



The Cursor



Monthly Newsletter of the
Washington Area Computer User Group

Meeting Location
Fairfax County
Government Center



Next Meeting:
December 13, 2008



Presidential Bits

December 2008 Meeting

by Paul Howard

November's WAC meeting, featuring Bob Mason's presentation about selling on eBay, was our best attended meeting this year - we filled every chair in the conference room. Many thanks to all who attended, and to Bob for sharing his long experience with eBay auctions.

Our next meeting will be on the second Saturday of December, the 13th, and will feature our PC Clinic session. If you plan to bring a computer for help, be sure to follow the directions on the web site, and advise us in advance about what you need help with, so we can assemble the necessary resources to help with your problem. The topic for the "simultaneous learning session" will be announced on the web site. (The originally planned topic was Microsoft's Live OneCare security and maintenance suite. This product is being discontinued in June of 2009.)

Annual Dues & Newsletter Change

In the next two months, many of our members are due for membership renewal. Mindful of the economy, we're keeping the base dues rate at \$25, which includes a monthly emailed link to a full color, 16 or more page version of our Cur-

sor newsletter, produced by our indefatigable editor, Chuck Roberts. (Member contributions of articles, tips, etc. are always welcome!)

As a special promotion, we're reducing the rate for receiving a hard copy, 12 page edition of the monthly Cursor. A \$5 premium will be charged, bringing dues to a \$30 total to receive both a printed copy, and the expanded electronic version.

As we near the end of the year, some folks are looking for deductions to claim with their 2008 income tax filing. Contributions to WACUG, recognized by the IRS as a non-profit, educational organization, and a public charity, are tax deductible.

Meetings in 2009

Beginning with the January 17th meeting, WAC will be holding joint meetings with OPCUG, the personal computer club of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (also known as OLLI), 4210 Roberts Road, Fairfax. More details about the OLLI location will be posted on our web site in the coming weeks. You can also check out this web site:

OPCUG: <http://www.olligmu.org/~opcug/>



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Plus Bonus Articles in the Download Edition

Lloyd's Web Sites for November, 2008

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

Sites for December 2008:

1. **NASA: Deep Space Network** – <http://deepspace.jpl.nasa.gov/dsn> The NASA Deep Space Network - or DSN - is an international network of antennas that supports interplanetary spacecraft missions and radio and radar astronomy observations for the exploration of the solar system and the universe. The network also supports selected Earth-orbiting missions
2. **Arts & Letters Daily** – www.alldaily.com – News, reviews, latest trends, breakthroughs, disputes, and gossip in arts and culture. New material is added to Arts & Letters Daily six days a week.
3. **Science Daily** – www.sciencedaily.com – Breaking science news and articles on global warming, extrasolar planets, stem cells, bird flu, autism, nanotechnology, dinosaurs, evolution -- the latest discoveries in astronomy, anthropology, biology, chemistry, climate & environment, computers, engineering, and more -- from the world's leading universities and research organizations. Related site: [SciTech Daily Review](http://www.scitechdaily.com).
4. **Worldwide Subway Maps** – www.amadeus.net/home/new/subwaymaps/en
5. **PBS: The Future of Television** – www.pbs.org/nbr/site/features/special/future-of-television_home – “Future of Television,” NBR New York bureau chief Scott Gurvey examines how high-definition, digital video recorders, and the Internet will change that little black box that sits in 99% of all American homes.
6. **Getting Rid of old Electronics** – www.gazelle.com – Answer a few questions about its condition, Gazelle will give you an instant quote, if you accept the company will send a prepaid envelope or box to ship the item.
7. **Teach yourself Chinese** – www.csulb.edu/~txie/online.htm
8. **A book review with only plot synopsis and enough info to get you interested** – www.litmob.com
9. **Fundamentals of saving money during a recession** – www.fiscalzen.com
10. **U.S. Population Finder** – http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFF-Population?_sse=on&_submenuId=population_0&_ci_nbr=&qr_name=&ds_name=&industry= Interactive city maps with point-to-point driving directions, city guides, and SmartView, which displays restaurants, parks, ATMs, and other local features.



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

Washington Area User
Group Partners
Working Together For
Our Members

CPCUG

NCTCUG

APCUG

OPCUG



GNU/Linux SIG

By Geof Goodrum, WAC

Give One, Get One Again

The mission of the One Laptop per Child (OLPC) non-profit organization (<http://laptop.org>) is to empower the children of developing countries to learn by providing one connected laptop to every school-age child. In September 2008, WAC member Michael Coyne brought one of the innovative, low-cost (\$199) laptops to the monthly meeting (see his presentation in PDF format on the WAC website at <http://www.wacug.org/pdf/olpc080913.pdf>). OLPC previously offered these laptops to the public through a limited-time “Give One. Get One.” program in late 2007, in which one could purchase two laptops, one of which is donated to a developing country through the OLPC program and one is shipped to the customer. There were some logistical problems that resulted in delays distributing the laptops to customers.

OLPC is running the “Give One. Get One.” program again, this time partnering with Amazon.com to manage orders and shipping for the program. Customers can donate one or more laptops for \$199 each, or donate a laptop and get one for themselves for \$399. More details

about the program and online ordering are available from the website at <http://www.amazon.com/xo/>.

