The Cursor

Monthly Newsletter of the
Washington Area Computer User Group

Meeting Location:
Fairfax County
Government Center

Next Meeting:
November 18, 2006

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Presidential Bits

November 2006 Meeting

By Paul Howard

Our October meeting featured a presentation by Chuck Roberts, addressing an organizational approach and the procedures necessary to produce a DVD video presentation that tells a story.

Chuck has written an extensive handout, which is posted on our Recent Meetings web page, along with the slides he used in making the presentation. http://www.wacug.org/recmtgs.html

Our November meeting topic is Internet Email Security, and De-Bunking Internet Myths. Geof Goodrum will focus on identifying and handling e-mail hoaxes, spam, malware and fraud (phishing, 419, lotteries, etc.). Geof plans to use Thunderbird 1.5 and Firefox 2.0 for the demonstration portion of the program, which will provide members an excellent opportunity to experience alternative browser and email client programs. These programs are available for Windows, Linux, and Mac OS X platforms.

As time permits, Geof will also demonstrate Fedora Core 6, which is loaded on the WACUG laptop. Geof notes "The new 3D desktop effects are pretty neat, though this is reducing Linux to comparisons with Vista."

Another Chance for a Membership Bonus !

Pay Your Dues at the November Meeting and Receive a Special Bonus. Our special offer went so well in October, we're repeating it !!

Get a head start on 2007 — if you pay your dues at the November meeting, you'll receive a bonus "golden oldie" five pack of back issue software CDs. These are in addition to the certificates you'll receive for current and future CD offerings. This offer expires when the CDs run out. Don't miss this chance to unearth the treasures of past issues of WAC's great software collections.

Annual dues — $25 (includes 12 issues of the Cursor via email; certificates for 3 periodic software CDs.)
Printed Cursor Surcharge — $12 for 12 monthly issues, mailed to your home.

Lloyd's Web Sites for November, 2006

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. Good pictures from Great Britain. After viewing pictures go to their Home Page for Uk's slant on world news.
   http://news.bbc.uk/2/hi/in_pictures/4766448.stm
   Note: an underscore between in and pictures.
2. About.com has put together a comprehensive collection of maps, both physical and political, for almost every mapable region of the world. Did you know the Dutch (on average) are the tallest people in the world?
   http://geography.about.com
3. Gimmicks, But Fun. Dip into this enormous collection of images.
   www.corbis.com
4. This site lets you be anonymous when you search the Web.
   www.anonymixer.com
5. To find Vegetarian Restaurants and health-food stores world wide
   www.happycow.net
6. This site is good to check-out a site before downloading a file. It also tells who runs the site and provides contact information, etc.
   www.betterwhois.com
7. Do you know how long it is till Christmass?
   http://home.valomet.com/sabruf2/countchr.html
8. Before you turn loose your out-of-town visitors to explore Washington, DC., check out crime information for DC.
   http://crimemap.dc.gov

   For a specific Area click on "enter now" enter the address and click on 1500 feet.
9. To find ways to recycle, reuse or donate computer equipment check out www.epa.gov/e-cycling/basic.htm
10. Prepare a month's worth of dinners in a two-hour session.
    www.dreamdinners.com or www.easymealprep.com

Microsoft Vista Beta-First Look

by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida
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Many of the reviews that I have read on the early releases of Windows Vista have been done on "fast" hardware. Many times with 1- 2 GB of RAM. Knowing that many users of Windows XP will probably upgrade to Vista with their current hardware, I installed a Beta 2.0 copy of Windows Vista on an older machine. This computer has an Intel 1.3 GHz CPU and had 256 MB of RDRAM. I upgraded the RAM to 512 MB which is normal for many Windows XP users. The computer also has an ATA 40 GB hard drive and it did have a CD writer. However, when I went to install Vista, I found the installation disk was a DVD. So I had to upgrade to a DVD unit. I did manage to find a Sony DVD burner at a very reasonable price. So, a word of warning for those interested in upgrading to Vista when the final version is available, you may have to have a DVD drive to install it. This review is based on my hands-on experience with Vista.

I installed this Beta version to the hard drive as a new installation. It

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NCTCUG

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

http://www.nctcug.org/

Meetings start at 7:00 PM

GNU/Linux SIG

By Geof Goodrum

Tools for LCD Monitors

I ordered a 20" Samsung SyncMaster 204B LCD video monitor in late August during a rebate offer. It is larger, lighter, uses less power, takes less desk space and puts out less heat than my Samsung 17" CRT. Although not a widescreen model, this LCD monitor receives excellent reviews from users for brightness and quality, and supports a native resolution of 1600x1200 @ 60 Hz. It can accept and switch between analog (DB15) and digital (DVI) inputs; cables for both were included. The screen can pivot from landscape orientation to portrait orientation on its base, which is handy for viewing entire web pages or editing documents. The monitor features automatic adjustment with built-in controls, but also includes software utilities on CD for Microsoft Windows™ systems (Me/NT/2000/XP) to make adjustments such as color calibration and rotation of the screen image (used when pivoting the screen).

