



The Cursor

Monthly Newsletter of the
Washington Area Computer User Group



Meeting Location
OLLI, 4210 Roberts Road,
Fairfax, VA



Next Meeting:
December 11, 2010



Presidential Bits

by Geof Goodrum, President WACUG, president@wacug.org

I want to express my deepest thanks to [Rob Pegoraro](#), Washington Post tech columnist, for stepping in with only a couple of days notice to give a presentation on "Setting Up a New Home Computer" at the November meeting. Gabe Goldberg, who was scheduled to demonstrate some of his favorite software utilities at the meeting, was unable to attend and contacted Rob on behalf of WAC and OPCUG. Rob's talk gave him a chance to go over a draft column planned for the Post in December and pick up ideas from the audience. Since I don't want to take away from Rob's article, I will only summarize by saying that he gave advice about add-ons such as Java and Flash, how to migrate files and applications between Windows and Mac OSX upgrades, selection of web browsers, backup software, and anti-malware programs. Rob also gave us a glimpse of the Apple [Mac Air](#) notebook and the Samsung [Galaxy Tab](#). I highly recommend keeping an eye out for Rob's column in the Fast Forward section of the Post, as you are sure to see some of the audience's comments reflected in the article (he was frequently jotting notes during the meeting). I do apologize that WAC was not able to give Rob's talk the advance promotion that it deserved. We will try to arrange a future meeting with Rob so those who missed out have another opportunity to talk with him.

WAC will host its PC Clinic at the next meeting on December 11th. Note that this is on the second Saturday. If you need help fixing problems with your personal computer or installing software and hardware (including memory upgrades, hard drives, etc.), let us know in advance by e-mailing a description of the work needed to pcclinic@wacug.org or by leaving a voice-mail on the WAC AnswerLine at 703-370-7649. Guidelines for the clinic are posted at <http://www.wacug.org/clinic.html>. I will also demonstrate the free [Parted Magic](#) LiveCD to backup and repartition a hard disk during the PC Clinic. I expect to write a column about this useful utility in a future issue of *The Cursor*.

Gabe Goldberg will give the main presentation "Fundamental Technologies II" during the December meeting. This is the second part of the popular presentation Gabe began at the October meeting, and will cover some of the

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Lloyd's Web Sites for December, 2010

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. **eHow** – www.ehow.com – Learn how to do just about anything, and find out what you'll need to do it. Includes how-to's and tutorials on auto repair, careers, computers, health, fitness, home, and garden.
2. **Yahoo! Finance** – <http://finance.yahoo.com> – "At Yahoo! Finance, you get free stock quotes, up to date news, portfolio management resources, international market data, message boards, and mortgage rates that help you manage your financial life."
3. **Zillow.com** – www.zillow.com – Free real estate information. Search homes for sale, home prices, home values, recently sold homes, mortgage rates. An update from April 2006 sites
4. Directory of 800 stores that donate to the charity of your choice when you buy online – www.igive.com
5. Turn favorite photos into useable postage stamps – <http://photo.stamps.com>.
6. Create your online journals 750 words encourages members to write 750 words every day – www.750words.com. Oh Life sends you an e-mail every night asking how your day went – <http://ohlife.com>. Memiary asks what you did today and gives you space for 5 answers – www.memiary.com.
7. Daily Poems – www.poems.com.
8. Read.gov – <http://www.read.gov> – Explore new worlds: Read. The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress invites people of all ages to discover the fascinating people, places and events that await you whenever you read. This site provides free resources for reading and encourages kids, teens, adults and families to read books.
9. If all the negative political advertisements are making you crazy, here's a great change of pace – www.andiesisle.com/creation/magnificent.html.
10. Roget's Thesaurus – <http://thesaurus.reference.com> – The thesaurus that appears on this site is Roget's New Millennium Thesaurus. To use the thesaurus, simply type a word in the gold search box and click the 'Search' button. A list of synonyms and antonyms will be returned. Related site: [How to Use a Thesaurus](#).



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
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NCTCUG

WACUG

OPCUG

Oracle and the Future of OpenOffice.org

Oracle Corporation, a technology company best known for its flagship commercial relational database management software, is alienating the Open Source community it once embraced.

In 2008, Sun Microsystems acquired MySQL AB, the company that developed and provided commercial support for the highly popular relational database management system (RDBMS) software, MySQL, which is available in both Open Source and commercial license versions. MySQL is very popular (estimated at over eleven million installations) as backend software used by web sites world-wide, comprising part of the “LAMP” (Linux, Apache, MySQL, PERL/PHP/Python) software stack.

Sun Microsystems is perhaps best known for the Java programming language used to develop software that can run on a wide variety of computer platforms. The Open Source community has been pushing for the release of control over the Java language specification to the community since at least 2004. In 2006, Sun released Java software components under the GNU General Public License, but continued to release “non-free” executable versions.

Sun Microsystems also sponsored the OpenOffice.org community project, which developed and distributed a free, Open Source productivity suite comparable to Microsoft Office and built upon code from the commercial StarOffice product, previously acquired by Sun.

In 2010, Oracle Corporation completed acquisition of Sun Microsystems, including MySQL, Java, and OpenOffice.org. During the acquisition, the MySQL community expressed concerns that Oracle would discontinue support for MySQL as it competed with Oracle's commercial RDBMS products. While this has not happened, Oracle recently [doubled](#) MySQL support service costs.