GNU/Linux Distribution Releases

GNU/Linux distributions are complete GNU/Linux operating system and application software collections. Many are freely downloadable or can be ordered on CDs or DVD at low cost. DistroWatch.com lists the following distribution release announcements for the period November 5 – December 3, 2008.

Distribution
BlankOn Linux 4.0
Caos Linux NSA 1.0
Clonezilla Live 1.2.1-17
ComFusion 2.0
CrunchBang Linux 8.10.01
Fedora 10
GParted LiveCD 0.3.9-13
Greenie Linux 4l
grml 2008.11
Linux From Scratch 6.4
Mandriva One 2009 “Xfce”
Parted Magic 3.2
PC/OS 2009
Poseidon Linux 3.1
Sabayon Linux 3.5.1
SME Server 7.4
SystemRescueCd 1.1.1
Ubuntu Muslim Edition 8.10
Ultimate Edition 2.0
Yellow Dog Linux 6.1

Linux Software of the Month

The software described below is downloadable at the links provided or may be requested on CD, or copied onto a USB flash drive at the

WAC meeting. In addition, WAC can provide CD-R and DVD±R media for any downloadable GNU/Linux operating system distribution (e.g. Fedora, 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 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.

December 2008

Google Gadgets – v0.10.3. <http://code.google.com/p/google-gadgets-for-linux/>. Free Apache License 2.0 source code and executable packages for Fedora 9, Ubuntu 8.10, openSUSE 11, and Mandriva 2008.1 by James Su et al. Google Gadgets for Linux provides a platform for running Google Gadgets under Linux, catering to the unique needs of Linux users. It’s compatible with the gadgets written for Google Desktop for Windows as well as the Universal Gadgets on iGoogle. There are two main components to the application: one is a common gadget library responsible for running and

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presenting a gadget, and the other is a host program that allows the user to choose gadgets and run them on the desktop. Currently it has hosts written for GTK+ and Qt, with the GTK+ host offering a sidebar similar to that of Google Desktop for Windows.

OpenComal – v0.2.6. <http://www.josvisser.nl/opencomal/>. Free GNU General Public License C source code by Jos Visser. OpenComal is a highly portable and free implementation of the Comal programming language. Currently supported platforms are Unix, MsDos and Win32 (95, 98, NT, 2000, XP). Comal is a crossover between Basic and Pascal, with the best features of both and none of the drawbacks of either. Comal programs are platform independent.

Quackle – v0.96. <http://web.mit.edu/jasonkb/www/quackle/>. Free revised BSD License source code by Jason Katz-Brown, John O’Laughlin, John Fultz, and Matt Liberty and Debian executable package. Quackle is a very strong scrabble player and analysis tool that provides the estimated win percentages and expert analysis in ESPN’s coverage of the United States Scrabble Open. In 2006, Quackle defeated former World Champion David Boys 3 games to 2 in the Toronto Human-Computer Showdown. You, too, can harness Quackle’s power to improve your strategy and word knowledge! You can play against Quackle or use Quackle to record, playback, and analyze games. Source code requires QT 4.2 or later to compile.

Kernel Source – <http://www.kernel.org/>. 2.6 kernel source code for all

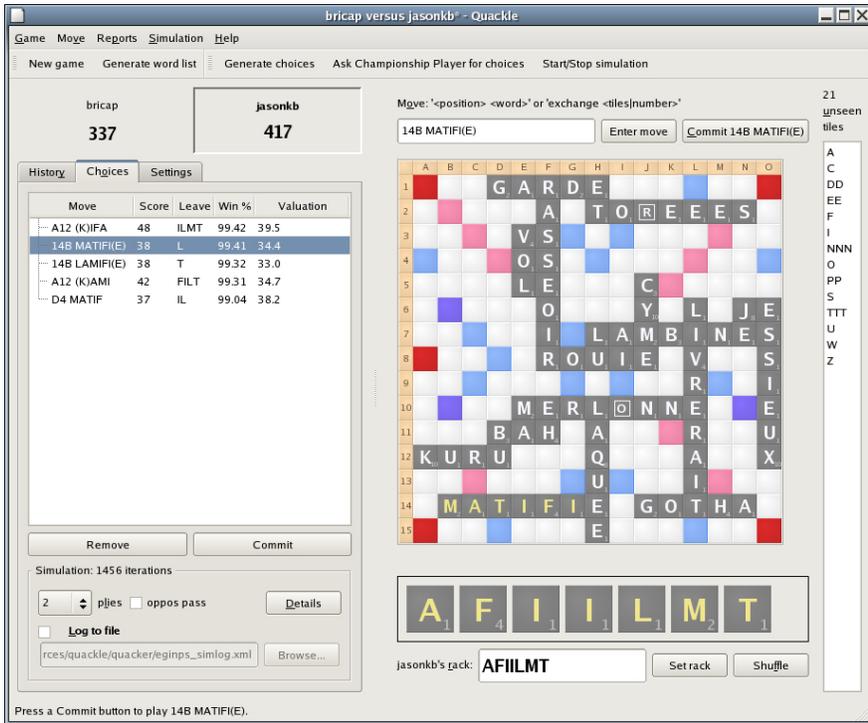
platforms (stable 2.6.27)

Screen shots follow.