That's fine for Windows users, but I needed similar capabilities on my GNU/Linux system. After doing a little online searching, I discovered that the modular X.Org X Window server used by current GNU/Linux distributions includes a command line utility called xrandr that allows sizing, rotation and reflection (mirroring) of images on the screen, dependent upon video card capabilities (xrandr -q lists supported features). The screen image can be rotated in any 90° increment. I have a rather old nVidia video card, a 32MB GeForce2MX 400, and use proprietary drivers from nVidia. nVidia provides an on-screen utility that supports the xrandr features, which makes it easy to pivot the monitor on its stand and then rotate the screen image to match. nVidia notes that some hardware features of the video card are disabled in rotated modes, and I noticed lags in screen updates while editing OpenOffice.org documents in portrait mode. This may not be as noticeable on newer, faster video cards.

LCD monitors sometimes suffer from manufacturing defects that leave pixels of the display that are always turned on or off. To check for these defects on my new monitor, I found the lcdtest utility (http://www.brouhaha.com/~eric/software/lcdtest/, included on the October Linux CD of the Month). This handy utility can display windows or full screens in solid red, green, blue, black or white, which makes pixel defects obvious. The utility also has a screen pattern designed to optimize results from the monitor's auto-adjustment function when used with an analog video input. Fortunately, my monitor is free of defects.

Open Source 3D Video

It should be no surprise that I prefer Open Source software over proprietary software. Open Source encourages community involvement, continuous improvement, and protects against products being orphaned when a company drops support in favor of newer products or goes out of business.

Unfortunately, video card drivers for Linux that support accelerated 3D effects are still largely proprietary, with programming information only available through a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) with the manufacturer of the graphics chipset. 3D video card support is required for many games, some applications (e.g. computer generated graphics) and desktop interface "eye candy" like XGL (http://www.novell.com/products/desktop/features/xgl/) and AIGLX (http://fedoraproject.org/wiki/RenderingProject/aiglx). Manufacturers of video card Graphic Processing Units (GPUs) are very competitive over performance, and presumably don't want to reveal their engineering secrets by opening source code for their drivers.

Three of the leading graphics chipset manufacturers are ATI, Intel and nVidia. These chipsets are used in most video cards and computer motherboards with integrated video on the market.

Users acknowledge that nVidia has the fastest 3D video support with proprietary Linux drivers. nVidia's proprietary drivers (v1.0-9625 and later) support AIGLX 3D desktop effects implemented in the latest GNU/Linux distributions. The X.Org server includes an Open Source 2D accelerated driver for nVidia (nv). 3D support is not currently available for nVidia in Open Source drivers, but the Nouveau development project (http://nouveau.freedesktop.org/wiki/) is beginning to work on it.

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ATI is an interesting case. The company provides proprietary drivers for Linux, but Open Source drivers with accelerated 3D support are available. Phoronix, a web site with extensive coverage of games and hardware for Linux, has published performance comparisons between proprietary and Open Source ATI video card drivers. The latest (http://www.phoronix.com/scan.php?page=article&item=560&num=1) looks at Open Source drivers that are under development for R300 chipset ATI video cards. Overall, the Open Source drivers do the job, but have significantly lower performance than the proprietary drivers. On the other hand, only the Open Source driver supports AIGLX effects at the time this article was written. No Open Source drivers are available currently for the latest X1000 chipset ATI cards.

AMD recently acquired ATI and is considering release of significant driver components under an Open Source license (http://www.infoworld.com/article/06/08/02/32OPcurve_1.html). The Open Source community is encouraging this, and user forum postings support the assertion that availability of Open Source drivers from ATI would favorably influence buying decisions in the Linux community.

Of the three vendors listed, only Intel completely supports Open Source drivers for their graphics chipsets. However, I've only found Intel graphics chipsets integrated on motherboards, not as add-on cards. Phoronix also tested these drivers (http://www.phoronix.com/scan.php?page=article&item=571&num=1) and notes that the chipset is not designed for top-notch game performance, but overall functionality and laptop power savings. The Intel driver supports AIGLX.

More information about Open Source 3D video drivers is available at http://dri.freedesktop.org/wiki/ and through the Free Software Foundation's site at http://www.fsf.org/resources/hw/video/.

Job Opportunities

Sr. Linux Analyst
Compuware's Professional Services Division is actively looking for a talented Senior Linux professional. Working in a team environment for a large government agency, the incumbent will provide Linux expertise in all areas from installing to customizing and support. This is in an IBM mainframe environment, running z/OS. Candidate must have experience with zLinux and z/VM.

We offer full-time employment with a salary, bonus plan comprehensive benefits and a company that is financially very strong.

If you are interested, please contact Scott Boren at 703-749-8555 x1260, or scott.boren@compuware.com.

System Administrators
AOL has numerous Opportunities for Systems Administrators of varying levels of experience.

Demonstrates a thorough understanding of Red Hat and Solaris Operating Systems as well as web technical tools and applications. Targeting experience with apache, tomcat, TCP, dump and Perl. Responsible for hosts and applications running on those hosts. Must be able to troubleshoot operating system and application issues. Must be able to provide support on call rotation and act as an escalation point to answer application questions. Must be able to coordinate with internal and external partners for application dependencies. Looking for someone who can function as a project lead, someone who can make decisions that impacts the project. Ability to consolidate system data to formulate reports for business managers is a plus. Must be able to articulate opinions and help guide work unit, communicating complex administration information to a wide variety of individuals and groups.
If interested, please submit your resumé to jbrockman11@aol.com or call Jeff Brockman at 703-265-1000, Ext 33195.