In August 2010, Oracle sued Google over its implementation of Java in the Linux-based Android operating system, claiming infringement on seven patents. This move alienated the Java developer community.

In September, a core group of over thirty leading contributors to the OpenOffice.org project formed The Document Foundation with support from organizations including Red Hat, Novell, Google, Open Source Initiative, Canonical, and the Free Software Foundation. The Document Foundation's primary purpose is to support the community development of LibreOffice, a productivity suite built upon the OpenOffice.org source code. This move was in response to ongoing concerns about Oracle's governance and development process for the OpenOffice.org project, including Oracle's reluctance to accept patches to the software. The Document Foundation's [stated mission](#)

is to facilitate the evolution of the OpenOffice.org Community into a new open, independent, and meritocratic organizational structure within the next few months. An independent Foundation is a better match to the values of our contributors, users, and supporters, and will enable a more effective, efficient, transparent, and inclusive Community. We will protect past investments by building on the solid achievements of our first decade, encourage wide participation in the Community, and co-ordinate activity across the Community.

Oracle responded to the formation of The Document Foundation by insisting that members step down from their positions on the OpenOffice.org project as it created a conflict of interest. As a result, it appears that community developers are migrating from OpenOffice.org to work on LibreOffice.

At this point, it appears that Oracle has squandered whatever credibility it had with the Open Source (MySQL, Java, OpenOffice.org) developer community, and the future of the original OpenOffice.org project is very questionable. However, expect to see rapid development and improved software quality for LibreOffice under The Document Foundation.

GNU/Linux Distribution Releases

GNU/Linux distributions are bundled collections of software including a set of applications and an operating system built on the Linux kernel. Some distribu-



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tions include general applications such as office suites, music players, and web browsers, while others may have specific purposes such as computer system recovery, network firewall, media center, or gaming. Individuals, community projects, or businesses create distributions. While some distributions are commercial and include fee-based technical support, other distributions are freely downloadable or can be ordered on CDs or DVD at low cost.

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 downloadable distributions do not include official technical support nor printed documentation. 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. 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.

The following list summarizes distribution release announcements from Distrowatch.com for the period November 4 - 24, 2010.

[Alpine Linux 2.1.0](#)
[BackTrack 4 R2](#)
[Chakra GNU/Linux 0.2.4](#)
[Clonezilla Live 1.2.6-40](#)
[Greenie Linux 8M](#)
[ImagineOS 20101103](#)
[IPFire 2.7 Core 41](#)
[Linux Mint 10](#)
[Penguin OS 10.10](#)
[Red Hat Enterprise Linux 6](#)
[Rocks Cluster Distribution 5.4](#)
[Sabayon Linux 5.4 "Experimental Spins"](#)
[Salix OS 13.1.2 "Xfce"](#)
[Tiny Core Linux 3.3](#)
[Unity Linux 2010_02 "Unite17"](#)
[Untangle Gateway 8.0](#)
[VortexBox 1.6](#)
[Webconverger 7.0](#)
[ZevenOS 3.0](#)

Linux Software of the Month: December 2010

The software described below can be downloaded at the

links provided or copied onto a USB flash drive at the WAC meeting.

0 A.D. - Alpha 3. <http://wildfiregames.com/0ad/>. Free GNU General Public License source code and executables for Fedora/Mandriva and Ubuntu/Debian by Wildfire Games with artwork under the BY-SA Creative Commons License. 0 A.D. (pronounced "zero eye-dee") is a free, open-source, cross-platform real-time strategy (RTS) game of ancient warfare. In short, it is a historically-based war/economy game that allows players to relive or rewrite the history of Western civilizations, focusing on the years between 500 B.C. and 500 A.D. Features include:

- Cross-platform
- Historically based
- 6 unique civilizations
- Provinces and territories
- Realistic maps/terrain
- Realistic naval warfare
- Comprehensive editor
- Several multiplayer modes

Jajuk Advanced Jukebox - v1.9. http://jajuk.info/index.php/Main_Page. Free GNU General Public License Java code by Bertrand Florat and the Jajuk Development Team. Jajuk is cross-platform Java software that organizes and plays music. It is a full-featured application geared towards advanced users with large or scattered music collections. Using multiple perspectives, the software is designed to be intuitive and provide different visions of your collection. Jajuk requires Java 1.6 and Mplayer.

LibreOffice - v Beta 3. <http://www.documentfoundation.org/download/>. Free GNU Lesser General Public License source code and executable by The Document Foundation. LibreOffice is a productivity suite (word processor, spreadsheet, database manager, presentation manager, and drawing program) that is compatible with other major office suites, and available on a variety of platforms. It is free software and therefore free to download, use and distribute. This beta release is not intended for production use!

Kernel Source - v2.6.36. <http://www.kernel.org/>. Free GNU Public License source code for all platforms by the Linux community.

Screenshots are on the next three pages...



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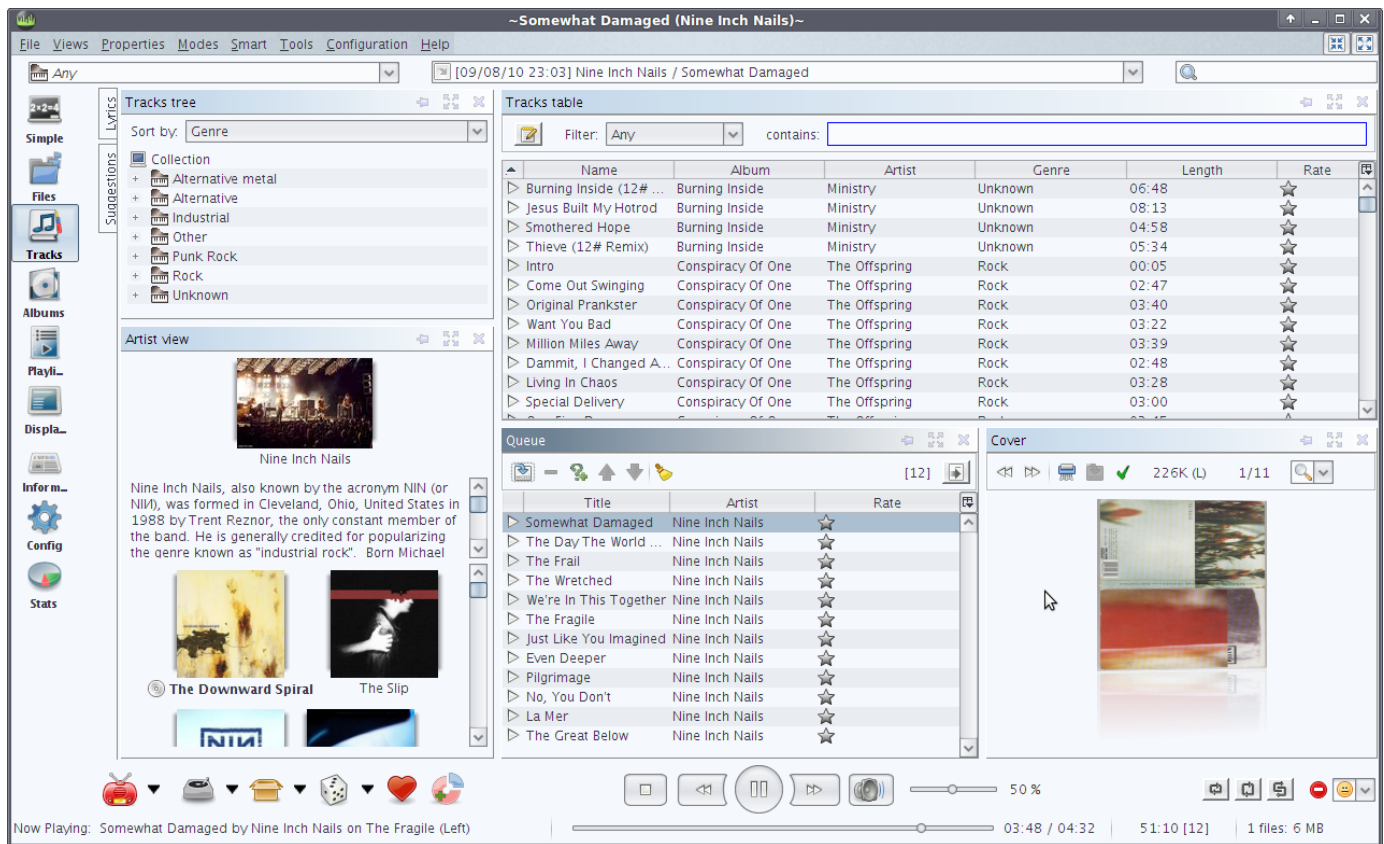


0 A.D. Desert Colony



0 A.D. Greek Theater

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JaJuk Main Page

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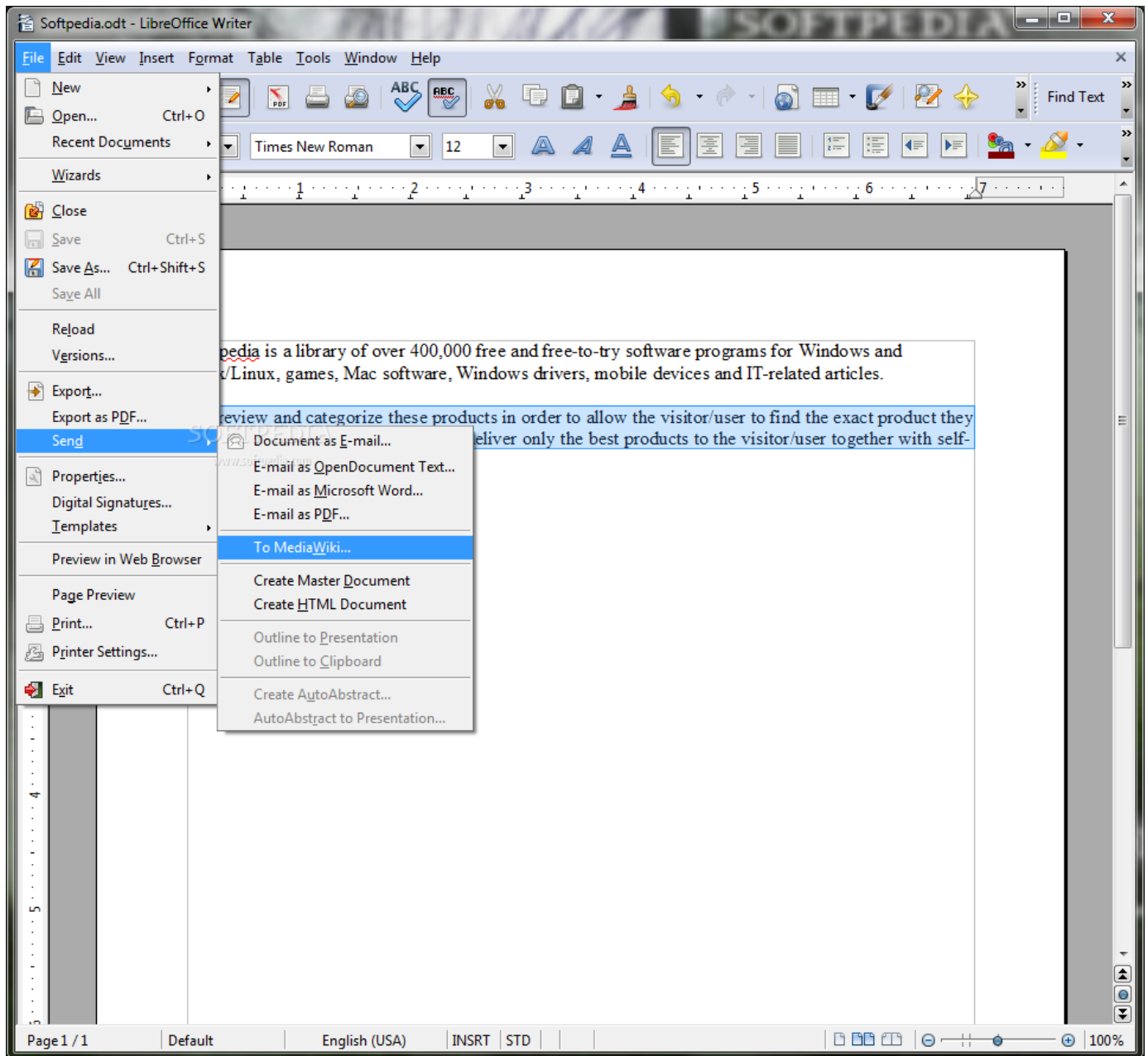
utilities he originally planned to demonstrate at the November meeting, as well as browser add-ons, games, networks, and best practices for maintaining your PC. For the Learn 30 tutorial session, Lorrin Garson will relate some of the "Lessons Learned" from the theft of a laptop.

See you there!

Annual Election in January

WACUG's Board of Directors election will be held at the January 22nd Annual Meeting. The Board shall consist of four members, each individually elected by a majority vote of corporation members attending the Annual Meeting of the corporation and not more than 10 others as may be elected from time to time by majority vote of the Board. The four board members elected by vote of the corporation members shall be the President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

Candidates for election: Anyone wishing to run must advise Nominating Committee Chairperson, Mel Mikosinski <[melvin22003\(at\)aol.com](mailto:melvin22003(at)aol.com)> no later than 11 December 2010. Mel and Jim Brueggeman will be our election commissioners. Ballots will be emailed to members, with instructions for their return. Members wishing to be considered for the 10 indirectly elected board positions should contact Mel.



LibreOffice Writer

Rob Pegoraro,
Washington Post tech
columnist, delivering
his presentation at our
November meeting



Learn 30 Topic: Laptop Theft—Prevention, Protection & Pain

Lorrin Garson, WACUG/OPCUG

Worldwide, well over a million laptop computers are lost or stolen annually, about three-quarters of a million in U.S. airports alone. What tidbits of wisdom can be passed on to potential victims of laptop theft? (Don't worry, U.S. nuclear missile launch keys might be safe, trust me!) What behaviors are risky? What should you do to minimize the loss? What can be done to protect your privacy? What steps can be taken to recover the computer? Once upon a time, not so long ago, in the heart of Barcelona, Spain...

Fundamental Technologies II

Gabe Goldberg, WACUG

Gabe will continue with part II of the Fundamental Technologies presentation he initially presented in October but he needed more time to complete the entire presentation, so this is part two of the presentation.

In addition, we will also be holding our PC Clinic in the social meeting room for those of you who need some help and/or assistance to help resolve a problem with your computer. Please note that prior notification is required. See Geof's article on page one for details of the PC Clinic.

Solid State Devices (SSD)

by Vinny LaBash – Sarasota PC Users Group,
www.spcug.org

Measuring the effect of SSD technology is more than the numbers game we play with conventional Winchester disk drives. What you experience with SSD drives centers on how certain tasks feel. Loading applications, boot up, shut down, and changing levels in your first person 3D shooter game are prime examples. Everything happens incredibly fast.

Examine the current state of SSD technology and you see a rapidly evolving technological landscape. Concerns about performance, longevity, and outright failure that plagued early solid state drives are fading. These issues are being replaced by how well manufacturers are optimizing the components of SSD technology. NAND chips, controllers, and cache memory are made by multiple suppliers. SSD vendors must take these separate

components and merge them into a reliable storage device with good performance at a price that potential customers are willing to pay.

SSD manufacturers select a controller based on the controller's cost and capability, match it with one of several different kinds of cache memory, and marry the combination to either MLC or SLC NAND flash memory chips. Single Level Cell (SLC) holds one data bit per cell. Multi Level Cell (MLC) has greater capacity. Currently MLC data chips hold two data bits per cell.

Experience reveals that the future belongs to MLC based devices. Up until now SLC based technology offered faster writes, lower power consumption, and greater longevity. Still, Intel and other chip makers appear confident that MLC technology will become dominant in the marketplace. That confidence is backed up by the design of current MLC devices where performance measured against SLC based devices is becoming nearly indistinguishable. An examination of technology publications shows that reviewers of SSD drives overwhelmingly prefer MLC gear.

Intel has been and continues to be a leader in this area. In the early days of SSD development, controller problems were so prevalent that Intel assigned a team of development engineers to redesign the controllers. A new generation of controllers came about which rehabilitated the technology. That too is about to change. Earlier this year Intel and Micron announced 25nm NAND flash memory production which means yet another generation of controller technology is imminent.

Why Performance Declines Without TRIM

It is important to understand how SSD devices handle a delete operation. (*Otherwise you may have difficulty comprehending TRIM, which will be described later*). No storage device, whether it is an SSD or traditional drive, has access to the operating system's file structure. Therefore, it does not know what data the OS has marked for deletion and is available for overwriting. Later on, when the OS wants to perform a write operation, this becomes an overwrite operation from the viewpoint of the storage device.

For conventional disks, this is the same as writing to an empty sector, but because of how an SSD must operate at the hardware level, an overwrite operation involves considerable additional overhead which can effectively cripple write performance.

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An SSD stores its data in flash memory cells. These cells are organized and grouped into pages. Typical page capacity is 4 KB. These pages are further consolidated into blocks consisting of (typically) 128 pages or 512 KB of data. Early SSD performance slowed down over time because data can be erased only at the block level. An erase operation is theoretically possible at the page level, but because of the physical construction of an SSD device, erase commands won't work except at the block level. This is inherent in the design, and cannot be changed.

Note: By design, it is impossible to write to a NAND memory cell unless it is empty.

Any data in the block must be transferred into cache memory where it is then erased and rewritten to flash memory as empty pages. The actual operation is more complex, but a data overwrite is essentially a read, modify, erase, and write cycle. The memory and processor embedded in the controller handles the entire procedure and does not go outside the SSD. The process is commonly referred to as *write amplification*.

Example: You have 8KB of data. In a previous session the OS marked some of the data for deletion, and the OS now wants to overwrite the “deleted” data.

1. The OS sends instructions to the SSD controller to begin the data overwrite.
2. The contents of the entire block are read into cache memory.
3. The memory cache is now updated. Unneeded data is deleted, and the rest undisturbed.
4. The entire block is erased on the SSD.
5. The updated data in the cache memory is now written back to the block.

The longer the SSD has been in use, the greater the performance degradation because of the way data must be stored and modified.

TRIM

Without TRIM, performance declines because the operating system doesn't bother to inform the SSD when data is available for re-write, and the operating system doesn't actually delete the data. The TRIM command addresses the situation by working with the operating system to notify the SSD that data marked for deletion should be immediately erased. In other words, the TRIM command tells the SSD to delete data at the same time the user initiates the delete function instead

of waiting for the OS to decide when to overwrite the “deleted” data.

When the operating system “deletes” a file, if TRIM is enabled, the operating system updates the file system and notifies the SSD via the TRIM command which pages need to be deleted. Then the SSD reads the block into cache memory, updates the cache, erases the block on the SSD, and then writes back only pages containing data which was not marked for deletion by the OS. The delete is slow, but there is no performance hit for write operations because the affected pages are now empty, and write performance is what's important. TRIM improves performance only when you delete files.

The TRIM command acts as an interface between the OS and the SSD that tells the SSD when data should be erased. The SSD then performs the delete operation immediately after the OS marks the data for deletion. Since TRIM ensures that data is actually deleted immediately after the user deletes a file, traditional file recovery programs will not work on solid state devices with TRIM enabled.

Note: Windows 7, Windows Server 2008 R2, and some versions of Linux support TRIM. **Windows XP and VISTA do not, repeat, do not support TRIM.** However, a few vendors have included utilities that will enable the command with XP or Vista if the SSD supports the command. However, most early SSD devices do not support TRIM. Check with the manufacturer.

Partitioning and Formatting

While the physical structure of solid state devices is considerably different from traditional disk drives, partitioning and formatting operations appear virtually identical from a PC user point of view. What goes on under the covers should be of no concern to most users.

Defrag

In a standard disk drive, information is accessed by a combination of platter rotation and movement of read/write heads. Defragmentation takes all the sections or fragments of a file and positions them in one contiguous location. This minimizes seek time and speeds up disk operations.

Solid state devices have no moving parts. Performance is the same no matter where data is located. Therefore, nothing can be gained by defragging a solid state device. The additional, unnecessary read/write cycles may actually reduce the SSD's life expectancy. Therefore, de-

See *Solid State Devices* on page 10

fragging SSDs is not only useless, but may be harmful. Don't defrag an SSD.

Wear Leveling

Flash memory chips have a finite life cycle. This cycle is defined by approximately 10,000 write operations before the cell is subject to breakdown and no longer reliably records data. *Wear Leveling* is the process by which no flash memory cell is required to undergo significantly more write operations than any other memory cell on the drive. The process evenly distributes write operations among the available flash memory cells.

Wear Leveling affects the data capacity of solid state drives because some of the disk space must be reserved to carry out the leveling operation. The amount of reserved space varies by manufacturer and is known as *over-provisioning*. The longevity of an SSD appears to be directly proportional to the efficiency of *Wear Leveling*. Most manufacturers reserve around 7% of the SSD. Conservative vendors such as Mushkin reserve up to 13%. This can account for much of the discrepancy between stated total capacity and formatted capacity. The trade off could become an issue to SSD customers who may be unwilling to sacrifice storage space even for potential increased longevity.

Summary and Conclusions

There is no doubt that solid state devices will eventually replace conventional disk drives, but prices of solid state drives will have to decline significantly first. Until that day, expect to see hybrid systems consisting of an SSD boot drive, and traditional drives for bulk storage. Solid state drives have no moving parts. Therefore, they have considerable advantages over traditional drives:

1. They are very fast because seek time is greatly reduced.
2. Less likely to malfunction.
3. Smaller and lighter.
4. Generates very little heat.
5. Completely silent.
6. Consume far less energy.



PDF Files in iTunes - For Syncing on Apple Devices

By Ernie Cox, Jr., member of the Computer Club of
Green Valley, AZ
<http://gvcc.apcug.org>
ecoxjr (at) cox.net

There is an easy way to get PDF files into iTunes for syncing to your iOS device (iPad, iPhone or iPod Touch). The iBooks apps can then view the PDF files, as long as you have iTunes 9.2 and iOS 4.

Create an alias of iTunes.app and drag it to your user-folder/Library/PDF Services. (Create the folder if it does not already exist.) You can rename the alias, iTunes PDF files.

The next time you are viewing a document you would like to read later on your iOS 4 device, go to File > Click on Print, click the PDF Button on the bottom left corner of the Print dialog box, and choose iTunes from the list. The iTunes app will then launch and receive the PDF. The next time you sync your device, the document will be synced as well.



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The Cursor provides news, commentary and product information to members of the Washington Area Computer User Group.

Send membership inquiries and address changes to: membership@wacug.org

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

WAC Membership Application / Renewal

Dues are collected on an Annual basis and includes:
downloadable links for WAC's monthly newsletter,
The Cursor, in PDF format

Individual/Corporate/Family Dues: \$25.00
\$5 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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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: • Jan 22 • Feb 19 • Mar 19 • Apr 16 • May 21

Call (703) 370-7649 for the latest meeting information or Visit our Web Site at:

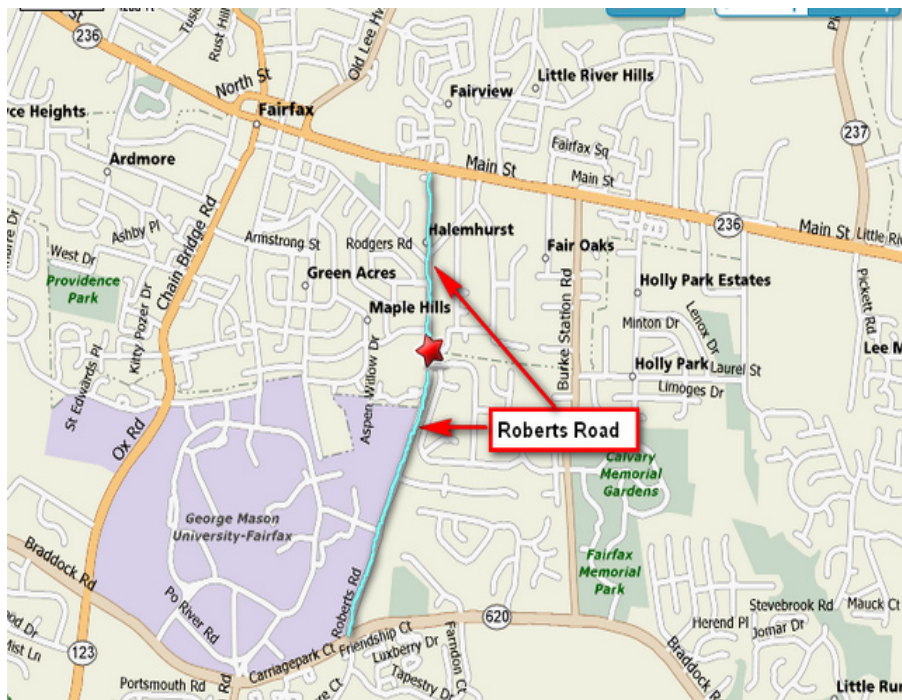
<http://www.wacug.org>

All Meetings are held at the
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute 4210 Roberts Road,
Fairfax, VA. Call our help
line or visit our web site if
you need additional infor-
mation.

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12:30 Meeting Starts at
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eBAY - The Pluses and the Problems

By Ian Gemmell, Webmaster, Computer Pals for
Seniors - Epping Inc., Australia
September 2010 Newsletter
www.cpepping.net.au
Open Windows (at) Epping

BEGINNERS BEWARE

We have Club members who are very active users of eBay, and who do so with very few problems. Some even say they are addicted. We need to understand that people in this category succeed because they understand both the techniques necessary for buying and selling and also the pitfalls which have to be avoided.

eBay has grown rapidly and now has 181 million customers, and at any one time has more than 3 million items for sale. Because of this there are 174 thousand professional users of eBay who make their living on eBay. It is important to realize that you are competing with these.

Search techniques and trading tricks

The first thing you need to understand is you have to know how to “snipe”. This is a technique whereby you only bid in the last few seconds. You can either do this manually or by using a professional sniper. It is also important to understand that all the intermediate bidding is a waste of time. Leave it to the inexperienced operators as you only increase the competition. You only bid once at the end and set your sniping price according to your keenness to win in the bidding.

