

WA C

The Cursor

Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Area Computer User Group

WA C

Meeting Location:
Fairfax County
Government Center



Next Meeting:
March 17, 2007



Presidential Bits

March 2007 Meeting

By Paul Howard

At our February meeting, Chuck Roberts brought us up-to-date on some of the latest features of version 5 of Photoshop Elements, an excellent consumer software tool for editing photographs and other digital images. This program is available for Win XP PCs with a version for Macs to arrive soon.

Geof Goodrum narrated video of exhibits from the 2007 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. Geof and Bob Rott attended the meeting of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups in January, which precedes the CES.

Our March 17th meeting will return to our usual venue, conference center room 2/3 at the Fairfax County Government Center. Two presentations will be featured at this month's meeting.

See the Radio Spectrum – the Other Ether!

Bill Walsh, WAC's Secretary and Director of Meeting Services will introduce us to the secrets of the airwaves – the radio communications that surround us.

We've come a long way in radio com-

munications receivers, from large vacuum tube equipment to miniature solid state to subminiature surface mount solid state. Incorporating computers into their evolution, receiver technology has created the "Software Defined Radio" which uses programming to access and manipulate the RF spectrum.

RFSpace (<http://www.rfspace.com>) makes a little black box called the SDR-14. It is designed to receive signals from 500kHz to 30MHz, and includes the capability to hear and see the radio spectrum. You can define wide or narrow chunks of radio frequencies to observe, which lets you see signal presence on a wide scale or see, filter, and record signal activity with a narrower spectrum scale.

Internet Streaming Radio

Geof Goodrum will discuss and demonstrate audio listening from a competing medium, streaming radio on the Internet. Geof will help us uncover the mysteries of the many formats for audio listening, and discuss tools to use for this PC adventure.

If your schedule is full for our Saturday session, Bill will reprise his

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Lloyd's Web Sites for March, 2007

by Lloyd Johnson, WACUG Member

<http://www.wacug.org/> is the URL for the Washington Area Computer User Group. Visit it for past issues of Web Sites with hyperlinks

1. The elder Geek on Windows XP. This site has tips and solutions for newbies and geeks alike
www.theeldeergeek.com/
2. Malek Tips. If you are like me you're a glutton for computing tips.
www.malektips.com/
3. PDAPortal see hundred of PDA-friendly Web sites.
www.pdaportal.com/
4. Distinctive and Unusual gifts
www.xperiencedays.com/
www.signaturedays.com/
www.excitations.com/
www.incredibleexperiences.com/
5. Projects you can make (such as: wind chimes, chocolate truffles, many more)
www.instructables.com/
6. A different month, date, time display. What do you think?
<http://home.tiscalinet.nl/annejan/swf/timeline.swf/>
7. To find out how much Memory your computer has Press Windows key with the Pause/Break Key. Good information if you want to install a new program
8. Want to swap homes with someone from another country?
www.Digsville.com/
www.HomeExchange.com/
www.Homelink.org.uk/
www.Intervacus.com/
www.Exchangepartners.com/
www.SabbaticalHomes.com/
www.HomesAroundtheWorld.com/
And
www.SeniorsHomeExchange.com/
Some charge annual membership fee.
9. On-Line Free Stuff. There are many sites for free stuff, however this one is less demanding of your participation
<http://freebies.about.com/>
10. Online conversions for cooking measurements, temperatures, your grade point average or your car's horsepower.
www.onlineconversion.com/



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presentation on Wednesday, March 28th, at 7 PM at Carlin Hall in Arlington. See: <http://www.nctcug.org> for details.

At the request of several members, we've added links from the home page and several places on the meetings page of our web site to a pdf file with an agenda of our meetings by time and topics.

See: <http://www.wacug.org/pdf/agenda.pdf>



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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GNU/Linux SIG

By Geof Goodrum

Notice: Firefox Security Update

Mozilla.org released updates to the Mozilla Firefox 1.5 and 2.0 web browsers on February 23rd to address multiple security issues, including the Cross-Site Scripting flaw noted in the February issue of *The Cursor*.

Although Firefox 1.5.0.10 fixes this problem and others, Mozilla.org recommends that all users upgrade to the new Firefox 2.0.0.2 release. Mozilla.org will discontinue security updates for Firefox 1.5 on April 24th, 2007. The announcement is online at <http://www.mozilla.org/talkback.html?article=20520>.

Job Opportunity: Application Consultant

- Software company based outside Boston. IPO pending in the next 6 months.
- Looking for Application Consultant, for DC Metro market with Security Clearance.
- 100% annual revenue growth year over year for 5 years
- Company provides Software for Data Center Automation
- Over 100 customers including: TimeWarner, Verisign, VirginMobile, E*Trade, HSBC, Wal-

Mart, Priceline and Novartis.

- CTO Named Top Innovator by INFOWORLD
- Salary \$80 -90 K plus bonus (TTE \$140K+)

Required Skills:

- 1+ years experience utilizing software applications
- 2+ years IT operations experience in an IT operations role (e.g. System Administrator, Software Engineer)
- Hands-on experience building the following technical skills: Solaris, AIX, Linux, HPUX, Windows NT/2000 systems administration, UNIX and Perl shell scripting, WebLogic, WebSphere, Apache, iPlanet, or other common web server, application server, or middleware administration experience

- Sun Jumpstart, Compaq SmartStart, or other bare-metal provisioning experience preferred
- Experience working with established IT operations methodologies for systems management; Candidates with ITSM/ITIL/MOF experience preferred
- Self-motivation, leadership and desire to help in building sales or IT operations organizations; TS/SCI Clearance

If interested, please send a copy of your resumé and availability to speak over the phone for ten minutes to:

Catherine Rode

Brownstone Sales & Marketing Group

86 Chamber Street Suite 701

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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 nor printed documentation.