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

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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.

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Advchk – v1.01. Free BSD License Perl code by Stephan Schmieder. Advchk is a tool for monitoring the security of installed software. Advisory Check gathers security advisories using RSS/RDF/XML feeds, compares them against a list of known software, and alerts you if you're vulnerable. Since adding software lists by hand would be quite a boring task, advchk leverages your system's package manager for detecting software. Software installed on remote systems can be monitored by executing the remote package manager as a SSH ForceCommand using Public-key authentication.

Dnsmasq – v2.35. Free GNU General Public License source code by Simon Kelley and Debian package. Dnsmasq is a lightweight, easy to configure DNS forwarder and DHCP server ideal for PCs used as network routers. It is designed to provide DNS and (optionally) DHCP to a small network. It can serve the names of local machines which are not in the global DNS. The DHCP server integrates with the DNS server and allows machines with DHCP-allocated addresses to appear in the DNS with names configured either in each host or in a central configuration file. Dnsmasq supports static and dynamic DHCP leases and BOOTP for network booting of diskless machines.

Frets on Fire – v1.0.263. Free GNU General Public License source code by Unreal Voodoo. Frets on Fire is a game of musical skill and fast fingers. The aim of the game is to play guitar with the keyboard as accurately as possible. A humorous tutorial is provided, but some of the words may be considered offensive. Requires 128 MB of RAM, fairly fast OpenGL graphics card (shader support not necessary, antialiasing support recommended), and a SDL compatible sound card.

Hero of Allocrost – v0.1.0 (demo). Free GNU General Public License source code by Tyler Olsen and Debian package. Hero of Allacrost is a single player 2D role-playing game inspired by the likes of SNES-era RPGs such as Chrono Trigger and the Final Fantasy series. In Allacrost, the player explores rich environments, undertakes various quests and missions, solves dungeon puzzles, and fights strategic battles in an active time-based system. This release demonstrates the basic components of map exploration, dialogue, battles, and character management, but not much more. However, users have complimented the quality of the artwork and music.

GNU/Linux Distibution Updates - Security and bug fix monthly updates for Fedora Core 6.

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

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saved the previous version of Windows and user files in one folder. Since I had no applications or personal information on the drive I was able to delete this folder after the installation was complete. I did note that the installation took more than 90 minutes to complete. I'm sure that this was partly related to the speed of this computer as well as the size of the operating system. Since this is a pre-release version, it probably contains debugging code which contributes to its overall size.

Once Vista was installed, it brought up a Control Center Window. This had icons for several items, one being hardware that wasn't installed and other to add a printer. There were also a Vista tutorial and an icon for new items in Vista. The first thing I tried was to see what hardware wasn't installed. The first item on the list was the Ethernet card, next the sound system, then a "Simple Controller" which I finally figured out was the modem and a SCSI controller. To simplify things I removed the modem and the SCSI card. Then I tried to install the Ethernet card. At that point I started getting the User Account Control (UAC) windows which required that I approve every step that might change the make-up of the computer. Every time I tried to install a driver I had several UAC windows to get through before I could get to the installation process. And this, in spite of the fact that I was running as the System Administrator.

Any of you that have set up Window XP Professional should be familiar with the Administrator and User Account system. On my XP Pro system I have the Adminis-

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trator account and a User account, both of which are password protected. I rarely use the Administrator account, instead I work in the User account. You might ask why I do this. The reason is that without the Administrator account running it is more difficult for trojans or parasites to make changes to any of the system files on my computer.

That is assuming that they can get past the firewall in the first place. I have seen too many XP Pro systems where the user is always running in the Administrator mode which has allowed invasions of the system by trojans/parasites. I have just cleaned out one system that was acting weirdly until I removed 295 parasites/trojans. Whenever I need to install software on my XP system, I simply use the "Run As" command and enter the Administrator password. That way I don't have to change from the User mode to the Administrator mode.

However, this has all changed in Vista with the User Account Control. Even if you are logged on as the System Administrator, it requests your permission for access to anything related to the system or devices. Just to review the list of hardware in the Device Manager requires that you get permission to do so by clicking in the Permissions request window. When you try to install new software or drivers you get a security window which requires your permission to let you continue. Then you get the UAC window which requires that you verify that you know you are installing new software and that you think it is reliable! You even get a UAC window when you try to download and install Windows Updates! I have learned that there is a good reason for this security. According to one report I have read it is possible for Trojans downloaded to your computer along with a web page, to inactivate your anti-virus, firewall and anti-parasite software. This can all be done in the background if you are running in the Administrator mode. Then changes can be made to your system software that can affect the operation of your computer. The UAC in Vista is designed to prevent this from happening. Once I set up my User account, then I had fewer UAC windows show up. They occurred only when I wanted to install new software or drivers. The only thing I had to do then was to provide the Administrator password.

Since I didn't have drivers for the Ethernet card, I had to search for one on the Internet using my XP computer. After some research I was able to identify the make/model of the card. Then I found a driver on DriverGuide.com. I downloaded the zip file to my hard drive and burned it to a CD-RW. Then I transferred it to the hard drive on the Vista machine. Vista quickly extracted all the files for me. Then in the device driver, I clicked on "Update drivers" for the Ethernet card and told it to search the drive for a driver. Low and behold, it did find and install the driver. Now, after some hard drive activity and approving the UAC to update the Network center, I was on the Internet.

The next thing I wanted was not my sound card driver. It was an anti-virus program. According to the Vista information site only TrendMicro has an A-V program approved for Vista. However, I had noticed on the Avast Web site that they had a Vista compatible version of their A-V software. So I went back to their web site and found that all versions of Avast are now Vista compatible. So I downloaded a free Home Edition and installed it. Again, I had the UAC windows to get through to get the installation under way. After it was installed, I went through the Avast registration and my A-V program was operational. So far, the Avast is running normally and is doing its usual updates in the background.

I have been using the Windows Firewall as I "assumed" it was a two-way firewall. I have since learned that it is only an in-coming firewall. I plan on replacing it with ZoneAlarm.

After a re-boot of the computer, Vista popped up a window and asked if it could install my multimedia sound card. I clicked on OK and the next window had two choices, one of which was to search the Internet for a driver. At this point I still had no indication as to the manufacturer of the sound card, so I selected the Internet search. In just a few minutes it changed from searching to installing the software. Then I had a window saying it had installed the software for the Creative Labs sound card! Now that, in my mind is quite an improvement over previous Windows versions.

The one interesting aspect of the Creative installation is that Vista could not install a driver for the game controller. As with most sound cards, there is a output for a game controller. For some reason, Vista was unable to install a driver for this output. It is now listed in the Device Manager as an unknown device. The sound card is listed correctly.

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My next step was to set up a User account and shift out of the Administrator mode. That was accomplished quite easily through the Control Panel. So, once I was in User mode, I downloaded a copy of OpenOffice. When I started to install it, a UAC window popped up and I had to enter the Administrator password. Then the installation proceeded normally. Not really any different from the User mode in XP.

Vista has a Security software setup in the Control Panel that is similar to that in XP. It shows the status of the firewall, anti-virus, updates and a new item, Windows Defender. This latter software is an anti-parasite package. It has a default setting to scan your hard drive every day at 2:00 a.m. Since my computer is rarely turned on at that hour, I changed the setting to 5:00 p.m. It is more likely to be running at that time.

The last step was to install two networked printers. I clicked on the "Add printers" icon in the Control Center Window. That brought up the Printer Installation Wizard. I selected a networked printer and told it to find the printer. Several minutes later it told me there were no networked printers. So I backed up and selected browse for printer. That took me through the whole network tree, but I did find the printer. When I selected the printer and went to the next window, a bright yellow warning popped up to tell me that "printer drivers can install viruses! Are you sure this networked computer is trustworthy?" Well, since it is my main computer, I decided it was trustworthy and clicked on the OK button. Then I got the usual UAC window. After entering the password, the installation was completed and a test page printed. I had to go through the same routine with the second printer. But at least both of them are installed and working.

The Vista computer is now part of my local network and I can share files with it. In fact, part of this article was written on the Vista computer using the OpenOffice I downloaded. I had intended to finish the article on that computer, but the hard drive died. I can't fault Vista for this, the computer is old and it was the original drive. So, when the new drive arrives, I will have to reinstall Vista and all the drivers. Since I had activated this copy of Vista, it will be interesting to see what will happen when I have to activate the new installation.

Next month I hope to tell you of my experience with the Vista interface. So, hang in there, more information on Vista will be coming.

*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(at)yahoo.com.

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Tech News

By Sue Crane, Editor, Big Bear Computer Club
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Amazon Reveals Windows Vista Pricing
http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1895,2010150,00.asp

Preorder prices posted on the Amazon.com Website, Windows Vista Home Basic will retail for $199, while an upgrade to this version will cost $99.95, with $89.95 for an additional upgrade license. Vista Home Premium is priced on Amazon.com at $239, with an upgrade costing $159 and an additional upgrade license for $143.00, while Vista Business costs $299 retail, $199 for an upgrade and $179 for an extra upgrade license.

New Skype Phone Doesn't Need PC
http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1895,2010681,00.asp

Skype announced a new cordless phone on Thursday that sends and receives Skype calls just like a landline, but without the need for a computer. The new Philips VOIP841 plugs into a standard RJ-11 home phone jack, as well as into an RJ-45 broadband connection jack. It can send and receive Skype calls as well as calls from a regular home phone number, but you do have to have a broadband connection.

IRS Sets Refund for Individuals from Phone Tax
http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,1895,2011151,00.asp?kc=EWNAVEMNL090106EOAD

Long-distance telephone customers can receive refunds of between $30 and $60 on their 2006 taxes to

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reimburse them for a now defunct telephone tax, the U.S. Internal Revenue Service said recently. The U.S. Treasury Department in May announced

it would end its legal fight to keep a 3 percent federal excise tax on long-distance telephone service that dates back to 1898, when a luxury tax on wealthy Americans who owned telephones was imposed to help finance the Spanish-American war.

Light Bulbs Going Organic

http://articles.techrepublic.com.com/2100-22_11-6111872.html?tag=nl.e019

The Ewing, N.J., company–along with General Electric, Osram Opto Semiconductors and others–is tinkering with the idea of transforming organic light-emitting diodes, thin sheets of plastic that emit light, into a source of room lighting. Pioneer and Samsung Electronics already use OLEDs for screens on consumer electronics products. By increasing the size of the sheets and the brightness, researchers think the material could become an energy-efficient substitute for the incandescent light bulb.

Flying-car

http://news.com.com/Flying-car+firm+releases+simulator%2C+takes+deposits/2100-1008_3-6112862.html?tag=nl.e703

The Transition, a plane that can also be driven as a car, won't come out for a few years, but you can try a flight simulator now and put a deposit on a future plane too. Terrafugia, a "roadable aircraft" developer that emerged out of MIT, has devised a flight simulator for its aircraft (which can be downloaded here). The application runs on top of the X-Plane simulator for Laminar Research. Potential buyers can also now plunk down

$7,400, or 5 percent of the anticipated $148,000 purchase price, for a deposit on a Transition. The planes will come out in late 2009. A fully operational prototype is expected to come out in 2008.

Cars with Depth Perception. http://articles.techrepublic.com.com/2100-22_11-6117385.html?tag=nl.e019

Honda believes Canesta's chips could help drivers know how close they are to other parked cars, pedestrians, and get other similar, useful information. Automakers are also examining ultrasonics (sound waves) or stereoscopic technologies to give drivers better information about their surroundings.

Fly planes in a 360-degree Virtual Universe. http://news.com.com/1606-2_3-6118278.html?tag=nl.e703

Take a tour of the Future Flight Central at NASA Ames Research Center in California.

Homemade Car Gets 105 mpg.

http://news.com.com/2061-11200_3-6118875.html?tag=nl.e703

Inventor Jory Squibb combines environmentally friendly products and do-it-yourself- gadgetry with the "Moonbeam," a DIY car that he claims can get up to 105 miles per gallon. The project took about $2,500—and 1,000 hours—to complete. Check out the step-by-step instructions on his Web site: http://mysite.verizon.net/vze6omtd/jorysquibb/id1.html

Motorola Sells Phones and Accessories in Vending Machines. http://www.chicagotribune.com/technology/chi-0609210048sep21,1,939120.

Motorola has begun selling phones and accessories through "Instant-moto" vending machines at well-trafficked locations such as airports and department stores. Under the plan, the machines will stock nearly 12 phones and 18 accessories.

Gas from manure. http://news.com.com/Gas+from+manure+Big+plant+to+open/2100-1008-6119213. html?part=dht&tag=nl.e433

Microgy plans to start operating its first two thermophilic digesters--large, heated vats in which microbes turn large quantities of manure into fuel.

Post-9/11 Anti-terror Technology: A report card by Declan McCullagh , Staff Writer, CNET News. comt http://articles.techrepublic.com.com/2100-1009_11-6113064.html?tag=nl.e019

A CNN writer examines five useful ways of improving security--and five that should raise eyebrows!

In need of support:
1. Going wireless
2. Better search technology
3. Inspecting cargo containers
4. Smarter translation software
5. Faster chemical detection.

Raising privacy concerns:
1. Omnipresent cameras
2. Registered traveler
3. Backscatter X-ray (privacy advocates say it can show body contours that are so exact it amounts to a "virtual strip search.")
4. "Brain fingerprinting"
5. DNA dragnets.

Canon to recall copiers that can catch fire. Japan's Canon will recall more than 140,000 personal copiers

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made in Japan between 1987 and 1997 due to a faulty connection involving the power cord. http://driveragent.com/pcworld.php?PHPSESSID=9241043d076111e037e92e9e1fbab1e8

FREE Driver Update for PC Magazine Members. Are your computer's drivers up to date? Stop wondering and get a free computer scan for instant driver updates. Instant Access to 94,081 Device Driver Updates: http://articles.techrepublic.com.com/2100-10878_11-6114592.html?tag=nl.e019

Windows Vista RC1 Now Downloadable By Anyone. First, it went to a select group of technical beta testers. Then to those who had tested Beta 2. As of September 14, however, Windows Vista Release Candidate (RC) 1 is now available to anyone interested in testing the product. http://www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/getready/preview.mspx

Free Music Downloads. SpiralFrog, a new music download service, said it will make Vivendi's Universal Music Group's catalog available for free legal downloading in the United States and Canada. SpiralFrog's business model is based on sharing income from advertising with content partners like Universal. http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1895,2009739,00.asp

Free PDF Books From Google. Google Book Search now offers PDF files of scanned books that can be downloaded and printed for free. Readers can find the books by choosing the "Full view books" option on the Google Book Search home page before they activate their search. Once they have chosen a book from the results page, a download button is clearly visible on the top-right corner of the page. Just be sure it doesn't cost you more to print the book than it would to purchase it! http://news.com.com/Google+These+books+are+free/2100-1032_3-6110950.html?tag=nl.e703

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How Do I Get My Home Videos Into the Computer?

By Elise Edgell, President, North Orange County Computer Club, California
http://www.noccc.org
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I have stacks of VHS and 8mm tapes that I want to convert to digital format before they are no longer accessible. I know that once I get the analog videos converted to digital format I can preserve them, edit them, back them up, etc. But, what technology is available to me?

First of all, let me explain that I have never been good at reading about a technology, learning all it's terms and features before I have had a chance to use the technology. When I am making a decision about software, frequently the feature, which sounded so good on the box and enticed me to purchase it, is not the feature which I really use. It often is something that I was unaware of when I initially got the program but which I use the most and like the best. An example of this is the "Reveal Codes" feature in WordPerfect.

When VCRs first came on the market, I wanted one. I heard about the pros and cons of VHS and BETA formats. I had a hard time remembering which was which. I had never used a VCR before I purchased a VHS model. I rapidly learned the different recording speeds and how they affected the quality of the image. The next VCR I purchased was a BETA format. The image quality was much better and I couldn't understand why it was not the format of choice for everyone.

Since that time, I have had a VHS camcorder, an 8mm and a Hi8. Again, the quality difference between the three formats is noticeable. I have not purchased a digital camcorder yet so I have not learned the difference between the different types of digital camcorders. When I was looking for the technology necessary to convert my precious memories to digital format I was focused on analog conversion devices.

The first analog capture device connected to the computer with a USB1 cable. That did not work well and I put the project aside for a while. I then received a ADS Instant DVD USB 2 capture device as a gift. By this time I had acquired a couple of video editing programs. I had installed them, read the documentation (much of it was incomprehensible to me without actually using the program), and attempted to capture some video from a Hi8 tape. This did not work well. I found that software programs are very touchy about which video capture device they will talk with. Fortunately, the video capture device came with capture software so I am able to trans-

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fer my analog video to digital. But, not in the way I wanted and I am still learning the terminology.

I wanted to write this because some of my confusion may be the same as yours. The software programs say that they can "capture" both analog and digital video. They also talk about "capture card" for the digital video. It is necessary to have a "capture card" or "capture device" to take the analog information from your VHS (or other analog input) and convert it to digital information. This is usually accomplished by connecting the video-out and audio-out from your analog device (VHS player, camcorder, etc) to the input section of your capture card (this may be your video card) or external device. When you are in the process of capturing the video, the analog information is converted in the capture device to a digital format (there are several such as MPEG1 and MPEG2) and then stored on your computer. Once stored, they can be used by video editing programs or can be burned to a disk.

Please note, if you have a digital camcorder, you do not need a conversion device. The information that is on your camcorder is already in digital format. Depending on the type of camcorder the digital information my be stored on a tape, memory card, hard disk, or even on a DVD. If you cannot remove the storage device and put it into a reader on your computer then the way to transfer data is through a FireWire or USB2 connection to your computer. If you are using a video editing program to enable the transfer, there are some nice things that the program may be able to do with the data as it is received. It may automatically create chapters and provide other information that is handy when you want to edit the information (rare is the tape which cannot be improved with cutting out the unintentional video of the pavement).

There are programs which let you transfer your converted VHS tape directly to a DVD.

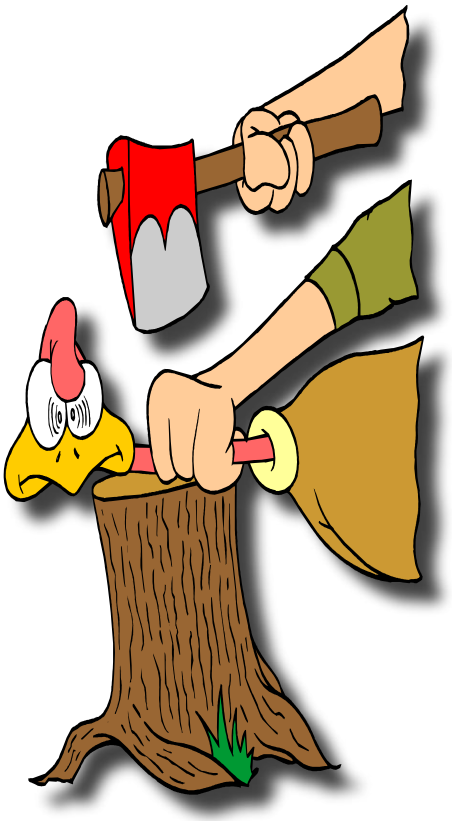
The reason to do this is to get the analog tapes preserved. I know that I will never have the time to edit all the old tapes which I have, but I do want to preserve them. The CapWiz program which came with my ADS Instant DVD USB2 capture box has this feature. If you purchase a program that is not bundled with the capture box (or card) be sure that specific version of that program will work with your model of capture device.

Expect to put in some time learning the terminology. Read carefully what the program will do and what it will not do so that you are realistic in your expectations. Keep in mind that what you are working with, once you have your video in digital format, is a file. The file can be in several different formats with different characteristics. What I mean is that, just like with digital photos, a file format which is really compressed will not look as good as a larger file with more information. When dealing with video information, you must remember that you need a lot of storage on your disk and it really helps to have a disk with fast response time.

A fast computer with lots of RAM is also important. It is only recently that video editing has become practical for the home user. Before really large, fast hard disk storage was affordable, the home user was very limited in the size of file that could be edited. With today's fast computers, inexpensive RAM, large storage disks, and inexpensive DVD writers it should be within the reach of many home users to be able to preserve valuable analog tapes. Plus, be able to make home movies from them that friends and family are willing to watch.

If you are planning to buy a new computer in the near future, keep in mind the requirements for video editing as well as the requirements for VISTA. Fortunately, the requirements for the Ultimate version of VISTA are also good for video editing purposes.

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 Cursor

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Individual/Corporate/Family Dues: $25.00
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_____

_____

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: • 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: http://www.wacug.org

November 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
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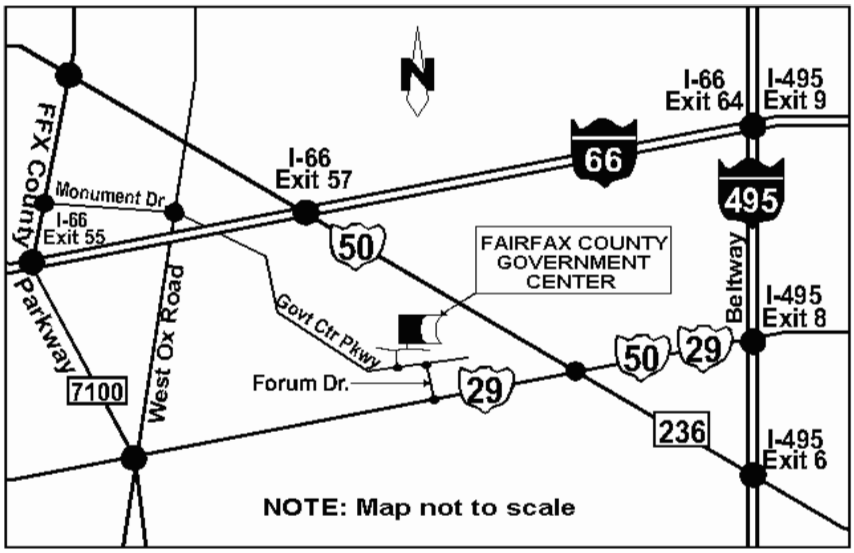

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Ram & Reason: Enter the Dragon: Comodo Free Desktop Security Tools

By Rob Rice, A member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City and a computer specialist in Anchorage, Alaska
http://www.ccokc.org
articles(at)isp.com

Every once in a while a company manages to push my button. Symantec is the latest after having bought my beloved Sygate Personal Firewall and then immediately yanked it from the market. Having paid for the Pro version, I can no longer install it; since it requires authorization - I am dead in the water.

Still, a nice thing about capitalism is that where there is a void, it will get filled. Enter the Comodo Group, with not only a worthy alternative to Sygate's Personal Firewall, but a whole suite of security products for free!

The Comodo Group gets its name from the Komodo dragon, a metaphor for the Internet, with a "C" instead of a "K" to acknowledge a commitment to commerce, communications, and dot com. Comodo is the "2nd largest Certification Authority for ensuring Identity Trust & Assurance" on the Internet. In other words, they are the folks that make that little yellow padlock on your web browser work. The Comodo Group is the real deal with headquarters in Jersey City, USA (Yes, they have a real mailing address unlike some so-called security products offered on the web) with global offices in UK, Norway and India.

So why is Comodo giving away product? While the company does more than just issue SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) certificates, but apparently they feel the need to build brand identity. According to Melih Abdulhayoglu, the President and CEO - Comodo Group:

If we are able to write good software and give such valuable software for free, our name will be known in the market place, we will build our Comodo brand and this brand will be associated with security. And this will help us sell more Digital Certificates and other services we have as we will have a big brand!

Simple enough! So what are they offering? Again from the Comodo website:

Comodo Firewall
- Comodo Verification Engine
- Comodo AntiVirus
- Comodo AntiSpam
- Comodo BackUp
- Comodo iVault

Comodo Personal Firewall 2.0
FREE lifetime license

Sleek design gives an at-a-glance overview of your security status

1. Highlights - displays the latest Comodo news and information about updates
2. Traffic - high visual overview of the last minute of traffic history in terms Applications and Network protocols
3. System info - information about your system in terms of the Hardware and details of all network Adapters in your computer.

4. View Alerts - Get in-depth details on the high severity risks that the firewall has detected.
5. Update License - One click activation of your free-for-a-lifetime Comodo license.
6. Computer Security level - customize firewall security by using the slider to quickly move between preset security levels
7. Check the security of your firewall's configuration with Comodo's online vulnerability scanner, HackerGuardian.
8. Security Monitoring - get an immediate heads up on the status of the firewall's major components.
9. Protection strength - your overall security level determined by the settings you have chosen

Comodo Firewall, rated by PC Magazine Online as an Editor's Choice, constantly monitors and defends your PC from internet attacks. It's easy to install and use and passes the industry's most stringent firewall "leak" tests. Unlike some other 'free' firewalls, this is not a stripped down version but is the full, completely functional product. This free solution comes complete with continual updates that are free forever!

System Requirements:
Windows 2000 (ALL)
Windows XP (ALL)
Windows 2003 (ALL)
64 MB available RAM
32 MB of available free hard disk space

Comodo Verification Engine
FREE for life

VerificationEngine anti-phishing and identity assurance tool for Microsoft Windows offers an extremely simple way to differentiate legitimate web sites from fraudulent ones. Place your mouse cursor over a site logo. If it is authentic, a green border will appear around your browser. So if you really wish to be sure you are looking at the real www.paypal.com site rather than a clever imitation created to steal your identity, install VerificationEngine now!

Comodo AntiVirus
FREE lifetime license

• On Access Scanning - Always on, real-time protection against threats more...
• On Demand scanning - Take control by running instant scans on any file, folder or drive more...
• Automatic Daily Updates - Up-to-the second protection against the latest threats more...
• Email Scanning - Automatic checking and disinfection of incoming and outgoing mail more...
• Process Monitoring - Continuously scans your PC's memory for viruses more...
• Worm Blocker - Monitors and intercepts suspicious mass mailing attempts more...
• In- depth Reporting - Comprehensive logs of all scans performed more...
• Pro-active virus defense - Submit suspicious files for analysis by the Comodo AntiVirus team more...
• Easy, User Friendly interface - Sleek design provides fingertip access to all major settings more...
• Scan Scheduling - Timetable scans to run when you choose more...
• Dedicated Quarantine Facility - Isolate suspected files where they can do no harm more...
• Advanced Heuristic detection Engine - Protection against unknown viruses more...
• Scan Removable Devices - CD's, DVD's, external drives, USB devices, digital cameras more...
• Scans Network drives - protection from any potential threats on your network more...
• Scans Compressed Files - there's no hiding place for viruses, even in a .zip file more...
• Does not hog system resources - Maximum Protection with no slow down of your PC more...

System Requirements
Windows XP (SP2) / Windows 2000 (SP4 or later)
50 MB available space on your hard drive
128 MB RAM
Intel Pentium 300 MHz processor (or equivalent)

Note - Not compatible with Windows 9x systems

Comodo AntiSpam
FREE license

Install Comodo AntiSpam for free and reclaim your inbox. Our powerful challenge-response technology authenticates the sender of every mail – a system that automated spam bots can't get around. This is the full product, not stripped down 'cripple ware' and is free forever to the end user.

• Total Spam Elimination
• No hassle set-up
• Sender based authentication
• Thwart the Spam Bots
• Works with your existing setup
• Automatically authenticate your address book
• Instantly migrate custom black and white lists
• One click Bandwidth Optimization
• Pro-active Spam defense
• Maximum Protection – Minimum Drain
• Independent Authentication Database
• Independent Quarantine Database
• Protects all your email accounts
• Stay spam free WHEREVER you access your mail from
• Never miss a message
• Failproof
• E-Commerce friendly
• You're protected – stay protected!!

System Requirements

Operating Systems: Windows 2000/XP
Processor: Pentium 100 MHz or higher,
System RAM: 32 MB RAM
Hard Drive: 21 MB of HDD free space
Internet Browser: IE 6.0 or above.

Comodo BackUp
FREE lifetime license

Comodo Backup is the straightforward and powerful utility that allows users to quickly and easily create backup copies of critical files. Free of charge, it includes complete file and folder-duplication to local network drives and FTP servers, intelligent incremental backups, e-mail reporting, extensive report logs, real time back ups with "synchronization" mode, advanced rule-based filtering, flexible scheduling of backups, space-saving archiving capabilities, and more.

• Easily backup files or folders anywhere on your computer, network, CD-RW or FTP server
• Protect yourself against ever losing those critical files that took hours to create
• Quickly recover your data in the event of data loss
• Schedule backups to run automatically at a time that suits you
• Synchronized backup feature - save a file and it gets copied instantly
• Send E-mail notifications to team members about the status of a backup job
• Save Disk space by compressing your backups as ZIP files
• Configure in minutes with our intuitive interface

System Requirements
Windows XP (Service Pack 1 or later) or
Windows 2K (Service Pack 3 or later)
Intel Pentium IV with 133 MHz processor
64 MB RAM
12 MB free hard drive space
Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.01 or above

Comodo iVault
FREE license

iVault saves time by providing instantaneous logins to any username/password secured web pages such as online banking and email account sites. It also doubles up as a 256 bit secure storage for private and confidential information such as credit card details and social security numbers and protects against the very latest key-logging Trojan Horse viruses.

• Instantly login to your favorite websites and applications
• Speed up surfing - No more forgotten passwords
• Single point of storage for all your confidential information
• 256 bit encryption of credit card and bank account details
• Secure Password Generator instantly creates complex passwords
• Supports multiple users on a single machine
• Anti Keylogging feature- stop hackers monitoring your personal data
• 'Drag 'n' drop' interface -Windows ease of use

Comodo i-Vault can protect and manage:

• Website password details
• Software access passwords
• Credit card numbers and PIN details
• Bank Account Details
• Telephone banking codes
• E-Mail account passwords
• Computer logon passwords
• Personal Contact details
• Cell Phone PIN codes
• And much more..

Phew! That is a lot of stuff! And I must admit I have yet to test all of these free products. Not for a lack of desire but because we are talking about six programs! I will say that I am about half way through my testing of the firewall product and it does seem to perform as advertised. But don't wait around for me, grab these six freebies and let me know what you think of them!

Thanks Comodo!

Comodo - http://www.comodogroup.com/

Computer Club of Oklahoma City - http://www.ccokc.org/

PC Magazine Article on Comodo Firewall - http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1895,1969485,00.asp

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