Fraud – Prevalence and Prevention

eBay go to great lengths to convince us that fraud is not very significant. The fact is that fraud has become the domain of professionals, who become increasingly expert as time goes by. For this reason if you venture into trading on eBay you will have to be aware of the precautions you must take. The most common cause of fraud is non-delivery by the seller, usually because the item does not exist. Precautions which you should take include the following: —

1. Check the trading history of the seller and only deal with those with a good record.
2. Use eBay's Paypal facility to ensure that you receive the goods as described. You can also for a small fee when dealing with expensive items use an escrow service. This ensures that the goods are verified

before you pay for them.

3. Ask the seller any questions needed to further describe the item.
4. Be on guard against a scam where sellers provide a fraudulent “proof of dispatch” document to obtain payment claiming that the shippers will only dispatch when goods are paid for.
5. Use the proven guidelines that if something sounds too good to be true then it probably is.
6. Use a universal email provider like Gmail in communicating by email. Use of your regular email address is inviting problems.
7. Be aware that eBay has been the subject of fraudulent “phishing” emails which are trying to get your user name and password. Never respond!

All you have to do now is to learn all the ways that you can use eBay. Use the eBay Sitemap to find all the links, and use all the information on eBay Help. Best of luck.



SmartPhoto P60

By George Harding, Treasurer, Tucson Computer
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October 2010 issue, TCS eJournal
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This is a handy, almost pocket-sized, scanner for photos. It could be used to scan almost anything, but the aperture is only 4¼”, which would eliminate anything wider. The product includes the scanner, a USB cable, a calibration card, a CD-ROM for installation and a Guide booklet. The English portion of the Guide is only 6 pages long. The balance of the 78 pages is for the other 12 languages supported.

The scanner can be installed on Windows (XP, Vista or 7) or Mac (10.4 or 10.5). It has resolutions of 100, 300 and 600 dpi. It has controls for brightness, contrast and gamma. The file name and location of the scanned photo can be specified.

The scanner is simple to install. Connect the USB cable to your computer and the scanner. Power is supplied by the USB port, so if using a hub, you must be sure that it is plugged into a port. Next install the scanner software and driver from the CD-ROM and restart.

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The next installation step is to calibrate the scanner. The calibration sheet is a small 2.75 X 4.25" card. The instructions specify loading it face-up, but the technician I talked to instructed me to load it face-down.

One thing not mentioned in the Guide is that any other scanners attached to your computer must be disabled. I was not aware of this and the quality of scanned photos was terrible! Once I disabled my All-In-One Printer (scanner included), the photo quality improved dramatically.

Once installed, scanning a photo is the essence of simplicity. You load a photo (not larger than 4" x 6") edgewise and press the scan button. If you need to, there is a Settings application in which you can select other resolutions, change brightness, contrast or gamma to get better results.

I tried several photos, using several different resolutions and got acceptable results. The scan turned out somewhat dark, so I increased brightness a bit. I also tried increasing the contrast, which gave me quite a nice scanned result.

The scanner is quite small and can be carried with your laptop quite easily. I found it easy to use and it produced very good results.

About: SmartPhoto P60

Vendor: Plustek

www.plustek.com

Price: \$99 MSRP

Files and Folders, and now Libraries

By Phil Sorrentino, President, Sarasota Personal
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Just when you thought you had it all mastered, something new comes along to possibly change things. Well, it's not really that bad, it's actually pretty good. Libraries are a new concept in organization that has been introduced in Windows 7. You don't have to use Libraries, but they are there to help you organize and access your files. (Files being the entities that all programs work with.)

Windows 7 initially includes Libraries for Documents, Music, Pictures, and Video, the four categories of infor-

mation that many people use. You can create other libraries; you are not limited to only Documents, Music, Pictures and Video. To create a new Library, Right-Click "Libraries", and then select "New-Library", and give the New Library a name (much the same way we create new Folders).

As you can see below, initially each Library includes a "My" folder and a "Public" folder. Windows 7 expects each user to organize his/her information into private and public folders. The contents of the public folders are then shared with other users on your computer. New Folders can be included in a library by using the Library Properties window. Right-click on the Library you want to add a folder to, then select Properties, and then add a Folder to the current list of "Library Locations" by clicking the "Include File Folder..." button, and then naming, or navigating to, the Folder to be included in the Library. Folders can be removed from a Library by Right-Clicking the folder to be deleted and selecting Delete.

A file, as you will remember from one of our basic classes, is a collection of related information. That information is organized in a certain way and the applications that use that "type" of file knows the organization scheme and therefore how to use the information. The file type is kept with the file name and is actually the extension part of the file name, (the letters after the period). For example, the file "picture1.jpg" is a jpg type of file. (If you don't see the file extensions after the period when using Windows Explorer, it is because Windows is initially defaulted to not show the extensions. To show the file extensions, Click Start, then Click Control Panel, then Double-Click the Folder Options icon, then Click View, then Uncheck the "Hide extensions for known file types" box, and finally, Click OK).

There are many types of files. In fact, if you Google "file types" you will find websites that describe hundreds of different file types. The "filext.com" website (and many others) has an alphabetical index to help you find a particular file type. To review information about a particular file type, click on the first letter of the file type of interest, then find the file type in the list and then click on that file type. (Caution: To be safe, if you do go to this or any other site to see information about file types, please do not click on any link you are not sure of, or any link that suggests a "scan" of your system or your system's registry or hard drive.) And while considering Files and folders, just to be complete, Folders are collections of Files and/or other Folders. Folders are essentially containers.

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Now, Getting back to Libraries. Libraries are collections of folders. Libraries are a way of collecting information (files) in order to keep related things together. The Pictures Library is intended to keep track of all of your Pictures (jpg, jpeg, bmp, tiff, and other picture file types) in one spot, therefore making it easier to work with your pictures. Similarly, the Documents Library is intended to organize your documents (doc, docx, rtf, txt, and other text file types); the Music Library is intended to corral your music files (mp3, wma, wav, m3u, and other music file types); and the Video Library is intended to corral your Video files (mpeg, avi, mov, vob, and other video file types).

Libraries can also be created to organize information for a specific purpose, say a Movie Maker Project. You could create a Library for a particular Movie, say the “OurWedding” movie. You would create a Library called OurWedding and then you would include, in that library, the working folders that you use while using your pictures, music and video applications. (The actual folders remain with the application, but they are viewed as part of the OurWedding library.) Then, when you create files using the various applications, all of the files relating to OurWedding would show up in one specific place, the OurWedding Library (a pretty neat trick, don’t you think?). This is pretty good because it leaves the specific application to deal only with its specific type of file, and yet keeps all the project files in one place for the project application. (For example you could use Windows Media Player to Rip music from your CDs, Photoshop Elements to collect and finish the pictures of your wedding, and Adobe Premier Elements to preview and cut the videos for the movie. When all the Picture, Music, and Video files are done and in their folders, you could use Movie Maker with the OurWedding library to put it all together into a Movie and burn it to a DVD.)

Libraries provide a way of superimposing a structure or organization on what might look like an unorganized collection of files and folders. Libraries are really just another tool to be used to help us use our computers in a smart way. When you get Windows 7, give them a try but don’t jump in too fast. First, organize your folders in a basic structure (the way you might think of organizing a file cabinet) and then apply Libraries on top of that basic organization, to your benefit. In time, I’m sure you’ll find Libraries helpful.



Tips and Tricks (Slip an Ace up your Sleeve)

By Bob Goodman, Newsletter Team, Cajun Clickers
Computer Club, LA

November 2010 issue, Cajun Clickers Computer News
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Disable Laptop Touchpad with TouchpadPal

DYou have probably experienced your cursor jumping to another location in a document while typing on your laptop because your hand accidentally touched the touchpad. In order to put an end to this problem use TouchpadPal.

TouchpadPal is a freeware utility for windows XP/Vista/7, which runs in the background and will automatically disable the touchpad when it detects that you are typing text. It is lightweight and only consumes 10Mb of Hard disk space:

(The type/touchpad problem is one of my major laptop complaints; so, I downloaded and am using this utility. So far, it's working great with no problems. I don't even know it's running in the background...Bob Goodman)

<http://tpp.desofto.com/>

Connect Laptop and Cell Phone Using Bluetooth

We can use Bluetooth technology to connect laptop and cell phone. We can move videos, images, photos, etc. from a desktop computer or a laptop to our cell phones.

In order to use Bluetooth technology to connect laptop and cell phone we need a laptop and a cell phone which support this technology. If the laptop doesn’t support it, we can use a USB Bluetooth dongle plugged into the USB port of our desktop computer or laptop and leave the rest to Windows which will find the driver and install it. If it is not supported, we can manually install it via the manufacturer’s compact disk. Follow these simple steps in order to use Bluetooth technology to connect laptop and cell phone: <http://tinyurl.com/244m6vs>

5 ways to speed up your PC

By following a few simple guidelines, you can maintain your computer and keep it running smoothly. This article discusses how to use the tools available in Windows 7, Vista, and XP Service Pack 3 (SP3) to more efficiently maintain your computer and safeguard your privacy when you’re online. See how to free up disk space, speed

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up access to data, protect your computer against spyware, detect and repair disk errors, plus learn all about Ready-Boost: <http://tinyurl.com/lf7np2>

Get a Better Battery Gauge

Over the years, Windows has gotten progressively better at laptop power management—but it still doesn't tell you much about your battery. Enter BatteryBar, a free, easy, ingenious power gauge that's compatible with XP, Vista, and Windows 7--and should have been built into all three of them: <http://osirisdevelopment.com/Battery-Bar/download.html>

Typically, you have to mouse over that tiny System Tray power icon if you want Windows' read on how much battery life is left. BatteryBar adds a full-time, at-a-glance gauge to the right side of the taskbar, which, by itself, is mighty handy.

That gauge shows you either a percentage of battery life remaining or the amount of runtime left; clicking it toggles between the two readings. Interestingly, when you're running on AC power, the gauge switches from green to blue and shows how long until you reach a full charge.

But wait, there's more: when you mouse over the gauge, a pop-up window displays a boatload of additional information, such as total battery capacity, charge/discharge rate, AC status, and even a lifetime estimate based on historical charge/discharge data. That's what I'm talking about!

Although BatteryBar is free, there's also a Pro version that adds more features, like a graph of battery profiles, low/critical power warnings, and automatic power-scheme switching that kicks in when you switch between AC and battery power.

How much? The developer sort of lets you choose your own price: \$3 for a one-year license, \$5 for two years, or \$7-9 for lifetime. Pony up \$10 and you get two lifetime licenses.

While I suspect most users will be happy with the free version, I admire this creative approach to pricing. I love this program. Don't run a laptop without it.