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

March 2007

IPCop – v1.4.13. Freely distributable GNU/Linux operating system distribution in ISO9660 (CD-R image) format by Mark Wormgoor. IPCop is a Linux distribution designed to provide dedicated firewall and Intrusion Detection System (IDS) protection for home and small office networks with dial-up or high-speed Internet connections. IPCop's web page interface is very user-friendly and task-based. IPCop offers the critical functionality of an expensive network appliance using stock, or even obsolete, PC hardware. IPCop supports online updates, security zones, firewall and IDS logging, and graphic network activity charts.

Linphone – v1.6.0. Free GNU General Public License source code and Debian and Fedora Core 6 executables. Linphone is a Voice Over IP (VoIP) phone. With Linphone,

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you can communicate freely with people over the Internet, with voice, video, and text instant messaging. Linphone uses the SIP protocol, an open standard for Internet telephony; Linphone should interoperate with most SIP-compatible phones and proxies. If you subscribe to a VoIP to PSTN (classic telephony) account with a telecom provider, you can reach anyone that has a phone line.

Open Tax Solver – v4.04. Free GNU General Public License C source code by Aston Roberts. OpenTaxSolver (OTS) is a free program for calculating Tax Form entries and tax-owed or refund-due, such as Federal or State personal income taxes. TaxSolver has been updated for the most recent 2006 tax-year for US 1040 and Schedules A, B, C, & D, and state taxes for California, North Carolina, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, and New York. Consider it an open tax spreadsheet using commented text files for data input. Two optional graphic front-ends are included. While the OTS programs developed over the last seven years, results have been checked against commercial packages such as TurboTax (Intuit) and TaxCut (HR Block). The answers produced by OTS have always matched to within a dollar, differing only by rounding differences.

Rail World – v0.7. Free GNU General Public License Java source code and executable by . Rail World is a single player railroad train simulation game designed to bring the features of model railroading to the desktop. Rail World allows you to: Use actual aerial photographs or satellite images as the basis for maps; Manage multiple trains as a

conductor; Control trains with signals; Drive trains using throttle and brake as an engineer; Grapple with realistic physics, including stopping distance and collisions; Set switches and specific train routing; Load and unload cargo. Rail World includes both the play module and a complete map editor. Maps included: Anchorage (Coast); Anchorage (Inland); Las Vegas Strip; Richmond Harbor; Seattle King Street Station; Tumwater Brewery. Rail World requires Java 1.5.

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.



Digital Asset Management for Photographers

by Chuck Roberts, WAC Member

Ipurchased my first digital camera ten years ago! It was 1997 and I paid about \$600 for a 3.2 megapixel camera – The Kodak 280. Man it was great! It came with a 64

MB compact flash memory card. I thought I could rule the world with that setup. But very quickly I recognized the need to obtain additional memory cards. Things weren't too bad in 1997 and I was able to purchase additional Compact Flash cards at around \$1 per MB depending on the brand, the store and the Sunday ads. I was living in Silicon Valley at that time so I was able to shop at Fry's Electronics and enjoy their discounted prices.

Well, guess what? I've purchased two additional digital cameras since then for my personal use and I now have an extremely large collection of digital images. As a habit, as a best practice, and as the first step in my image editing workflow, I burn the photos from my memory card(s) to a CD, print a contact sheet of the photos on the CD and file the CD in a binder and the contact sheets in page protectors in another binder. I recently decided to test my DVD burner so I burned all my photos to DVD. How many DVD disks were required for this task? The answer is six. Yes it took six DVDs to hold my collection of digital images. To me they are my negatives or "digital negatives."

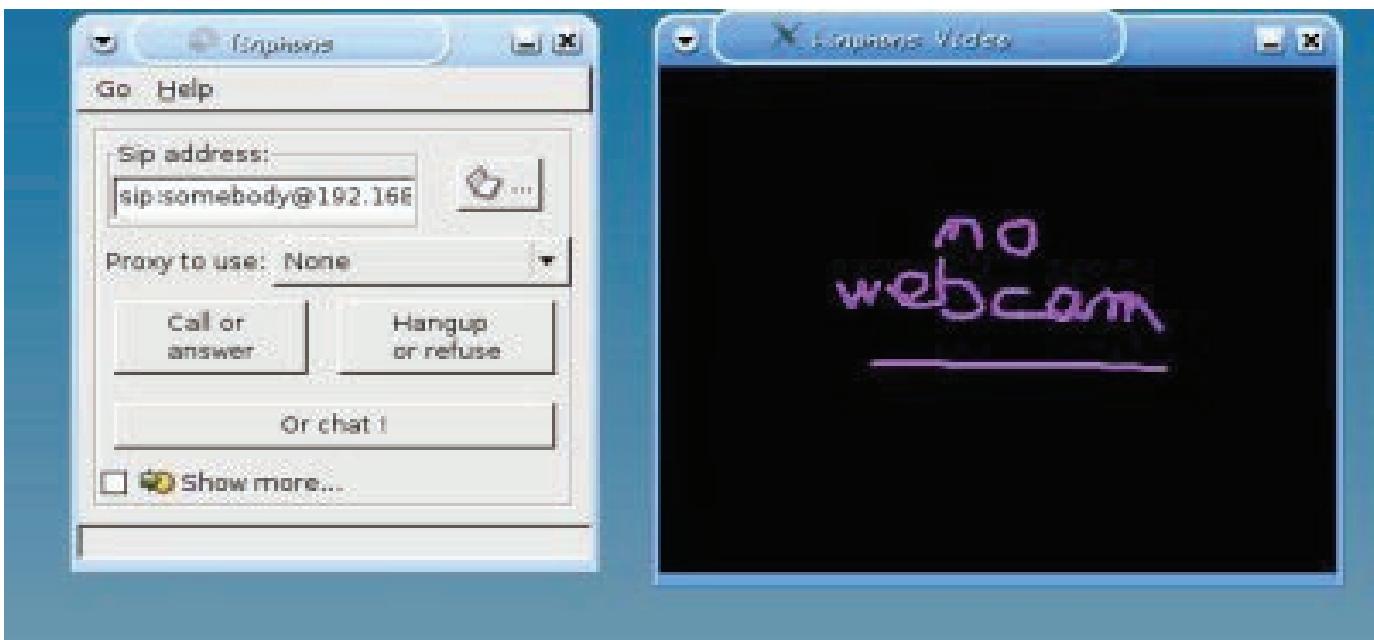
While I enjoy having a large collection of photos, this becomes a problem when my wife tells me our daughter wants a 8 x 10 print, "...of that picture you took of Kim and Joe when we met the Phipps side of the family on a day-trip last year in the fall."

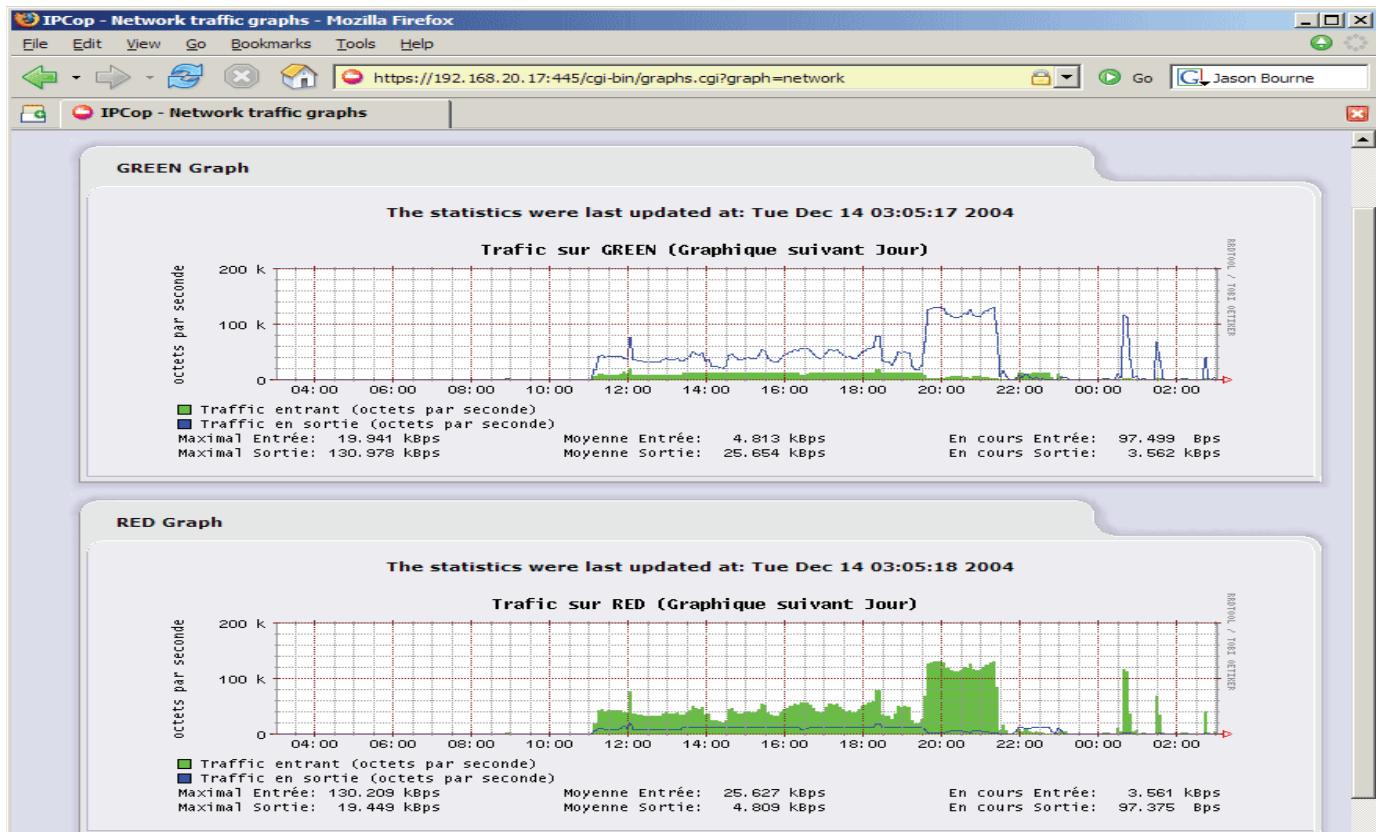
Locating that particular photo would be a lot easier, if I only had about one or two hundred photos. But how do I locate that single photo out of my entire collection covering six DVDs?

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Rail World Layout of Richmond





IP Cop Traffic Chart (French Option)

OpenTax Solver

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Hold that thought (problem) for a minute and imagine for an instant that I'm a professional photographer or a budding amateur photographer with thousands of photos. How should I go about locating a single photo out of all my files even segmented by date or by client? How much time would it take to review my photo collection to locate a particular picture?

Now back to my problem, most image editing solutions available today include an organizer or electronic photo album that includes tools to help you organize, label, rate, tag and describe your photos. Using these tools will assist you when you begin looking for that particular photo because you usually perform a search on the images based on tags you assigned or unique text you used to describe and/or rate your images.

I highly recommend you utilize these tools. The sooner you begin to use them the better off you will be when you are forced to find a particular photo.

Now back to the professional photographer or the agency with several photographers. Several books have been written recently discussing the management of these digital files. To the professional, these digital files are assets. While photographers go on shoots for their clients, often these clients don't want every photo that was shot for them. In fact, clients only get the photos they actually purchase. With the correct legal agreements, the extra photos remain the property of the photographer or company which may use them in additional ways like selling to an advertising company or to a stock photo company like *iStockphoto*.

Imagine the situation where thousands of images are stored on several servers, what tools would a professional photographer use? Well believe it or not, books on the subject of *Digital Asset Management* are beginning to hit the market. With the advance of digital photography, the need to store, index and find individual digital negatives is advancing at an exponential rate. Professional Photographer and Author, Peter Krogh tells us that a professional needs two specific tools to manage his or her Digital Assets. First they need an image browser and second they need a image catalog or database system.

The last two versions of Photoshop CS include an application known as Adobe Bridge. This is a browser that includes the ability to view the image as well as edit some of the basic metadata for each image.

Remember, to understand your future problems with your photo collection, it is beneficial to examine the parallels to those of the professional, who has your problems a thousand fold times over. Peter Krogh offers the following:

“... In general, metadata adds considerable value to your photographs, because it helps you and others to find them when they're needed. ... The relationship between metadata and market value is pretty direct.”

“... The best photograph in the world has no market value if it's sitting unknown in the bottom of a file drawer; likewise, a terrible photograph that is well cataloged has little market value. Follow this axiom: to maximize the value of your photography collection, identify the images with the highest intrinsic value, and augment them with the highest metadata value that is practical. I suggest that this holds

true whether you are talking about the monetary value or the personal value of images.” (Quoted from *The DAM Book: Digital Asset Management for Photographers* from the O'Reilly Digital Studio; Published by O'Reilly Media, 2006).

There are three levels of metadata. As one moves down to the lower two levels, the value of the metadata increases but so does the effort to input the data. Let's begin with the first layer or Type 1.

Type 1 is metadata that is automatically generated and may be viewed with your browser (e.g. Elements Organizer, Photo Album, Adobe Bridge, etc.). It is typically information about the image file (file properties) and the EXIF data (usually supplied by the camera) which captures things like shutter speed, ISO, date/time shot, and etc.). Type 1 is automatically generated and requires nothing from you.

Type 2 is additional information that is entered by a person. Most organizers will allow some type of batch processing like importing images from your memory card into your computer and allowing the files to be renamed in bulk. Photoshop Elements allows image files to be imported and renamed automatically. Instead of being stuck with the mysterious file name provided by the camera, you may replace the camera file name and add the date or some other numbering system automatically to the files you import. So some Type 2 metadata can be added in bulk to multiple files.

Type 3 is the most valuable metadata, but also the most time consuming to prepare. Type 3 includes your ratings (from 1 to 5 stars for example). Keywords can be used as

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part of your search criteria, but you need to establish up front the key-words you will be using to describe the image. For example: who is in the image? Was it a job? What's the occasion? Was it a holiday or a vacation? What's the location (city)? What are the prominent things in the photo – a traffic light? Is it highlighting architecture? Is it a portrait? These are simply thought starters. Everyone loves the idea of using key-word searches, but someone has to create the list of key words that will be used and apply them to the images.

Another tool just released by Adobe is *Photoshop Lightroom*. This application has just completed public beta test and is available for purchase. While *Lightroom* is for professionals or really serious amateurs, it is a viewer in that it allows you to "browse" your images and import them into *Lightroom*. Once imported, *Lightroom* builds a database of your images and provides tools to manage your collection or library. You may view the images individually or in groups. A tool box is provided to quickly develop or touchup images – even a batch mode is available. Tools are also available to create slideshows for clients that can be burned to media for delivery or for a live presentation. Adobe has also included tools for web utilization of images in your library. Remember, *Lightroom* is targeted for professional photographers or really serious amateurs or addicted home photographers.

While I'm not recommending that you run out and purchase Adobe *Lightroom*, I am simply pointing out that Adobe recognized the need we, as photographers, will all have

sooner or later, as digital photography expands, and each of us will eventually need help in locating, identifying, cataloging, assigning key words and rating our photos so we can find that "special" one of the daughter and her husband so we can print and enlargement as requested. So remember to take the time to organize, tag, describe and document your Digital Assets so you find the one you want later. DAM (Digital Asset Management) is a very good thing.

Enjoy your photos!



Moving to Vista – What Not to Do

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS
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Microsoft's long-anticipated new operating system, Windows Vista, is finally here. After months of testing I can say that it is a stable program and is more secure than any previous version of Windows. It also has a great new look and some wonderful new features. Just remember that there are always gotchas with a new operating system. Here are a few of the "don'ts" when moving to Vista.

First, five different flavors of Vista are available in the US: Home Basic, Home Premium, Ultimate, Business, and Enterprise. Don't bother with Home Basic. It doesn't have "Aero", the rich new visual interface. It doesn't have the advanced multi-media features for photos, movies, and television. It doesn't even have the cool new chess or mahjong games. All of this is missing, but Microsoft is still selling the Home

Basic upgrade for \$99. The full version of Home Basic is \$199. If you buy a new computer with Vista, make sure that you get at least the Home Premium version. You can get a comparison of the different versions of Vista and what they offer at the Microsoft website.

Another don't...don't try to upgrade without a large hard drive and at least one gigabyte of memory. You can use the Windows Vista Upgrade Advisor to determine if your computer is ready for Vista. Most older computers will come up lacking. So, you may not want to upgrade at all. Although Vista's better security is enticing, if you are happy with your Windows XP machine you may want to keep using it a bit longer because it may be not be economically beneficial to upgrade. The Vista product upgrade can cost several hundred dollars. That plus the cost of extra memory and/or other hardware upgrades may make it wiser to just purchase a new computer with Vista preinstalled.

Don't expect every software program to work with Windows Vista. Intuit, the makers of the popular Quickbooks program have notified their users that no older versions of Quickbooks will run on Vista. Only an upgrade to Quickbooks 2007 will let Quickbooks users run the program on a Vista computer.

Because of the major security changes in Vista, most antivirus programs will also need an update to be able to run on Windows Vista. If you purchase a new computer it may come with a trial subscription to Symantec or McAfee that will get you started but you will have to purchase a new version in the future or move to a free antivirus program. Again upgrading an old computer

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may be problematic because the old antivirus software will need to be removed before the new version is installed. Experience has taught me that it is often difficult to remove all the various pieces of an existing antivirus program. This is one experience you may want to avoid.

Some programs will also have trouble with Windows Vista new user controls which make it more difficult to make changes to your computer. This bolsters the operating system against hackers, but can confuse some existing programs. Simple changes or work arounds for these types of problems can easily be found on the Web. For instance, I couldn't run Adobe Photoshop CS2 upon installation on my Vista machine, but a few simple changes which I found documented on the Web, solved the problem quite easily.

Also any specially written or high-end software programs may not work with Vista. This will not affect the average user, but if you have any unusual or specialty programs you will want to check out compatibility.

Much of today's current hardware will work with Windows Vista. Of course, you may want to check the manufacturer's website to be sure before you make that assumption. You may need to update a hardware driver or two. If you have older hardware, some may not work with Vista. So check it out before you move to Vista.

Of all the hardware problems, you can expect the most problems with audio equipment. Windows Vista has a new audio stack which means that it handles the audio data structure differently than older versions of Windows. Also this audio

change was made quite late in the Vista development process, so audio manufacturers may not have caught up yet. While this will probably not impact the average computer user, if you have any high-end audio equipment, make sure you check our compatibility before you migrate to Vista.

One last don't....don't worry about the 64-bit version of Vista. If you have a 64-bit processor on your new computer like the Intel Core2 Duo or AMD 64-bit processors you may be thinking about trying out the 64-bit version of Vista. Don't do it unless you want to be on the "bleeding" edge of technology. Most hardware does not currently have 64-bit drivers and the 64-bit version of Vista does not support the widely used 32-bit drivers. Also there is currently very little software that actually takes advantage of the 64-bit system. So leave the 64-bit version as something to dream about. It will be more secure and faster, but it is not yet ready for prime time.

However the 32-bit version of Vista is ready for immediate use. The best way to move to Vista is to buy a new computer with Vista preloaded. Just be sure you check out these gotchas before you put your money on the counter.

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New Security Products Shown at APCUG Annual Conference

by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director;
Columnist, The Examiner,
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Show Host
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WEBSITES:

<http://www.apcug.net>
<http://www.pandasoftware.com>
<http://www.grisoft.com>
<http://www.trendmicro.com>

I recently had the opportunity to attend the annual meeting and convention of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG) in Las Vegas. Even though I have attended APCUG annual events since 1991, it always amazes me how quickly technology changes, and how those changes are rapidly introduced to us consumers. Every year participants are astounded by what we see, but every year has also demonstrated technologies dwarfing those shown the previous year. The APCUG events were all on topics related to personal computers, including security, applications, operating systems, hardware, CPU, and other technological services and components. Three of the presenters were companies in the computer security software sector.

Grisoft (www.grisoft.com) is a computer security software publisher headquartered in the Czech Republic, and best known in the U.S. for its very popular free version of AVG antivirus software. I was very surprised to learn that the more sophisticated and comprehensive commercial versions of AVG are among the most widely used computer

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APCUG Conference from page 9 security utilities in Europe. AVG has a professional staff of engineers in Europe, but also has sales, and more importantly technical support services, located in the U.S. I have to admit that until I saw the AVG-Grisoft presentation, I was unaware of the degree of sophistication and quality features built in and backing up the AVG products. My opinion of AVG was positively changed, as I had always thought of it as an excellent free antivirus product; now I know it as a technological leader providing enhanced features and functionality in its products. While I will still recommend the free version of AVG antivirus software to those who may not be able to afford commercial software, I would also hope that those who use AVG free version and are satisfied with it would eventually upgrade to the more comprehensive and feature rich commercial products. AVG offers a comprehensive selection of security software ranging from antivirus software to complete security suites. AVG has been certified as among the most effective antivirus products by several independent testing and rating services.

Panda Software (www.pandasoftware.com) is a publisher of computer security software headquartered in Spain, but with a strong American presence. I first became acquainted with Panda several years ago when I purchased a copy of Panda Antivirus at one of the big-box office supply stores. I had read some amazing reviews of it in a computer magazine, so I decided to try it on my Windows 98 computer to replace an expired competing big-named American product. My "98" computer continued to have Panda protect it for the remainder of its lifetime, and Panda never failed me. At

APCUG Panda amazed me with its degree of technical sophistication in dealing with the changing threats facing the computing public. According to Panda, over 90,000 new malware threats appeared in 2006, with some individual months in 2006 having as many new threats as in all of 2005. Panda explained how the threat scenario for computer users changed from the old-fashioned viruses intended to damage computer files with random acts of vandalism, to the new threats that are almost all commercially driven. Panda Software offers technology security solutions ranging from its free online "Active Scan", to free-standing antivirus software, to comprehensive security suites complete with antivirus, firewall, anti-spyware, anti-spam, wi-fi protection, and other protective features. Panda has its own proprietary "Tru-Prevent Technologies" which is designed to protect computers from attack by new and unknown viruses even before the virus signatures can be updated. Most Panda Software packages can be installed on multiple computers under a single license, and should be considered as a very strong and capable competitor to other better known security products on the market.

Trend Micro (www.trendmicro.com) explained the degree and types of security threats facing computer users. Identity theft of various types was discussed as well as the means to detect, protect, and neutralize a wide variety of other computer threats. Threats can come via email, malicious code on websites, from file sharing services, and countless other places. In order to deal with and protect from a wide variety of threats, Trend Micro demonstrated its flagship product Trend Micro Internet Security

2007 with its integral TrendSecure online services. Previously known under the moniker PC-Cillin, Trend Micro Internet Security 2007 provides protection from viruses, spyware, spam, phishing, and other forms of attack. Features also include a "fraud defense" to explicitly help protect credit card and other sensitive personal information from being compromised while online. The 2007 version includes a single license that can be installed on three computers which make it both a qualitative and economical good choice when compared to the other name brand security software titles widely available at retail.

I am a firm believer in good competition and the free enterprise system. As was clearly demonstrated at APCUG and CES, competition drives innovation which in turn provides valuable and tangible benefits to the consumer. We all need antivirus and other flavors of security software on our computers and any of the feisty competitors above can provide a quality product and service at very competitive prices. If more computer users could have seen what those of us at the APCUG event saw, the security "biggies" would have a lot to fear, because these aggressive "little guys" are providing excellence by innovation and superior service and support at a fair price. Those big guys on the block should be looking over their shoulders, as these little guys are growing stronger by capitalizing on the weaknesses of their larger competitors. Security software should not just be purchased based on the familiarity of the name or brand, but on the quality of the services and support offered. Any of the three products mentioned above would be a good choice for virtually all PC users.

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Send article submission and reprint requests to the Editor: cursor@wacug.org

2007 WAC Membership/Renewal Application

Dues are collected on an Annual basis and includes three coupons redeemable for WACUG Software Disks, and WAC's monthly newsletter, ***The Cursor***, in PDF format

Individual/Corporate/Family Dues: \$25.00
\$12 annual surcharge for delivery of the Cursor by 1st Class mail

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

Washington Area Computer User Group
30 Fendall Ave.

Alexandria, VA 22304-6300

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

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

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Phone: (_____) - _____

E-mail:

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

Operating System(s): _____

Modem(s): _____

Printer(s): _____

Other Hardware: _____

Favorite Software: _____

Connection: (circle one) Dial-up or Broadband

Circle Your Interests: Photo Printing Investing Games

Digital Photography Internet Access Education Music

Graphics/Animation Genealogy Video Finance

Programming Language(s) _____

Hardware Upgrades/Repair List others below

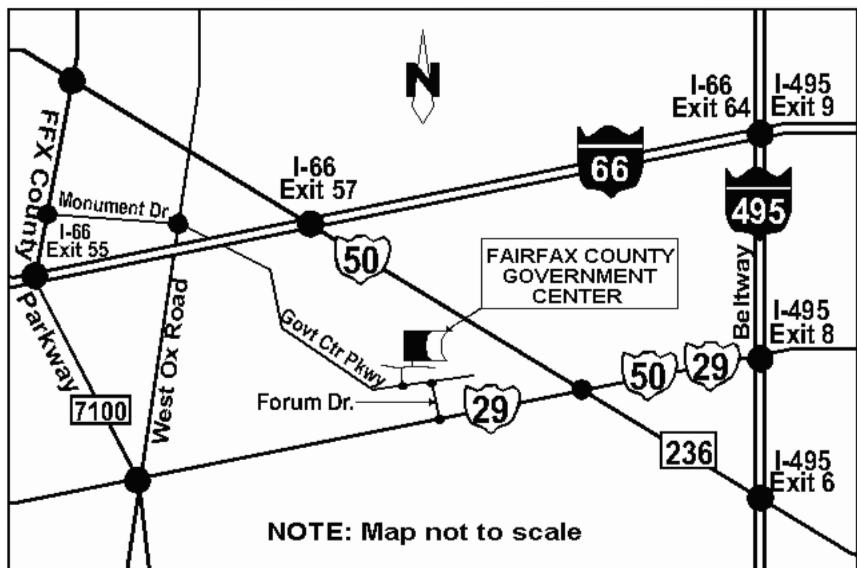
Next WAC Meetings: • Apr 21 • May 12 • June 16 • July 21 • Aug 18

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March Meeting will be held at the Fairfax County Government Center

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The New, the Best, and the Worst

February 2007

Collected by Pim Borman,
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Computer Globalization

University and industrial research laboratories in the United States can be proud of having spawned the computer revolution almost single-handedly. AT&T's Bell Laboratories invented the transistor and developed the Unix operating system that in turn formed the basis of DOS and Linux. The C and C++ programming languages originated at Bell Labs also. The basic configuration of desktop computers originated with the IBM PC which in turn was the seed for the current Intel and Microsoft dominance in desktop computers. The Internet grew out of a collaboration of mostly American researchers, sponsored by universities and government labs. Microsoft's near-monopoly created *de facto* software standards, including the Windows operating system, Web browser, Office programs, and related software. Not surprisingly, even though computers have spread out all over the world, the standards governing their behavior are still strongly American-dominated.

Increasingly, foreign governments are objecting to some of the US-based standards. One bone of contention is ICANN, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, a California non-profit corporation that manages the assignment of domain names and IP addresses on the Internet. There is widespread feeling that this task should be taken over by an inter-

national committee. Also, *de facto* standards imposed by the dominant MS Windows operating systems and the proprietary nature of its Office software are being challenged with a world-wide move towards Open Source software, including the Linux operating system and notable software such as the OpenOffice suite of office programs.

The latest version of Microsoft Office, version 7, uses a different proprietary format, based on the XML hypertext markup language. It is not only incompatible with earlier MS Word and Excel formats, but also with the internationally established standard Open Document Format, equally based on XML. This is regrettable since much documentation generated since computers came in use is already inaccessible in electronic form because of obsolescence. General acceptance of the Open Document Format is an essential step to avoiding further loss of documentation due to changing technology. There is a growing trend amongst private and governmental organizations to abandon proprietary document formats in favor of international standards. Microsoft may be forced to accept the open Document Format for use with its Office programs sooner or later.

The computer revolution clearly originated in the USA, and we can be proud of that. But now that the technology has spread to the rest of the world, opposition is growing to the continuing domination of American companies and standards. Globalization may have to extend to the acceptance of internationally generated and approved standards.

Random Spam

Have you noticed that a lot of spam lately appears to be totally pointless? Instead of trying to sell pornogra-

phy, get-rich-quick schemes or ED medication (aka Viagra), the subject lines and content appear to consist of random words and sentences. Its intent is to neutralize spam filters that depend on keywords such as Viagra to identify and intercept spam. Swamping the Web with these decoys makes it harder to distinguish spam carrying messages from random noise. Same trick as used by Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. Most of these decoys are sent out by zombie computers, personal and institutional computers lacking adequate firewalls and virus protection, that have been hijacked by spammers and are transmitting spam unbeknownst to the owners. Are you sure yours is not one of them?

Free Software

As long as it has been available, I have been using tax preparation software for the annual IRS ritual. Mostly, I have been using the plain version of Tax Cut, because it has been the cheapest and done the job. Since my tax return is much the same from year to year I used to get irked by the roundabout way Tax Cut forces you to prepare your return. Last year Tax Cut sent free copies of its program around to previous users and as inserts in PC Magazines, so I just put up with it again. But this year I haven't seen any free copies and decided to try the free **Tax Act**. It has the reputation of being a solid program, but with less hand holding than Tax Cut and Turbo Tax provide – just what I wanted.

I downloaded the program from www.taxact.com and used it to prepare a provisional return. It worked just as I wanted, straightforward question-and-answer steps, or by

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directly filling in the forms as preferred. It told me about the tax credit for previously paid federal telephone taxes and otherwise took care of the calculations and printing the forms. It also offered to file electronically without charge, but I am still waiting for some 1099 forms, and the government still hasn't finalized some of the supporting forms for 2006. The only minor downside was that it didn't import my personal data from last year's Tax Cut-prepared return, but that was typed in quickly enough. If you really need more help (from J.K. Lasser) you can download the Deluxe version for 9.95, or for 15.95 if you also want it to do the state return.

If you are interested in protecting your computer with a firewall and anti-virus software you might look at the Comodo Group. They offer a completely free firewall program, **Comodo.firewall 2.4** that has received good reviews for effectiveness and ease-of-use. They also have **Comodo.antivirus** that is still in beta, but free for the downloading. Comodo Group is an organization providing commercial security software worldwide, making it likely that they know what they are doing. They provide this free software, as well as some other free security programs, to improve their name recognition. More power to them! Find out more at <http://www.comodo.com/news/>

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Pandora – a Free Music Resource

Written by Sandy Berger,
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The Internet is filled with free resources, but some are better than others. Here is one of the best free music resources on the Web.

Pandora is one of my favorite music websites. Just surf over to www.pandora.com and type in a song or an artist that you like. Pandora analyses your choice and creates a music station with similar-sounding music. It will then play comparable songs that it thinks you will like. You can add more music and/or artists to the station to refine your choices. You can also tell Pandora whether or not you like the song that is playing. It uses your likes and dislikes to refine the songs it chooses. You can create up to 100 different stations with different types of music.

Pandora was created by the Music Genome Project, a group of musicians and music-loving technologists who have broken music into hundreds of music attributes or "genes" such as melody, harmony, rhythm, instrumentation, orchestration, arrangement, lyrics, and harmony. They then use high-tech methodology to analyze the musical qualities of each song and rendition.

The results are uncanny. I created several music stations with different genres that I like and in almost every case I was presented with similar music that I found very pleasing. You can experiment with different combinations. For instance, putting James Taylor and Willie Nelson together gave me an interesting,

but likable mix of music.

Pandora is pretty smart. Typing in The Christmas Song and choosing Diana Krall as the artist gave me a whole station of mellow Christmas music which is just what I was looking for. Typing in The Nylons and Take 6 gave me a nice selection of acappella and harmonistic music.

Pandora also lets you bookmark songs or artists so you can remember what you liked. You can look up more information about artists and songs right on the site. Two clicks will lead you to iTunes or Amazon where you can purchase the music. You can also share your music by emailing your stations to friends.

Pandora is ad-supported so you will see ads for everything from gym shoes to cell service. I found the ads to be unobtrusive, but if you want to get rid of them, you can pay to eliminate them. For \$36, you get 12 months of unlimited use with services exactly the same as the free version, but without the ads.

Since the ads don't bother me, I'll continue to use the free version of Pandora. It's an entertaining website that provides much listening pleasure to keep me company when I am working on the computer.

If you are into music, you may also want to check out two other music resources. MusicIP Mixer and Goombah. Like Pandora, both of these sites provide intriguing music adventures.

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THINGS, THINGLETS & THINGASSOS

Written by S. Jack Lewtschuk,
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Columnist
www.mbug.org/
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WORDS OF WISDOM

If builders built houses the way programmers build computer programs, the first woodpecker to come along would destroy civilization!

KEEPING TRACK OF MULTIPLE PASSWORDS

Passwords are a part of our everyday life: we use them for e-mail, online banking, stock trading, shopping, blogging, etc. For good security, you should have a different password for each website you enter. But how can you remember so many passwords?

A password manager is a great way to consolidate all your passwords without compromising security. Generally, a password manager is a program that stores all of your passwords for you. All of your passwords are kept secure with—you guessed it—a password.

The key advantage to using a password manager is that you only have to remember one password. That's not too bad. Then you can retain unique passwords for each of your various accounts without taxing your memory.

There are several pay programs that work this way. Before buying one, try KeePass (<http://keepass.sourceforge.net/>), a simple, free password manager. It can help you organize your passwords and also enter them into log-in forms.

How does KeePass work? After you

download and install it, there are several easy steps to setting it up. The first time you open it, you have to create the file that will store your passwords. Click the "New" button at the top left of the window which will prompt you for a "Master Key." Make it one that you can easily remember, but which someone else can't easily guess (e.g., your birth date, your spouse/child's/pet's name), because it's the password you'll use from now on to unlock all your other passwords.

KeePass includes categories for online functions such as e-mail, home banking and others. To put a password into KeePass, select a category and then click the "Add Entry" button. You'll be able to enter a title for the password, which will help you easily identify where the password is used.

Let's take Hotmail as an example—an effective title for a Hotmail password could be simply "Hotmail." You could also enter the web address where the password is required. KeePass automatically fills the password box with a random password. Chances are that it's stronger than the password you already use for Hotmail, but to make it work, you have to log into your account and change it to match KeePass.

If you want to keep things simple, erase the pre-filled box and put in the password that you already use and click "OK". Do the same steps for all of your everyday passwords and take a load off your memory. You can drag and drop passwords directly from KeePass. Click the password you need from KeePass and move it to the blank form on a Web page. The password will appear in the blank.

KeePass keeps your entire password

file encrypted. The only way to open or read it is with your master password, so don't lose it!

In addition to Windows, "switch-hitters" can download versions of KeePass for Macintosh, PocketPC, Palm and Linux. You can also take KeePass with you on a thumb drive by copying two files onto your thumb drive. One is the KeePass program (KeePass.exe), and the other is the file containing your passwords (the default is called Database.kdb).

BACKING UP OUTLOOK CONTACTS

Outlook stores all data in a single file called a ".PST file". This file contains your contacts, e-mail, calendar items and tasks. It's easy to back up your entire Outlook .PST file—just locate it and copy it as you would any other file. Backing up individual folders within Outlook is also easy, so you can export your entire "Contacts" list. Simply highlight "Contacts" in your Outlook folders list. Then click "File," and "Import and Export" to open the "Import and Export Wizard." Select "Export to a file" and click "Next," to choose from a list of options (I recommend Microsoft Excel as the best one to choose in order to export all your contacts into a nicely ordered spreadsheet). After making your selection, click "Next." You'll be given the option again to select the folder you want to export. Highlight it, click "Next," and specify the name and location where you would like to save your file (use the "Browse" button if needed), click "Next" and then click "Finish."

You can use the same procedure with other items in the Outlook folder list. This is handy if you only want to export certain parts of your

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Outlook data file. You can use the files with other programs such as a “Database.” You can also use it to share information with other people. Say you want to share your contacts with friends or coworkers: just export them, and others can import your list into their Outlook program.

To import a file, click “File,” and “Import and Export.” Select “Import from another program or file,” click “Next,” and select the type of file from which you’re importing. In this case, select “Microsoft Excel” and click “Next.” Click “Browse” to locate the file you wish to import, and then select your import options. You may want to allow duplicates, or you may wish to replace duplicates with imported items. You can also specify that duplicates not be imported. Click “Next,” select the destination folder, click “Next” again, and finally, click “Finish.”

NOVICE CORNER

Starting Your Computer in “Safe Mode”

At some point in time you may need to start your computer in “safe mode.” You should print these instructions before continuing as they will not be available after you shut your computer down in step two. Click “Start,” click “Shut Down,” and then in the drop-down list click “Shut down.” In the shut down window dialog box, click “Restart,” and then click “OK.” When you see the message “Please select the operating system to start” or “Windows” appears on the screen, press the “F8” key several times. Use your arrow keys to highlight the appropriate “safe mode” option, and then press “ENTER.” If you have a dual-boot

or multiple-boot system, choose the installation that you need to access using the arrow keys, and then press “ENTER.”

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