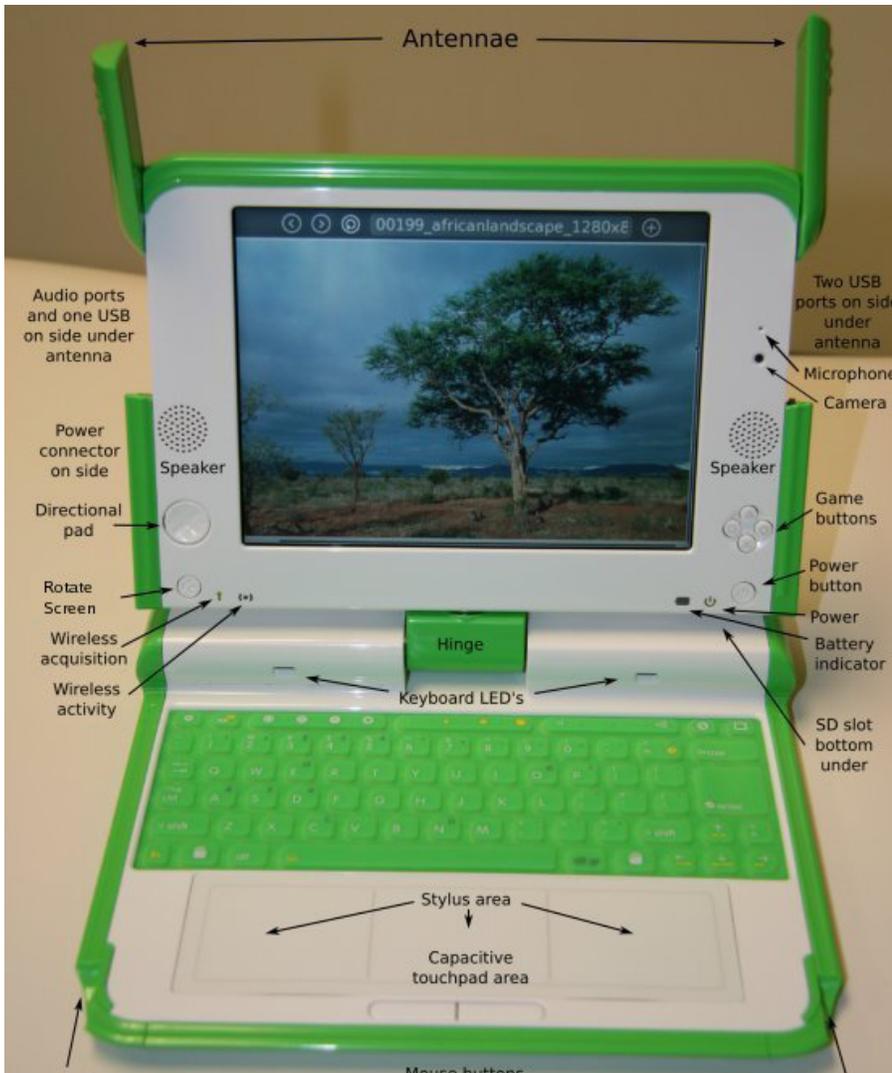


Google Gadgets for Linux





Quackle



One Laptop Per Child XO Laptop

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WASHINGTON AREA COMPUTER USER GROUP

Notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of the Washington Area Computer User Group (WACUG) general membership will be held at 1:00 PM on Saturday, January 17, 2009 at the Lifelong Learning Institute (also known as OLLI), 4210 Roberts Road, Fairfax., for the purpose of electing by ballot the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer to the WACUG Board of Directors and other such business of the Corporation as may properly come before them.

All members are invited to review the WACUG Articles and Bylaws before the Annual Meeting. Digital copies are available online at URL <http://www.wacug.org/articles.txt> and <http://www.wacug.org/bylaws.txt>. Hardcopy will be available for review at the January meeting.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Submitted by Mel Mikosinski,
Nominating Committee Chair

In accordance with Article VI, Section 1.a. of the WACUG Bylaws, the Nominating Committee presents the names of individuals who have stated their intention to run for election to the 2009 WACUG Board of Directors in the designated roles.

Candidates for President:

Paul Howard

Candidates for Vice President:

Geof Goodrum

Candidates for Secretary:

Bill Walsh

Candidates for Treasurer:

Robert Rott

Submit additional nominations to Mel via email.

After Retirement, Who Are You?

By Gabe Goldberg, Advisor,
Region 2; Columnist,
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Gabe(at)gabegold.com

Retirement – even temporary job loss – can trigger discomfort with one’s changed identity. Especially for those who have been strongly career oriented, the simple question, “What do you do?” can lead to fumbling for an answer. And when socializing or doing business or volunteering, it can be awkward not having the usual trappings of the grown-up world such as business cards.

Though called “business cards”, they’re hardly restricted to that context. Stay-at-home spouses, volunteers, and other folks often need a quick way to provide identification and contact information such as email address or Web site URL. They can also list concise emergency information and instructions such as medical history, allergies, medications, and someone to contact.

But with modern proliferation of such data – landline telephone number, cell phone number, instant messaging screen name, LinkedIn or other social networking Web site address, Skype number, etc. – it’s a challenge conveying one’s whole story quickly.

Designing and purchasing cards the traditional way, using a real-world printer, can be a nuisance or daunting challenge, not to mention expensive. And personally printed cards – whether laser or ink-jet – never seem quite as polished. For an online alternative, visit VistaPrint, <www.vistaprint.com>, a user-friendly and economical source of personalized cards and many other

customizable products.

Among VistaPrint’s many attractive bargains is the opportunity to order 250 cards for free, paying only shipping. The small “catch” is that there will be a small/tasteful VistaPrint ad on the cards’ back. But for a small fee, the ad can be omitted. And larger quantities can be ordered for rates far below those of local print shops.

These bargain cards aren’t limited to boring just-the-facts designs; more than 40 backgrounds cater to the most serious or the most fanciful among us. My cards are business-like, while my wife’s show a more flowery and artistic personality. Having browsed the site’s design spectrum I occasionally recognize fellow VistaPrint customers from their cards! More elaborate designs are available at slightly higher prices and custom designs can be uploaded to the site.

VistaPrint runs occasional sales and promotions, during which other products (sticky notes, T-shirts, desk calendars, invitations, announcements, notepads, letterhead, etc.) are offered for just the cost of shipping or at greatly reduced prices. I’ve gotten essentially free personalized rubber stamps and refrigerator magnets showing my business card design. And the site offers a small bonus for referring new customers.

A very convenient feature is the site remembering details of orders for reuse or modification. So when I’ve moved or changed contact information, I haven’t needed to redesign my cards from scratch: I simply update the information and reorder.

Having cards handy in pocket or purse eliminates having to scribble

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contact information on scraps of paper, and avoids someone having to later puzzle what's written. One warning applies, though: Consider how much information to reveal. Telephone number and email address, perhaps with city and state, may suffice without compromising privacy.

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How To Find Podcasts

by Mike Lyons, President Orange County IBM PC Users' Group, CA
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Download the free 7.3 iTunes program from www.apple.com/itunes/ and install. Now, all you need is an mp3 player, and you're all set to download podcasts and listen to them on the go.

When you first open iTunes, click on the "Podcast Directory" at the bottom next to "Report a Concern." That actually takes you to the Apple Store. In the upper left corner is a magnifying glass and a space to

search for a word or phrase. Type in "computer." The Apple logo in the top center area changes to a candy cane-striped bar as it searches. The bar will turn solid and display the results: Name, Time, Artist, Album, Price, Popularity and Genre.

Next to the name is a grayed-out circle with an arrow in it. This leads to more information about the podcast. It includes a description, user reviews, a list of the last 20 podcasts and a list of 5 "Listeners also subscribed to."

Headings are sortable by clicking on them, so if you click on Price, all the free ones appear at the top.

Some of the stuff is pretty explicit, that's why they call it the "wild, wild web." Podcasts are labeled "clean," "explicit," or blank which means the rating hasn't been determined.

I look to see how often and consistently the podcast occurs (some really good ones haven't been updated since 2006), check customer comments, and the "Also subscribed to" list.

If you want to subscribe, simply click on the "subscribe" button. To go back where you were, under the Apple logo on the left is a small button with a left pointing twirly. Click on this to get back.

After downloading podcasts, connect your mp3 player to a USB cable and right click on the file. Select "Send to" and click on the drive letter of the mp3 player to transfer podcasts to it from your computer.

Besides the iTunes Podcast Directory, you can find podcasts of Computer America shows at www.businessstalkradio.net/weekday_host/Archives/cc.shtml and National Public Radio at www.npr.org/rss/podcast/podcast_directory.php.

There are even locally-produced user group podcasts. The Los Angeles Computer Society has podcasts of their main meetings at www.lacspc.org/podcast/Archive.html

[org/podcast/Archive.html](http://www.lacspc.org/podcast/Archive.html)

You don't have to have an mp3 player to listen to podcasts, though. If you left-click on the mp3 title, it plays right in your browser. Or, if you right-click on the title, select "Save Link As," and you can save it to a directory on your computer.

Besides playing podcasts in mp3 players and browsers, mp3 files on your hard drive can be burned to a CD. Then, you can play them in your car. Just burn them as a music CD instead of a data CD.

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Online Consumer Help from the Federal Government

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director;
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WEBSITES:

<http://www.consumer.gov>

<http://www.recalls.gov>

<http://www.usa.gov>

<http://www.ready.gov>

<http://www.annualcreditreport.com>

<http://www.ftc.gov/idtheft>

<http://www.consumer.gov/military>

President Bush has requested that all federal agencies make it easier for consumers (the general public) to locate and utilize information on federal websites. In

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some cases a variety of federal agencies have pooled their resources and information, and compiled the data in easy to use websites that represent several agencies in one place. Some of these integrated federal websites are consumer.gov, recalls.gov, and usa.gov.

Consumer.gov is probably the premier federal website for comprehensive consumer information. The tabs across the top of the page lead directly to such consumer topics as food, product safety, health, home & community, money, transportation, children, careers & education, and technology. The perimeter of the page contains icons and links which directly connect to specific government services.

One of the icons links to "OnGuardOnline" which says, "OnGuardOnline.gov provides practical tips from the federal government and the technology industry to help you be on guard against Internet fraud, secure your computer, and protect your personal information." There is another link for "Consumer Sentinel" which contains comprehensive information on fighting and preventing fraud and identity theft.

One link that I have personally used and strongly recommend leads to the "National Do Not Call Registry" (donotcall.gov) where you can enter your home and cell phone numbers, and prohibit most telemarketers from calling. After activation, if a telemarketer does call, there is a link to enter a complaint, which may lead to a substantial fine against the telemarketer.

You have probably seen a TV commercial hawking free credit reports,

but the fine print and disclaimer advises that the credit report is only free with a paid subscription to a credit monitoring service. It just so happens that congress has required that all Americans are entitled to a genuinely free credit report once a year, without the strings or necessity of paying for a credit monitoring service. This free service is overseen by the Federal Trade Commission (ftc.gov), and linked to the consumer.gov website, or can be reached directly at www.annualcreditreport.com.

Many of us have had concerns about our children's safety while online, and consumer.gov has a linked resource for that purpose as well. The FTC has created an online child safety website "Kidz Privacy" which is a childish looking website that will appeal to kids of all ages. On this site are resources for kids, adults, the media, and teachers.

We are all faced with higher prices at the gas pump, and we generally do not like it. There are scammers out there promoting a variety of miracle products to dramatically improve our gas mileage, but there are also several legitimate tasks we can undertake to save gas. Consumer.gov obliges with an icon linked to a FTC website "Saving Money at the Pump". This is a cute, interactive website with several tips that we may find useful and money saving.

There is a pandemic of identity theft taking place which is costing our society tens of billions of dollars per year, with millions of victims of identity theft annually. Consumer.gov has a link to the central repository of identity theft prevention and information services, which is administered by the FTC at www.ftc.gov/idtheft. On this site is a link

to report identity theft, steps to follow if a victim, information on preventing theft, and other useful resources.

Many of us are inundated with pre-screened credit card offers, and invitations to purchase insurance. For those who want to reduce or end this unsolicited and often unwanted mail, there is a link to "Prescreened Credit Offers". On this site is information on how these prescreened offers work, and how to stop them. For those who want to stop these prescreened offers, the FTC says, "Call toll-free 1-888-5-OPTOUT (1-888-567-8688) or visit www.optoutprescreen.com for details." That website and phone number are operated by the three major consumer credit reporting agencies, and they will ask for personal information, but promise that it will be treated confidentially.

Hardly a day goes by where we do not hear on the news about some consumer product or food item being recalled for a safety or health reason. Occasionally we also hear about massive automobile recalls to correct some safety deficiency. There is an icon and link on this site to a centralized database on recalls which is continuously updated. This connects to a site recalls.gov, which is a joint venture of several government agencies that are involved in consumer recalls. Categories of recalled products include consumer products, motor vehicles, boats, food, medicines, cosmetics, and environmental products. What I find especially useful and informative on this website is the list of "Recent Recalls". There are six small windows on the recent recalls page

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that list the latest recalls from the Consumer Product Safety Commission, Food and Drug Administration (FDA), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Coast Guard. Personally, I check this site regularly, and sometimes find that I have a recalled product in my house.

Some of the other useful links on the Consumer.gov website are to specialized websites such as ready.gov and usa.gov. Ready.gov is a website sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that has resources about home and personal safety in a variety of threatening scenarios. Also included on this DHS website is information for businesses continuity, and child safety during disasters. USA.gov is the central clearing house for all federal agencies. It uses a simple menu hierarchy that eases the location of desired information. Topics are comprehensive, and include such helpful items as government benefits and grants, money and taxes, consumer guides, and many other topics. This site can be a good starting point for someone looking for something to do on the internet,

Military personnel and families may find the link to "Military Sentinel" a very useful resource. According to the website, www.consumer.gov/military, "Military Sentinel is a project of the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Defense to identify and target consumer protection issues that affect members of the United States Armed Forces and their families."

Included on this website is information on specific identity theft problems faced by military families, financial scams against military personnel, and other military specific information.

Other links on Consumer.gov are to the "Consumer Action Handbook", www.consumeraction.gov, and information that the disabled may find helpful at www.disabilityinfo.gov.

The website at Consumer.gov is a goldmine of consumer information that is free for the taking. I suggest that everyone should periodically visit this website and review any informational resources that may be of personal interest and benefit.

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Google Search Bar and Your Telephone Number

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS.com
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If you know someone's telephone number, how hard would it be to find that person? Well, with Internet resources, it couldn't be easier. Type any telephone number into the Google search bar and you will quickly be given the name and address that relates to that number. Even a bit scarier is the fact that right next to the name and address is the word "map". Just click on that word and the location in question is

marked with a big green arrow on a detailed map. One more click and you can see the building with that address from a satellite view.

I say this is scary because it is. This information may be put to good use by friends and relatives, but in the hands of a stalker or a criminal, it can be highly dangerous. Imagine how easy it would be to find a woman who lives alone in a rural area. Or think about a child who might innocently give out their telephone number and have a pervert be able to find their exact location so easily.

If you think that you are exempt from this because you have an unlisted or unpublished number, think again. Google states, "Our phone and address listings are gathered by a third party provider, which collects telephone directories and other public records available elsewhere on the web." It is the "other public records" that might get your telephone number into these listings. They use everything from public utility records, court records, and property records, to business records. I was able to easily find the names and addresses of several people who have unlisted telephone numbers.

Because of privacy complaints, Google has initiated a way to be removed from this reverse telephone lookup. Just search for your telephone number in google and click on the link with your name. You will be taken to another page with an obvious removal link.

Yet, if you want to remove your name and address from the entire Web, you should be prepared to settle in for a long, tedious task. Removing my telephone number from Google was easy. Unfortunately, I quickly found more than a dozen other places that had my telephone number listed including Yahoo, In-

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foSpace, Intelius, AnyWho, and addresses.com. Each one of these has a different method for removing your name and number, and often the process is quite convoluted. At Yahoo, there was an obvious "Remove my Listing" link. But the link went to the Yahoo help pages, which were not at all helpful. It took me about 30 minutes of searching to find the correct removal link. (<http://phone.people.yahoo.com/py/psPhoneSupp.py>)

Although most of the major search sites did not have listings for cell phones, I found that I could get the names and addresses for many cell phones numbers at Intelius for just \$14.95. Getting your name and address out of Intelius is even more complicated than removing it from some other websites. To opt out of Intelius they require that you fax them a copy of your driver's license or a notarized form proving your identity.

Even if you take the time to eliminate your name and address from all the directories that you find today, you might appear in some new directory tomorrow. Yet, if you want to guard your privacy, it may be worth the effort to eliminate yourself from as many of the directories as possible. It may also be time to realize that a simple thing like a telephone number can now lead to more personal identification than you ever imagined. Perhaps we need to start guarding our telephone number as carefully as we do our social security number.

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Anti-Virus Virus

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS
www.compukiss.com
sandy (at) compukiss.com

I hate writing about computer viruses. It always reminds me of how many unscrupulous, money-hungry people there are in the world. Yet, there are times when I feel that I must write about a certain virus because it is causing so much havoc for everyday computer users. Unfortunately, that time has come again. In the past two weeks, my company has removed a very bad group of viruses from six different computers. So I feel it is time to send out a warning.

There are many different variations of this virus and its cousins. They have many different names, including Antivirus 2008, Antivirus 2009, SpywareScanner 2008, and AntiVirXP08. Some experts are calling them viruses. Some are calling them malware. Symantec calls them misleading applications. McAfee lists them as a PUPs (potentially unwanted programs). Whatever you call them, they are terribly invasive.

By most accounts, these awful applications piggy-back on programs that are downloaded from the Internet. However, some experts are warning that your computer may become infected by simply visiting certain websites, especially if your operating system and/or antivirus software is not up-to-date.

The gist of the matter is that once your computer is infected, you will begin to see pop-up windows that give an exaggerated report of the number of threats that your computer is infected with. The window may say something like "Your computer has become infected with 231 computer viruses and spyware." These pop-ups try to scare you into purchasing their antivirus or anti-spyware software. If you purchase

it, they send you a registry key, but it doesn't work because the program they sell you doesn't exist. These viruses are also being spread by malicious websites that sell fake antispyware software.

On top of that, there are many other viruses or pieces of malware that can piggyback on the main virus. So this malware can dramatically slow down or even stop your computer. The infections being caused by these viruses and malware programs are extremely harmful and can be very difficult to remove. They often require a cleanup by a professional or a complete reformatting of the hard drive and reinstallation of the software.

As an everyday computer user, you need to be very careful about the software that you download from the Internet. Make sure that it is from a source that you know to be reputable or a website that has been recommended by a trustworthy source. You can also use a program like the McAfee Site Advisor to help you assess the validity of the website before you download the program. McAfee's Site Advisor is a small program that is used by your Internet browser to indicate the safety of websites. It is a free download available at www.siteadvisor.com and it is a valuable tool.

Also, as usual, be sure that you update your operating system and antivirus software regularly. Don't fall for any program that pops up on your computer trying to scare you into purchasing antivirus or anti-spyware software.

Yes, the bad guys are out there and they have a lot of computer savvy. So we all need to be smart about the software we download and the websites we visit.

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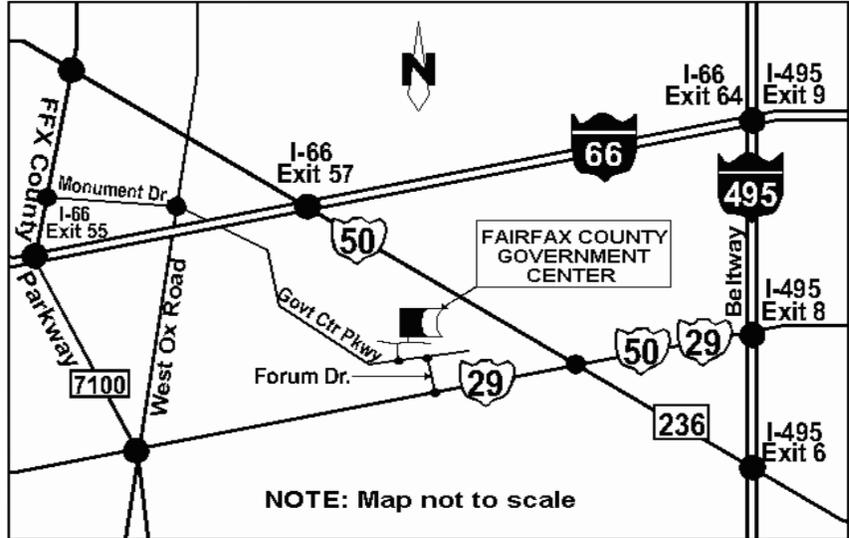
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Using Vista's Hidden Disk Cleanup Options

by Vinny La Bash, Member of the
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There are many things to like about the disk cleanup utility in Windows Vista. It's built into the operating system, it works, and it's free. It's also a tool that removes many potential problems such as corrupt files that may be causing difficulties or could cause computer ills in the future. One of its minor shortcomings is that it doesn't detect and eliminate wasteful duplicate files. This is a very insignificant quibble as Microsoft never claimed it could do that in the first place. That ability is an item on my wish list for the next version. Overall it's a very useful tool that everyone should be familiar with.

There is more to Disk Cleanup than removing junk files and recovering gigabytes of disk space. It's amazing how 'temporary' files can hang around for months in the little used crannies of a disk drive. Poorly written install and uninstall routines are largely responsible, but software glitches and power hiccups leave their own share of digital detritus laying about.

Systems with more than a terabyte of storage are becoming common, and it's easy to lose track of even the largest files. Try locating a suitcase sized patch of land in an area with the dimensions of a football field and you'll have an idea of what I'm talking about. Aside from taking up space, these useless files can slow down searches, bloat your backups, and make Vista's slow defrag process even slower.

If you're not familiar with how Disk

Cleanup works, you can access a good tutorial by clicking the Start icon, and then Help and Support. In the search box type Disk Cleanup, and you will get a list of items directly and indirectly related to the subject. You want the first three or four items in the list.

Let's access the normal version of Disk Cleanup by opening up the Computer icon on the Desktop, right-clicking the C: drive, and choosing Properties.

On the General tab locate the Disk Cleanup button just below and to the right of the disk graphic. You might want to make a note of how much used and unused disk space you have for a before and after comparison. Left-click on the Disk Cleanup button and you will get a message that Windows is doing some calculations. Eventually, you get a dialog box which displays various categories of files you can remove. Windows will let you peek at many of these files, but it's largely a waste of time. I've never found anything worth examining. Make a note of how many types of files Windows can remove, and then close all the dialog boxes.

You've just seen the standard way to access Disk Cleanup. Let's now examine Disk Cleanup with its deep cleaning options exposed. Vista's official file name for the Disk Cleanup utility is cleanmgr. Open the Start globe again and type cleanmgr on the Start Search box at the bottom of the menu. Press Enter and The Drive Selection dialog box appears. This is a great way to eliminate mouse clicks if we want a fast way of getting to a specific drive. However, this method doesn't display the extra functions we're looking for so close the dialog box down.

To access the enhanced options we need to use something called the System Agent or sage in conjunction with cleanmgr. Click the

Start globe again and in the Start Search box type

Cleanmgr /sageset:1

Notice the space between cleanmgr and the forward slash. Sageset is a variation of the System Agent utility, and the number 1 allows you to select different cleaning options. You can use any number you want, even zero or negative numbers.

Disk Cleanup will now be running in a special setup mode that offers more cleaning options than the standard default. In addition, the System Agent will remember whatever cleanup options you select. When you run Cleanup again you don't have to make the same selections as long as you use the same number. That's what the System Agent set part does.

Press Enter to run the utility and wait for the Disk Cleanup Settings dialog box to appear. Highlight the individual cleanup options and in some cases there is additional information that is missing from the default dialog box. You also have more cleanup options.

You can select any number of options from just one to all of them. For maximum cleaning, select everything. When you're satisfied with the options you've selected, click the OK button and run the utility. When the job is done, go back and see how much disk space you've recovered. You could be in for a pleasant surprise.

We used the sageset command to set the cleanup options. The system keeps track of what you've done, and it will run the utility according to your specification in the future, but you can't use the sageset command for that. You need to ignore sageset and run the sagerun command instead. From the desktop click the Start globe, and in the Search box

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type:

```
Cleanmge /sagerun:1
```

Press Enter and the system will automatically run in enhanced mode with the preference previously recorded. Run this command anytime you wish from now on. You can always change preferences by rerunning the sageset command with the cleanmgr utility.

Chances are good that a lot of clutter will be removed from your system, and you will see an increase in free space on your system. If you wish to automate the process, you can use the Task Scheduler to run the tool automatically at your convenience.

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Using CrossLoop to Troubleshoot and Control Remote Machines

By Vinny LaBash, Member and Contributing Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
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Third party Windows applications are rarely examined in this column, but CrossLoop is too good a utility to ignore. Trying to walk someone through a computer problem over the telephone is often an exercise in frustration. There is no substitute

for seeing what is actually on a user's screen to find out the root cause of a problem.

Vista has a built-in support tool known as Remote Desktop, but far from making the process easy, it has a tendency to confuse those with no technical background. Remote Desktop makes it rough on those who don't know how to handle the added complications of firewalls and routers. CrossLoop, which is a free remote support utility, could be an excellent solution.

CrossLoop shields users from tricky situations involving communicating through routers, firewalls, and other potential obstacles. Setting up a communications session between two computers physically separated, but connected through the internet, is reduced to a process hardly more complex than turning on your TV. Those concerned about security can relax. CrossLoop uses something called TightVNC which safeguards data with 128 bit encryption.

Crossloop is useful for people who want to train or support others remotely. If you're an experienced web surfer, for example, and need to show someone how to access a disk drive or retrieve a lost document, CrossLoop allows you to take control of their computer screen, and show them exactly how to do it.

Hard core geeks may not be satisfied with CrossLoop. It's not complicated enough. It works better than most similar commercial utilities, and your technically challenged friends and relatives will find it aggravation free.

You can download the program without charge from <http://www.crossloop.com>. The site has a video that demonstrates how to install and use the program which is very helpful for technophobes.

Once you're up and running, the interface presenting itself is a model of simplicity which effectively masks the complexity behind the

scenes. As mentioned earlier, security and remote control is handled by TightVNC. VNC stands for Virtual Network Computing, and is a very well designed software tool that easily allows remote access to Operating Systems with a graphical interface. The technical specifications say you need Windows 98 or higher. A broadband internet connection is also a requirement. Dialup connections won't work. Drive space, processor speed, and memory requirements are negligible given the general power of today's computers.

Another benefit of TightVNC is the built-in 128 bit encrypted security. When you begin a communications session, the program generates a new 12 digit access code. The access code then generates the encryption codes giving you an additional layer of security. Not bad for a free utility.

CrossLoop Graphic Running the program is so easy it's almost boring. As you can see from the illustration, the interface is simple and straightforward. Assuming you started the session, the next step is to communicate the access code to the person you are communicating with. You can do this by email, telephone, screaming into the next room, etc.

After starting the session, your friend types the access code into the box and clicks Connect. When the Connect button is clicked on both sides the two PCs are linked.

This method of troubleshooting a remote PC eliminates all the hassles of trying to interpret what an inexperienced user is attempting to explain. It's difficult to imagine anything less complex than a one button interface. With 128 bit encryption built in, it's tough to beat.

Other applications that make such

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connections possible have been available for years, but nothing I've seen makes it as simple as Cross-Loop.

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FastStone Capture

A Review by Ron Hirsch, a Member and Contributing Editor of the Boca Raton Computer Society, Florida
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THE BEST SCREEN CAPTURE PROGRAM I'VE EVER USED

Since it is possible that some of you may not know what a "screen capture program" is, I'll start off by defining that program type.

WHAT IS A SCREEN CAPTURE?

When you are working on your computer, the material you are working on/looking at, is displayed

on your monitor screen, as a bunch of pixels. Often, it is nice to be able to "save" the info onscreen, or parts of it, for further uses.

Windows does offer a "Print Screen" capability, to send info to the clipboard or printer, but as with many of Windows utilities, it's a pretty barren utility, with very few options. Fortunately, there are several 3rd party utilities out there, one of which I consider the best I've ever used.

MY HISTORY WITH FASTSTONE

When I started using FastStone Capture in early 2007, it was still freeware, with a request to send in a "contribution", if one liked it. I liked it so much, I sent off a contribution immediately, and received a very nice "Thank You".

Shortly after my contribution, it became a "paid for" utility. For \$19.95, you get the program, and updates are free forever. There is a 30-day free trial period, during which you can use a fully functional version, to convince yourself that this is indeed a program that you want to keep using.

LINKS

FASTSTONE MAIN SITE

The link to the FastStone site is: <http://www.faststone.org/index.htm>.

While here, check out the other excellent programs, all of which are free, or click on the Download button for FastStone Capture to download it.

FASTSTONE CAPTURE PAGE

The link to page for this program is: <http://www.faststone.org/FSCaptureDetail.htm> or just click on the "capture" program when you are on

the first link noted above.

WAYS TO USE SCREEN CAPTURES

Below, I've included some of the ways I use this screen capture program – which, by the way, I use just about every time I'm on my computer.

Remember, this program can capture a wide variety of areas on your screen - see the listing below in one of the screen captured images.

1. Have you ever installed something where a variety of screens and dialog boxes came up, and had to be filled in with info for various options, etc.? Sometime later on - weeks, months, or even years, you need to know what info and options et al that you filled in. No problem - just save each screen and store the saved screens in a named folder. Then all that info is available at a moments notice. All you have to remember is where you stored it. And you can also print out each of the screens after saving them, and file those pages in a loose leaf notebook.

2. You have some digital photos that you'd like to send to someone in an e-mail. If you just "insert" the pix into the e-mail message as many people do, they may come out to a very large size - much larger than you wanted, or expected. There are of course a variety of ways to "resize" image files, but there is one that is pure simplicity. What I do is to display each picture file in a program such as Windows "Picture and Fax Viewer", or the free FastStone Viewer offered on their site. Then adjust the size of the displayed image on the screen, to what you'd like the size to be in your e-mail. Then capture the image. When inserted into your

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FastStone from previous page

e-mail it will be exactly the size that you captured, since it captures pixels, and monitors all have very similar pixels/inch.

3. You're on a web page, and there is something interesting that you want to save, but you don't want to print out the whole page. Just select the desired area using Fastone Capture, and save/print that area only.

4. You're watching a video on your TV, and there was an image of someone/something you wanted to capture. Just pause the video, and select the area you want in Fastone Capture. Your image is captured. Remember, screen captures are just pixels. The capture process doesn't care what created those pixels.

Remember, this capture method saves things as an "image" (I use the jpg choice). It will not save text in editable form. If you want to do that, you must copy and paste into a text editor, such as Notepad. But, if you have a program such as "Omnipage" which is generally included when you buy a flatbed scanner, you can use it to convert a jpg image of text to an editable page of text.

The images below are several of the screens and drop-down menus from Fastone. The choices available to the user are well thought out and very useful. Note all the various options for what can be chosen to get saved, and the hot keys for these choices.

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See screen shots to the right:

