



# *The Cursor*



## *Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Area Computer User Group*

**Meeting Location:**  
OLLI, 4210 Roberts Road  
Fairfax, VA



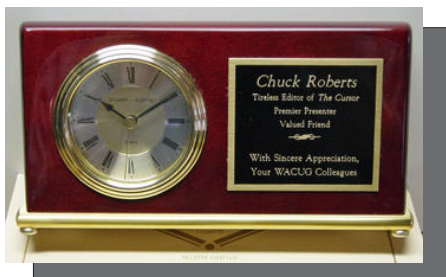
**Next Meeting:**  
April 16, 2011

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### **Presidential Bits**

*by Geof Goodrum*

*President, Washington Area Computer User Group*



You might notice some changes in this issue of ***The Cursor***. Although I edited newsletters for my homeowner's association in the interim, this is the first Cursor I put together since I was Editor over ten years ago. I used the free, Open Source desktop publishing software Scribus (<http://www.scribus.net/>) for the first time, which meant recreating much of the look of ***The Cursor*** from scratch. Scribus doesn't support drop shadows as well as the commercial Adobe® InDesign® software that Chuck Roberts used, and I didn't have one of the licensed fonts (Adobe® Caslon™) that Chuck used, but I believe I got pretty close. I took prerogative to make some changes, mostly subtle (can you find them?). For those who view the newsletter as a PDF file on a computer, you will find active links in the Table of Contents and where articles span pages, as well as a membership form on the inside back cover that you can fill in on the computer and print. Please let me know what you think by e-mailing comments and suggestions to [editor\(at\)wacug.org](mailto:editor(at)wacug.org). Since being Editor is a lot of work on top of writing articles and other duties, I will be sharing editorship with other WAC volunteers – I encourage you to help out! Also, my thanks to Jorn Dakin and Bob Rott, who volunteered to label and distribute printed newsletters, and Mel Mikosinski for relieving me of Membership Chair duties.

At the March 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, we expressed our thanks to retired newsletter editor Chuck Roberts with presentation of a plaque/clock (see photo) for ten years as a WAC volunteer, seven as editor. I gave a Learn 30 tutorial about Internet radio stations with a brief demonstration of the Pandora Music Genome Project (<http://www.pandora.com/>), which is a free online service that allows you to “stream” custom music to your Internet-connected device (computer, smartphone, Internet appliance) based upon music you already like (by musician or music title). You can find my briefing containing live web links on the WAC Recent Meetings page (<http://www.wacug.org/recmtgs.html>). Our guest presenter, Dan Feighery of the OLLI Photo Club, gave the main presentation on

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## Lloyd's Web Sites for April 2011

by Lloyd Johnson

Columnist, Washington Area Computer User Group

Visit [www.wacug.org](http://www.wacug.org) for past issues of Web Sites with hyperlinks.

1. Earthquake Risk Areas — [www.earthquake.usgs.gov/hazards](http://www.earthquake.usgs.gov/hazards). What to do if the ground starts shaking.
2. Toll-free numbers — [www.hardtofind800numbers.com](http://www.hardtofind800numbers.com). Customer service, tech support and other elusive corporate departments.
3. Federal News Service — [www.fednews.com](http://www.fednews.com). Federal News Service provides verbatim transcripts of the complete hearing testimony of Congress committees and subcommittees.
4. US News: Top American Hospitals — [health.usnews.com/best-hospitals](http://health.usnews.com/best-hospitals). A look through 5,000 hospitals in 16 adult specialties and 10 pediatric specialties to help you find the one that's best for you and your family.
5. Yahoo Finance — [finance.yahoo.com](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.
6. This Day in Music — [www.thisdayinmusic.com](http://www.thisdayinmusic.com). This site provides information on musicians who were born on this day, like recordings, gigs, deaths, chart positions and significant events on this day.
7. AreaVibes: City Guides, Data and Demographics — [www.areavibes.com/](http://www.areavibes.com/). Explore city guides with useful information, photos, reviews and city data with demographics.
8. Famous Quotes for all Occasions — [www.famousquotesandauthors.com](http://www.famousquotesandauthors.com). Browse over 25,000 quotes online from over 6,700 famous authors.
9. Time Capsuler — [dmarie.com/timecap/](http://dmarie.com/timecap/). To begin your trip in this Time Capsule enter a date. You will be presented with your own customized page that includes all the information you've chosen, plus typical consumer prices from that year, Academy Award winners that year, etc. Site has data online for the years 1800 through 2002, although data for the years 1800 - 1875 is probably spotty.
10. Mailbox Locator — [www.payphone-project.com/mailboxes](http://www.payphone-project.com/mailboxes). Locations of USPS Mailboxes and Post Offices. Find US Postal Service Collection Stations (Mailboxes) In Your Area.

### 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

NCTCUG

WACUG

OPCUG

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PhotoDex Corporation's ProShow products (<http://www.photodex.com/products/proshow/>), which Dan uses to create impressive slideshows with soundtracks. Dan showed several of his creations, including a documentary project, and gave tips on how to get the most from the software. Although Dan bought the ProShow Producer product designed for professionals because he needed a few of its features, he said that the less expensive ProShow Gold and even the free online ProShow Web products were all that most people would need.

On April 16<sup>th</sup>, we'll have Gene Barlow of User Group Relations (UGR, <http://www.ugr.com/>) online via the Internet from St. George, Utah to present a webinar entitled "Organizing Your Hard Drive & The Best Backup Plan to Protect Your System from Failure." Bring your checkbook, because Neal Grotenstein will handle UGR sales of featured software Acronis Disk Director Home and Acronis True Image Home. Gabe Goldberg will present his favorite utilities to enhance Microsoft Windows during the Learn 30 tutorial, including FileLocator Pro and Directory Printer. Please recommend your favorite utilities during the discussion!

See you there!



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## Call for Volunteers

*by Geof Goodrum*

*President, Washington Area Computer User Group*

With the retirement of Newsletter Editor Chuck Roberts, WAC needs your help with newsletter preparation and distribution, including articles, layout, editing, labeling, and mailing. In the spirit of "Many hands make light work" (John Heywood, 1497-1580), I would like to see duties shared in a round-robin fashion so no one is unduly burdened each month, and skills are shared so we have backup for every position.

**Articles:** WAC needs your articles for *The Cursor*. If you have good or bad experiences with new software or computer hardware, tips or tricks learned from experience, or just observations on current computer topics, please write them up and submit

them by e-mail to [editor\(at\)wacug.org](mailto:editor(at)wacug.org). Even a few paragraphs will do. WAC has a Writer's Guide at <http://www.wacug.org/cursorguide.txt>. We would also like to share your articles with other user groups, just as WAC benefits from the excellent material shared by our partner groups in APCUG.

**Layout and Editing:** Beginning in May, WAC needs additional volunteer Editors to perform layout and editing of articles on a recurring basis. While desktop publishing (DTP) experience is preferred, it is not required as we can provide hands-on assistance to get beginners up to speed. I have prepared a newsletter template for the free, Open Source Scribus DTP software, which runs on Linux, