as we understand it."

….so we can rest easy knowing we are safe in the hands of Microsoft!

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RSS Explained

By Phil Shapiro, member of the Capital PC User Group, Virginia Macintosh Users Group, Washington Apple Pi, Young Hackers and Scholars Libre Users Group
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RSS — really simple syndication — is a labor-saving tool that allows people to tune into information sources that interest them. The information source could be a blog, a podcast, a videocast or any web site that includes RSS feeds.

The value of RSS accrues when you subscribe to multiple RSS feeds. You can then monitor multiple information streams with a minimum of effort.

There are many different software tools for subscribing to RSS feeds. One of the most popular is a web site named Bloglines. Some web browsers let you subscribe to RSS feeds. Safari 2.x and Firefox are two browsers that do. Firefox lets you to subscribe to RSS feeds using something called Live Bookmarks. You can also use a Firefox extension named Sage to subscribe to RSS feeds.

RSS's primary value is that it brings information to you without you having to visit multiple web sites. In a knowledge economy, anything that streamlines the flow of information from producer to consumer gives benefit to both producer and consumer. You tune into the information you do want, and tune out the information you don't want.

Some Examples of How RSS Simplifies Peoples' Lives

I asked some technology consultants to explain how RSS brings value to peoples' lives. Curtis Brown at MissionMovers.org, in Seattle, is a strong believer in RSS. He explains, "RSS has invaded every part of our life, but we just don't know it. RSS is an information delivery method that gives added convenience to both senders and receivers of the information."

As an example, RSS feeds can be used by a nonprofit organization to distribute different kinds of information to different people. One RSS feed could be the organization's calendar of events or classes. Another could be a call for volunteers. A third feed might be information for funders. The more feeds an organization offers, the more narrowly tailored the information delivered to people served by that organization or supporting that organization.

Here are some other examples of RSS feeds. A used car dealer can have an RSS feed that details newly arrived used cars. A public library could have an RSS feed of newly purchased books. A police department can have separate RSS feeds for different neighborhoods, giving up-to-date information on safety concerns in each neighborhood.

Curtis Brown explains that information received in an RSS feed can be filtered by keyword and colorized in text. So you have control over the RSS feed. You decide the ways in which that stream of information is going to serve your needs.

Curtis explains that RSS feeds become immensely useful when people work collaboratively in a wiki. (A wiki is a web page that different people can edit.) Changes to the web page can be monitored via an RSS feed. This allows anyone participating in the wiki to have a clear idea of who is adding the most value to the wiki. RSS allows for better monitoring and gives added transparency to the collaborative process.

Curtis goes on to explain that there are two kinds of RSS feeds -- static feeds and dynamic feeds. A static feed might be sports scores or the feed from a single blog. A dynamic feed is a stream of information where there is searching going on to pull out specific pieces of information to add to the stream.

It's also possible to combine several RSS feeds into a single new feed. One web site that let's you do that is rssmix.com. Why would want to do that? Suppose you live in a metropolitan area with several different library systems spanning sev-

eral counties. Each library system provides an RSS feed of the events happening within their library system. You'd like to keep track of library events in multiple counties. rssmix.com would let you combine RSS feeds in that way.

Another RSS enthusiast, Bruce Roy, in Sydney, Australia explains - "I have found the RSS facility in The Next Generation of Genealogy Sitebuilding (TNG) very useful for the family tree site. It enables people interested in following the family tree to get information about changes to the tree without having to check the website's "What's New?" or wade through the data."

One other advantage of RSS is that it lets you tune out mainstream media and tune into alternative media and personal media. If you find the CBS Evening News a touch thin in how it covers the news, with RSS you have an alternative source of news where news stories don't need to be squeezed into 45 second slots.

Another RSS enthusiast, Winthrop Morgan, in the Washington DC-area had this to add:

"Regarding your request for examples of how RSS brings benefits into peoples' lives, I highly recommend you consider including Join Together Online as a great Win-Win- Win model.

Join Together Online (JTO) (http://www.jointogether.org) has long been a pioneer in using the Internet to support people working on substance abuse and gun violence issues. Every month, one million JTO web pages are viewed by over 350,000 people.

JTO uses RSS feeds to not only help their web presence spread, but also to provide vital to support state, municipal, and nonprofit drug treatment and prevention program managers and their audiences. While these programs' web masters might have a modest web presence, they lack the wherewithal to continuously produce new content, or even gather and republish it. Without new content, their audiences lack a reason to come back to their Web site. The JTO RSS service enormously increases both the return visit value of these sites and the presence of authoritative information in this highly charged information space.

To keep the RSS feeds fresh and riveting, JTO employs a small editorial staff who aggregates both online and offline news on substance abuse funding, policies, and more from authoritative sources. They edit this news down to its essential content, and then republish it via RSS, as well as to users of their site and subscribers to their e-mail news services."

RSS Relieves Cluttered Email Inboxes

If you have traditionally received a lot of your information via email, RSS can provide some relief to your inbox. Would you like to follow a particular email list, but can't stomach subscribing to one more email list? If that list is on Yahoogroups, you can follow the list via the list's RSS feed. An excellent free tool for reading RSS feeds is Bloglines. (http://www.bloglines.com)

RSS feeds are almost always spam-free. The provider of the RSS feed doesn't want you to unsubscribe from the feed — so they treat you with respect.

Ben Sheldon, in Lowell, Massachusetts, passes along this RSS tip: "Google still only offers email news alerts, but this utility lets you use create an RSS feed out of any Google News search term. [http://www.justinpfister.com/gnewsfeed.cfm]

I aggregate my name, my projects (DigitalBicycle, ServiceSpeak), and my street and city so that if something happens I should know about, I will."

If you're still with me, I'll pass along a few small tips of my own. I use RSS, Bloglines and my Digg.com account to keep track of what Digg stories my friends are digging (i.e. voting for.) I just copy the RSS feed from the bottom left of http://digg.com/users/pshapiro/friends and then paste it into Add Feed in Bloglines.

Between Katie Couric and the 50 friends I have on Digg, which do you think provides the richer quality of information to me? Right. Just for kicks I subscribe to the Associated Press RSS feed, so I'm in the loop with whatever Katie knows.

I also use the free service at Squeet.com to send me an email whenever one of my friends submits a story to Digg.com, so they don't have to let me know about their submissions. That email alert capability might well come to Digg sometime.

I use RSS to keep me posted on new items of interest to me that are posted to Del.icio.us. For example, if anyone submits an item to Del.icio.us with the tag digitalstorytelling, I find out about that really easily in my Bloglines account.

That puts me in touch with anyone doing digital storytelling anywhere

on the planet. And I don't even have to subscribe to another email list to be in touch with them. I like that.

Phil Shapiro

The author is a former president of Virginia Macintosh Users Group and worked as the Washington DC Regional Coordinator for Community Technology Centers' Network, an international network of more than 1000 organizations bringing technology and technology training to underserved communities.

This article may be freely reprinted by any computer user group or nonprofit entity. The article has been distributed via the The MUG Center's Newsletter Content List and via the newsletter article exchange of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups.

Upgrading Your Monitor

by Vinny La Bash, vlabash@home.com

Many more folks than I thought are getting the urge to watch high definition video on their personal computers. If high definition has you captivated, pay attention to the technologies known as HDMI and HDPC.

HDMI or High Definition Media Interface is a technology that connects video receivers and DVD players to devices such as a television. It makes no difference to HDMI if your set is high definition or not. The technology handles both standard and high definition resolutions.

HDPC or High-bandwidth Digital Content Protection is a completely different animal. Intel developed the technology specifically to prevent distortion or any kind of electronic interference between source and receiver. For example, HDPC encrypts the digital content of anything that a device such as a DVD player might send through a Digital Visual Interface (DVI) to a television set, a projector or a computer monitor. The encryption used is not a form of copy protection, but a process designed to protect the integrity of the data. In other words, HDMI makes sure that what is sent is what's received.

It's important to understand that HDCP is content protection, not copy protection. It won't prevent you from pausing live programming or recording a program to view at a later time. Any content provider that did this would soon be at war with its customers.

As long as features such as "time-shifting" keep appearing, protecting copyright material becomes increasingly difficult. Copyrights are important because without them there is no protection for the artists, authors, and performers who create material or those who use them.

Your home equipment can implement any kind of copy protection, but a content provider might allow no copies whatsoever. Another provider might let you make a limited number of copies. Still another provider might put limitations on how the material is used. Many factors come into play. The mechanism for distribution, source, equipment design, and equipment configuration all have their unique effect. A content provider will usually insist on enforcing its own brand of copy protection.

HDCP makes its appearance at the DVI connection, the last link in the video chain. HDCP makes no decisions on any type of copy protection strategy, it merely protects the choice.

It may be a let down to find out that HDCP isn't an issue yet. However, it will become more important when high definition takes over. Expect all high definition DVD players to eventually use HDCP.

If you own a DVD player that isn't HDCP compliant, you will still be able to use it even if your TV isn't HDCP compliant. You just won't experience high definition quality images. HDCP will restrict playback to standard quality. This prevents pirates from getting perfect copies of movies or other digital content. Upgrades are definitely in most people's future.

Windows Vista will certainly support HDCP, as will upcoming versions of the Mac OS. What it comes down to is if you want to watch high definition content on your computer monitor, the monitor must be HDCP-compliant.

Almost any television set you buy today will use HDCP, but very few computer monitors are HDCP compliant. Do your research carefully. If you want to watch high definition on your monitor, it must be HDCP compliant.

The Cursor

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2006 WAC Membership/Renewal Application

Dues are for the Calendar Year and include Disk Library Discounts, and WAC's monthly newsletter, *The Cursor*, by 1ˢᵗ Class mail to your home. Half-year memberships now available.

Individual/Corporate/Family Dues: $15.00

Remit payment in person at the WAC Membership table on meeting day, or by mail to:
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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
Name:
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Phone: (   ) –

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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)
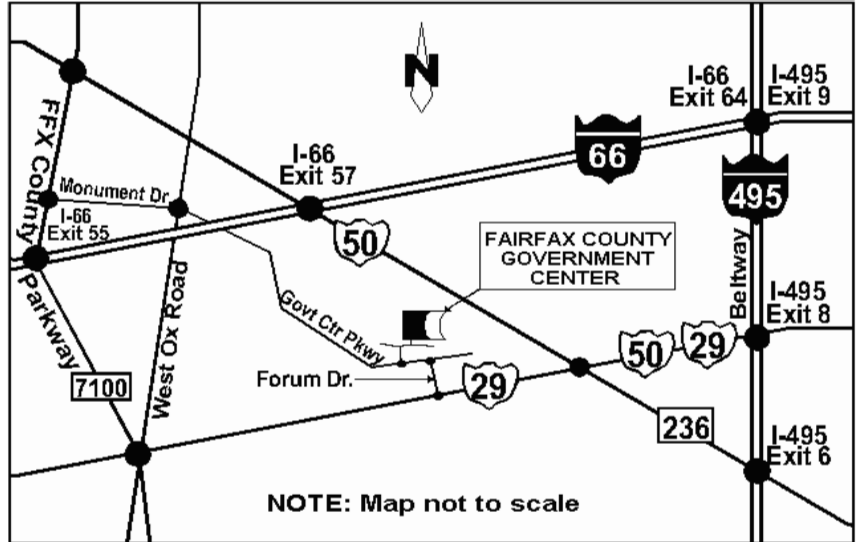Hardware Upgrades/Repair   List others below

Next WAC Meetings: • Sep 16   • Oct 21   • Nov 18   • Dec 16   • Jan 20

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

July Meeting will be held at
the Fairfax County
Government Center

Through Front Entrance to
the Left Hallway, Past the
Elevators to:
Conference Room 4/5

Service Desks Open at 12:30
Meeting Starts at 1:00 PM
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