



The Cursor



Monthly Newsletter of the
Washington Area Computer User Group

Meeting Location:
Ruritan Club, 183 Ruritan
Road, Sterling, VA



Next Meeting:
October 21 2006



Presidential Bits

By Paul Howard

Details about revisions to WAC's membership benefits and dues structure were emailed to all members for whom we have addresses. A link to this announcement is available on the web site's organizational documents page: <http://www.wacug.org/orgdocs.html>

September's meeting featured local author Bruce Fries, who provided a great demonstration of how to convert recordings from vinyl records to digital formats. Check the recent meetings page (<http://www.wacug.org/recmtgs.html>) for a list of resources, and information on Bruce's recent book from O'Reilly Publishing.

Our next meeting will be held on October 21st, at Ruritan Hall, 183 Ruritan Rd., Sterling, VA. All meeting attendees are promised several gifts. A map for this special location is available at: <http://www.wacug.org/images/ruritanmap2.jpg>

This meeting will feature Chuck Roberts, discussing the creation of a DVD, incorporating information of various types to tell a story. Each of us has some type of hobby that inevitably includes a collection of things. Obvious examples include

stamps, coins, yo-yo's, teapots, model airplanes, model cars, antiques, quilts, hand-made lace, family history facts — and so forth. No matter what your hobby is or your collection includes, there is someone else (perhaps in your family) that is interested in your hobby or collection and would love to learn more about the items you have collected.

Instead of simply sending them a few photos of your collection, you can put your collection on DVD and provide them with a copy. But instead of simply putting several images on a CD or DVD, we'll discuss what makes your hobby or collection unique. We'll talk about how to collect images of your special items and use them in creating a story of your collection.

Your story could include old family movies, interviews with individuals, newspaper or magazine clippings. Everyone's collection is unique and contains special objects that are interesting or include an interesting story about how they were created or how you obtained them. This is what makes your unique collection interesting. Once you have developed your story, and collected the images, then you can burn the

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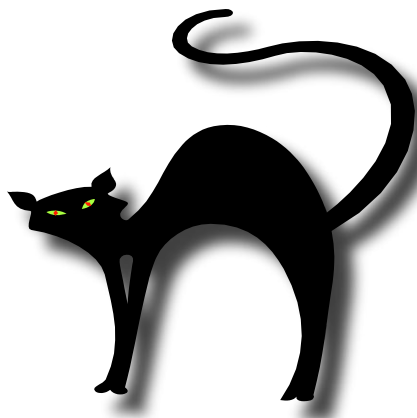


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Lloyd Johnson's Web Sites for October

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. A flight in a private airplane from California to Oshkosh, Wisconsin and return. Great pictures of western USA.
<http://silvairechair2.home.comcast.net/072806>
2. Robots at work and play www.forbes.com/egang, also see www.forbes.com/manes
3. View 3D Satellite Images from NASA.
www.snapfilespro.com/gnomeapp.php?id=110244
4. To obtain a monthly printout of Sunrise, Sunset, Moon Rise and Moon Set for a variety of locations try www.sunrisesunset.com/calendar.asp
5. View your Installed Services and Drivers along with their status.
www.snapfilespro.com/gnomeapp.php?id=110241
6. Need a Pro Football Fix? This URL is kept up-to-date, has historical archive of records, results, rosters and trivia.
www.jt-sw.com/football
7. Medicare approved surgeries; rates for 30 common procedures.
www.cms.hhs.gov/healthcareconinit
8. Battling those 'senior moments'. Look at these programs.
www.positscience.com
9. Companies that are highly rated by customers do well in the stock market. Look at a list of companies with high customer-satisfaction.
www.theacsi.org
10. Want to cut down on catalog overload. The site www.junkbusters.com has free templates for letters to request removal. Also www.abacusal-liance.com — click on "privacy" can help.
The Direct Marketing Association can delete you from its direct-mail lists. (deletion costs \$1) www.dmaconsumers.org



NCTCUG

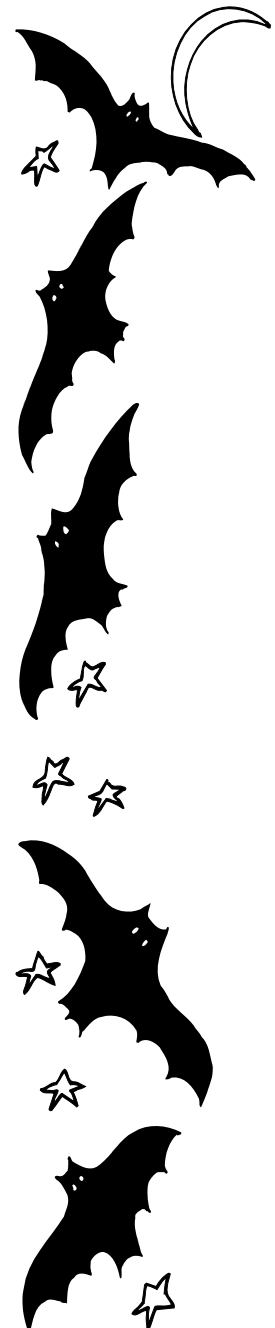
Visit our "sister" user group. The National Capital Technology and Computer User's Group meets the first and fourth Wednesday of the month. They meet in Carlin Hall in Arlington at 5711 South 4th Street. Visit their web site for more information, a map and directions:

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

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DVD to share with others. Once you have mastered the first DVD, you can always "burn" additional copies — It's easier than you think.

The handout for this presentation is available through the meetings page, or use this link: http://www.wacug.org/pdf/dvd_thang2.pdf





GNU/Linux SIG

By Geof Goodrum

Defective by Design(.org)

I received a package from the Free Software Foundation in late September containing information and promotional material for a new campaign, Defective by Design. As described by its website, <http://www.fsf.org/>, the “Free Software Foundation (FSF), established in 1985, is dedicated to promoting computer users’ rights to use, study, copy, modify, and redistribute computer programs. The FSF promotes the development and use of *free software*, particularly the GNU operating system, used widely in its GNU/Linux variant.”

Defective by Design, which has its own website at <http://www.defectivebydesign.org/>, is designed to raise public awareness about the impact of DRM (defined as Digital Rights Management by the music and movie industry, Digital Restrictions Management by the FSF), which puts controls on music and video data to prevent unrestricted copying and distribution. However, in cases like the Apple iPod and iTunes, it also prevents consumers from playing or copying music and video they have legal rights to. Besides creating vendor product lock-in, it may also prevent creating backup copies for personal use. Another

warning from the campaign is the inclusion of DRM technology in new personal computers, termed Trusted Computing (TC) by media and technology companies and Treacherous Computing by the campaign. TC puts DRM in the PC hardware where it is nearly impossible to bypass, taking control of the computer from you and giving it to software vendors. It should be noted that DRM is integral to the new high-density media players/recorders, HD-DVD and BluRay DVD, and media companies have restricted use of personal digital recording systems such as TiVo.

Question: Do you trust vendors to look out for your best interests? Recall the Sony BMG rootkit debacle of 2005 (http://www.boingboing.net/2005/11/14/sony_anticustomer_te.html), part of a CD copy protection DRM scheme for Microsoft Windows systems.

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) makes it illegal to circumvent DRM schemes, so consumers and software developers are left with little recourse.

FSF sees DRM (and TC) as a direct threat to the future of free software and is soliciting public support very aggressively. In addition to the Defective by Design campaign, FSF has a draft of the GNU General Public License v3 (GPLv3) out for public comment (<http://gplv3.fsf.org/>) that contains an anti-DRM section.

While you may or may not agree with FSF’s position, they are strong advocates for the consumer and have raised legitimate concerns about DRM technology in the public forum.

I urge you to check out the web sites cited above for more information.

I will also bring the promotional material provided by FSF to the October WAC meeting, including anti-DRM stickers, fact sheets, sample FSF publications and FSF membership applications.

Linux CD of the Month

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

Discs are available only by pre-order. Contact Geof Goodrum by phone (703-370-7649) or e-mail (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.

October 2006

Bouncy the Hungry Rabbit – release 4. Free GNU General Public License Python code by Richard Jones. In this winning “individual” entry of the September Pyweek game challenge, you play Bouncy the Hungry Rabbit. You’re in a 3D garden with yummy veggies and a farmer who’s not keen on you eating them. You can hide (and move around) under the ground. Bouncy was written so it could be enjoyed by the author’s daughter, who is about to turn 3, and by older gamers. Hence it’s not a violent game and “easy” is really, really easy, and “hard” is challenging. A level editor is included. Requires Python (included in most distributions).

Gnome Wave Cleaner - v0.21-5. Free GNU General Public License See *Linux* page 4

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source code and SUSE executable package (v0.20.09-3) by Jeff Welty. Gnome Wave Cleaner (gwc) processes a wide variety of audio file formats (e.g. au, wav, aiff) to remove noise and hiss. This is particularly useful for cleaning up recordings from vinyl records. Requires libraries for Gnome desktop environment, libsndfile, and FFTW (included with most distributions).

lcdtest - v1.0.1. Free GNU General Public License source code by Eric Smith. lcdtest is a utility to display monitor test patterns. It was originally written for use with LCD monitors, and may be useful in finding pixels that are stuck on or off as well as for adjustment (automatic or manual). However, it can be useful for CRT monitors as well. lcdtest uses the SDL library, and has been used on Linux with X and on Windows, but may work on other platforms supported by SDL. Requires SDL libraries, included in most distributions.

PhonoRipper - v0.9.1. Free GNU General Public License Python code by Michael Lange. PhonoRipper is an easy to use, all-in-one GUI tool for creating audio CDs from analog sources like vinyl records. It uses cdrdao for CD writing and Normalize for volume normalization. Features include a fully buffered WAV file recorder with mixer and VU meter (supporting both ALSA and OSS drivers), automatic detection of track borders, and an intuitive drag'n'drop CD writing interface with CD-text support. Requires Python 2.3 or later, Tkinter, Tk-treectrl (included), Tkimg, Python Mega Widgets 1.2, snack 2.2.2 or later, normalize and cdrdao.

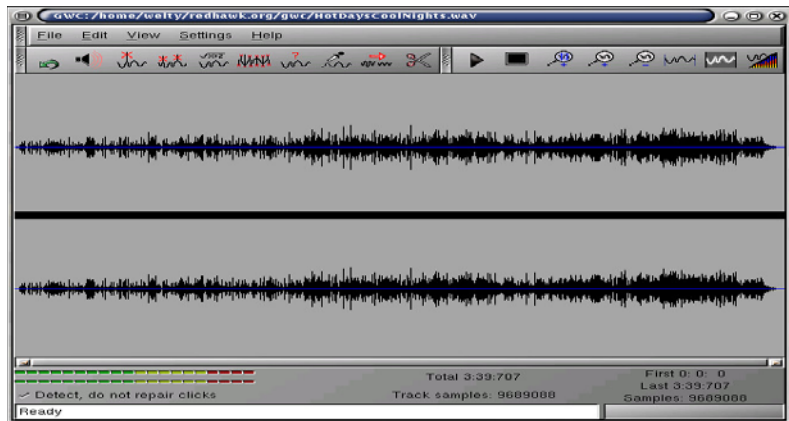
GNU/Linux Distribution Updates
- Security and bug fix monthly updates for Fedora Core 5.

Kernel Source - The latest versions

of 2.4 and 2.6 kernel source code for all platforms.



Bouncy the Hungry Rabbitt



Gnome Wave Cleaner



Defective by Design

XP or Vista?

By Elaine Drain, President, Senior Surfers Computer Club, Delaware
www.nscseniorsurfers.com

From talking with our members, it seems that quite a number of you with older computers running Win98 or ME are in a quandary as to whether to go ahead and buy a new computer now with XP or try to hold out until Vista arrives on the scene. As Jim and I tell our members when asking for buying advice, it's a personal choice you have to make depending on your needs and your budget. We can, however, provide some general information to help you choose, so read on.

XP certainly is superior to Windows 98 or ME, especially now that 98 and ME are no longer supported. Microsoft will probably continue to support XP for 4 or 5 more years (but no one can say for certain on that one). XP, even with its vulnerabilities, is a very stable operating system. Jim and I are both running XP Pro and have been satisfied with its performance overall. I have been doing a lot of reading on Vista and, from the information available, feel that it will be superior to XP, but not everyone will require all of the features that will be included in the full version of Vista.

So given that information, here are some choices:

Current Computer with 98 or ME: If you are currently running Windows 98 or ME and don't want to spend a lot of money next year for a new computer with Vista, you may want to go ahead and buy a new computer with XP soon. The Back-To-School prices for computers right now are very enticing. Certainly, the newer computers next year running Vista

will cost substantially more because of the increased hardware requirements.

If you would like to upgrade to a new computer with XP now and have minimum needs only using your computer for email and surfing the Internet, and do not plan to upgrade to the Vista operating system down the road, a budget-priced computer with a Celeron or Sempron processor may suit your needs, even though you would have fewer upgrade options in the future.

If you would like to upgrade to a new computer with XP now and may wish to upgrade to Vista later on and also have higher needs such as working with digital photos and editing programs, spreadsheets, databases, powershows. etc., you should consider spending a little more to get a Pentium or Athlon processor. I would recommend a bare minimum of 512Mb of memory (RAM) if you are working with multimedia (photos/music/movies/radio) for now but you should plan to add another 512Mb of memory when you upgrade to Vista.

If you are wondering about the minimum requirements for upgrading your current computer to Vista, the following information was taken from the Microsoft website:

Windows Vista Minimum Supported System Requirements – page 6

PCs that meet the minimum supported system requirements will be able to

run the core features of Windows Vista with the basic user experience.

Keep in mind that the above specs are for running the BASIC version of Vista and not the fully functional version which has a multitude of

new features. Although Microsoft is currently stating that Vista will run with 512Mb of RAM at a minimum, I would make certain the computer could be upgraded to 1GB of RAM. Minimum requirements are just that – bare bones minimum – and I would recommend that your computer exceed these minimums. Vista is currently in the Beta2 stage and is nearing (so they say) finalization before debut, but that does not mean that the system requirements stated here won't change by the time the system is ready to sell, so stay tuned on that.

Personally, if your current computer came with Windows 98 or ME, I would not recommend attempting to **upgrade** your old computer to Vista unless you originally purchased a high end computer with a Pentium processor with the capability of 1GB of RAM. Even then, it may not be worth the time, effort and money to upgrade. The cost to purchase the Vista operating system, plus any installation charges, plus the cost of the memory upgrade, not to mention the graphics card requirements, would add up to a tidy sum and in the end you would still have a very old computer (that may or may not work well with Vista).

Current Computer Came With XP: If your current computer came with XP already installed, you may want to hold out and wait to see what Vista offers and how it operates before you take the plunge.

Excellent Comparison – Vista vs XP: If you would like to take a peek and see how Vista compares with XP side by side, follow this link: <http://www.bentuser.com/article.aspx?ID=332&page=1>

If you're wondering how the Apple

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Vista Minimum System Requirements

Processor	800 MHz 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit (x64) processor
System Memory	512 MB
GPU	SVGA (800x600) (GPU means Graphics Processing Unit, or in other words, Monitor)
Graphics Memory	(not stated, although I have heard a minimum of 128Mb)
HDD	20 GB (Hard Drive)
HDD Free Space	15 GB
Optical Drive	CD-ROM drive

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operating system, Tiger, compares with Vista, this article may be of interest to you:

<http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,1895,1842175,00.asp>

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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 information. 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.microsoft.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 ef-

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fective Tuesday night,” she said. “It was not a change in support 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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Digital Resolution Made Confusing

By Dave Chrestenson, Member of the
Fox Valley PC Association, Illinois
Digital Photographer/Hobbyist

There seems to be a plethora of articles on the number of pixels required to create your photos to their full glory. Many of the articles disagree with each other and some are mystifying (to say the least); occasionally a few are wrong. So here I will approach it from a different point of view, I'll give you the knowledge and let you decide what you need. Ready? Here we go!

Let's start with some facts. (I'll reconsider these later, but we have to start somewhere.) First, the average eye, relaxed, focuses at a distance of about fifteen inches. So that's about the distance people view their prints.

Second, the angle of comfortable vision (not acute) is generally agreed to be about fifty to fifty-five degrees. Beyond that is peripheral

vision. Now, fifty degrees at fifteen inches subtends a distance of about thirteen inches, just covering the diagonal of an 8x10. Is it any wonder that size is so popular?

And third, the typical eye has a resolution of about one minute of angle. This works out, at fifteen inches, to about .004 inches, or approximately 229 dots in an inch. (For purposes of clarity I will use the term pixels when referring to the camera sensor and dots when referring to the print. But in this discussion they can be considered equivalent. (Don't compare this with the resolution (normally also referred to as dots) of printers. They are completely different animals. (Subject for another article?))

For convenience and to assure a tolerance, for now let's round that up to 300 dpi. This means that we need 300 dpi (at 15 inches) on the paper to assure that we won't see individual dots. Now, it's easy enough to work backwards from there. Assume that we wish to print an 8x10. Ten inches across at 300 dpi is 3000 dots. Eight inches down at 300 dpi is 2400 dots. So we need a camera of 3000 x 2400 pixels, or 7.2 meg. (This is assuming a camera with square pixels, not all have that, the Fuji S3 for example has hexagonal pixels, two sizes, no less. (Subject for still another article?)) Simple huh? Maybe.

But let's try another example first. Assume you just want to print a picture half that size, 4 x 5 is more common. Then 4 times 300 equals 1200 and 5 times 300 equals 1500, so our camera need only be 1.8 meg. That's not so bad, is it? But before you dash right out to buy a 2 meg camera on sale, let's take a look at some of those original figures.

I said that the average eye views an image at 15 inches. That's an "average" eye. It can vary from that... a lot. Depending on age, it can go from 3 inches (a youngster) to more than 6 feet. (An old timer.) And that's for an eye that's working well. Near-sighted? You'll hold the picture closer. (Assuming you don't wear correction lenses, of course.) Far-sighted? Further away. Have astigmatism? A mess! So, if you hold your picture at 7.5 inches, you will need twice the number of pixels, or 600, per inch. An 8x10 would require a 28.8 meg camera. Good grief! Thirty inches viewing distance is a lot easier, a 1.8 meg one will do the job. Also, some eyes can see significantly better than one minute of angle, some can reach 1/2 minute. That's even worse, you need 600 dpi at 15 inches, which means we're back to a 28.8 meg camera for an 8x10, and a 7.2 meg one for a 4x5. But you can do the math. And do you really need to have the dots as small as theory suggests? Well, to make it more confusing, there are other considerations that affect that. Bright lighting needs higher resolution, dim lighting needs less. Glossy paper? Higher resolution. Matt paper, less. High contrast image, more, low contrast, less. Ad infinitum.

Finally, what if you have taken the definitive photo of Yosemite, the one to equal Ansel Adams, and you want to have it printed at, say, 16x20 and frame it. Do you still need 300 dpi? Probably not. After all, people don't normally hold a 16x20 in their hands and look at it from 15 inches. Remember the 50 degree vision. So, you'll probably be hanging it on the wall, where they will view it from a distance. Experience shows that

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people will move backward or forward when viewing a picture until it subtends that 50 degree angle. So you might well get away with 150 dpi.

But, getting back to the more normal usage, handheld prints, do you need 300 dpi there? Again, maybe. In many cases you may get away with less. But if you go below 150 dpi you are almost certain to get obvious visual pixilation at that distance. Of course, Photoshop to the rescue, you can resample upwards and increase the number of pixels to what works. You're not adding detail, but at least you're getting rid of those annoying "jaggies."

Clear? I didn't think so. Remember, I said "Made Confusing." But at least you are now confused on a much higher plane! Good luck.

APCUG Editor's comments: Dave has presented several programs over the years that have gone into great detail on various aspects of digital photography. From cameras and lenses and from basic photo software to the flagship of the genre: Adobe Photoshop. His knowledge has always impressed me and we always enjoy his point of view on this topic. He presented a program last month: "Pursuing the Path From Pixels to Pictures," which could have easily gone late into the afternoon. All present enjoyed his program. Thanks Dave!

Jon Jackman

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BASICS

Software with New Computers

by Hilton Kaufman, member of the Chicago Computer Society, Illinois

www.ccs.org

[hmkaufer\(at\)earthlink.net](mailto:hmkaufer(at)earthlink.net)

When a typical consumer buys a computer, some software or programs normally comes with it. Just what is included will vary with price and brand, but usually includes an operating system as a minimum. It is possible to get a custom built machine without any software if this is actually wanted.

I recently bought an HP Media Computer, that I consider an over-kill machine, for home use. A lot of software comes with it. There are several separate programs for working with audio-visual files and DVDs, two money management programs, several games, two internet browsers, two office suites plus an extra word processor, a security program, and probably a few other small programs.

In the vast majority of computers delivered today, the operating system that is included is some version of Windows XP. This includes a number of possibly useful programs in a folder or directory called Accessories. For many people, this will be all that is needed to get good use out of a computer.

The manufacturer of the machine very likely included some additional programs. Maybe this brings you up to your required level of software. If you do need more, the included programs may provide deals or better prices on the others that you need.

Check out what you have before rushing out to buy more.

Microsoft Windows Media Player should be adequate for playing most music and video files and comes with the operating system. The major competing program, *RealPlayer*, also seems to have come with the operating system. (I believe there is some sort of legal requirement that it be included.) In addition to playing music, you can also do things like listen to the hourly online BBC news headlines.

I personally do not use either of the money management programs, *Microsoft Money* and *Quicken*. I may be a bit paranoid but I do not put personal financial data on a computer that is regularly connected to the Internet. Spyware gets on computers too easily, even with good defenses.

I find several of the games to be fun to play, as well as good to kill time when I don't want to do anything serious. The virtual pinball machine comes complete with arcade noises and has the same motif as the last real one that I had a chance to play some years ago. *Free Cell* is a thinker's card game with most deals possible to win. There is also a straight solitaire game that is quite popular among long-time computer users.

Both *Internet Explorer* and *Netscape* are included. My Internet service provider seems to prefer to work with Internet Explorer. The default setting that came with my machine was *Netscape*. Other browsers can be downloaded if wanted.

There is a minimal level word processor, called *WordPad*, that comes with Windows operating systems. For many computer users, it is perfectly adequate. It will do letters and small plain text documents, such as an article for publication in a com-

See *Software* on page 9

puter club newsletter, quite well. There is a choice of font styles and colors. A common starting document, such as a letterhead, can be saved and renamed when used for another document.

Microsoft Works and *Office* are collections of related software or suites of programs for office purposes, with *Office* being the one for professional users and large offices. Both have word processors that are more powerful than *WordPad*. Most home and small business users have no reason to use anything more powerful than *Works*.

Without getting into a lot of details, I can say that *Microsoft Office* is a very powerful and versatile office suite. There are increasingly expensive versions available with programs of interest to limited numbers of users. I received a 60-day free demo of the bottom of the line version of *Office* with my computer. If I upgrade during the trial period, I need only to pay the upgrade price for even the most expensive version.

Some sort of security program came with the program that would be good for a limited time unless I paid a subscription fee. Windows XP also has an adequate firewall for most users. I removed the security program since I am subscribing to an excellent one through my Internet service provider.

While the included programs you get can vary greatly with the brand and price of the machine, those that come with Windows XP remain constant. You can have a machine built to order with hardly anything in it or fully loaded. The default word processing suite from Dell seems to be a *Corel WordPerfect* one, but you can order a Microsoft suite

for a slightly higher price. An off-the-shelf Media Center machine will routinely come with a lot of stuff.

While each machine is different, you should learn what you already have before adding more programs. You may already have something that will do what you want or will enable you to get a discount on what you want to add. ■

Hilton Kaufman serves as the technical support person in the procedures writing unit of the Illinois Department of Employment Security. As such, he uses the software provided to him to create forms, convert documents into PDFs, advise members of his unit as to how to use the available software, and similar tasks.

For his home computer, he can go all out and get a powerful machine that allows him to do things like playing games and surf the web without getting in trouble. He has prepared a number of articles aimed at novice users on the basics of standard computer programs.

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My Spyware

By Sandy Berger, Compu-KISS
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sandy(at)compukiss.com

Everyone has computer woes...even me. Last week my office computer slowed to a crawl when accessing anything on the office network or on the Internet. It was so slow that I was

anxious to begin troubleshooting.

Since we had recently moved to a new office, the first suspect was the network cabling. I replaced cables on both ends and used my laptop to confirm that the network was fine. It was obvious that something in my computer was the problem. So the first order of business was to scan for viruses. Since I always use an up-to-date antivirus program, keep my operating system patched, and don't open uninvited attachments, I felt my computer was probably virus-free. The virus scan confirmed that my problem was caused by something other than a virus.

My next thought was that I probably had some spyware in my computer. These unwanted programs infiltrate computers without the user's knowledge. They can wreck havoc with a computer. So I ran a spyware detection program named *Ad-Aware* (www.adaware.com). This is a free program that I have used for years with good results. This time, it didn't find anything. So I turned to another favorite...*Spybot Search and Destroy* (www.spybot.com). Another free program, *Spybot* has turned up much spyware in the past. Yet, even though I updated both of these programs before I scanned my computer, neither found any spyware.

Now I had a dilemma. Since I could not find the problem, my next step might have to be reformatting my hard drive and reinstalling all the programs. In trying to avoid that time-consuming hassle, I decided to try one more spyware program. On my desktop I had two additional free spyware tools that I downloaded for review but had never used before: AOL's *Automatic Spyware Protection* (<http://daol.aol.com/safetycenter/>)

See *My Spyware* on page 10

My Spyware from page 9

[spyware](#)) and Microsoft's *Window's Defender* (www.windowsdefender.com).

I decided to start with the AOL program. The scan was faster than either Ad-Aware or Spybot, and it unearthed several pieces of spyware that were not detected by the previous programs. I clicked the button that said "Eliminate Spyware" and my work was done. My computer was immediately back to normal.

It's unbelievable that I would have to use three programs to find the nasty spyware that was causing my problem, but this is the situation in today's spyware-infested computer world. The bad guys are always trying to stay one step ahead of the good guys and in some cases, they are obviously succeeding.

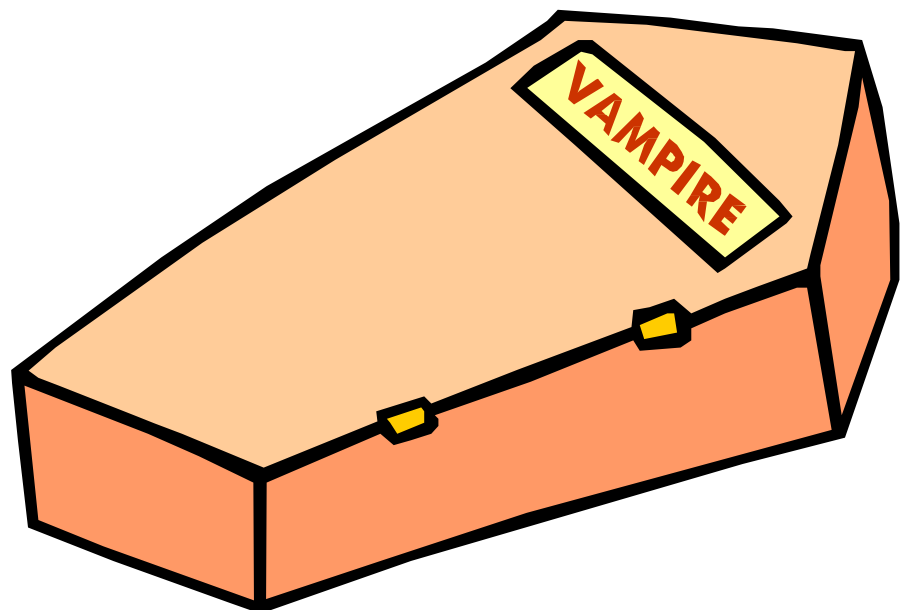
If you want to add the AOL software to your arsenal of anti-spyware tools, it is a simple download at the AOL Safety and Security Center at <http://daol.aol.com/safetycenter/spyware>. You will need to get a free AOL screen name before you download the software by entering your name, address, telephone, email, and date of birth. Be careful to download only what you need. AOL will offer you virus protection, a firewall, and an email program in addition to the spyware software. These may or may not be valuable to you. I checked out the free AOL *Active Virus Shield* software which you can download at www.active-virusshield.com. This program is powered by Kaspersky Lab, one of the largest anti-virus providers, and has garnered good reviews. It is an excellent choice if you are looking for a free anti-virus program. AOL's free email program, however, is probably not as good as the email

program you are already using.

Since my spyware detection encounter, I have also tried the Microsoft *Window's Defender* anti-spyware program and I liked it as well. A year ago I would have scoffed at anyone using more than one or two anti-spyware programs, but perhaps in today's computer environment, it's not overkill to have four anti-spyware programs!

Sandy Berger, The Compu-KISS® Lady...nationally respected computer authority, journalist, media guest, speaker, and author is a seasoned 30-year computer expert. Sandy is a consumer advocate promoting simplicity, ease-of-use, and stability in consumer technology products. She works with hardware and software developers to help them make their products more user-friendly.

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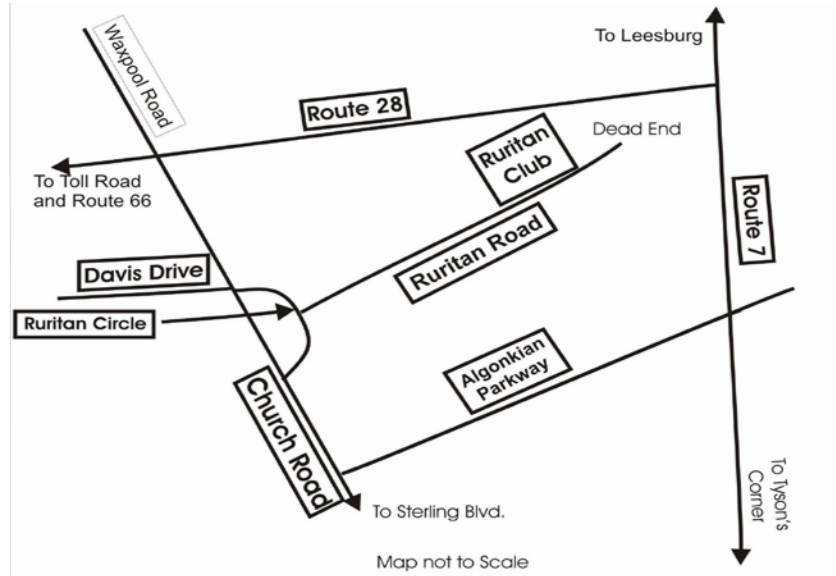
Hardware Upgrades/Repair List others below

Next WAC Meetings: • Nov 18 • Dec 16 • Jan 20 • Feb 3 • Mar 17

Call (703) 370-7649 for the latest meeting information or Visit our Web Site at:
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Service Desks Open at 12:30
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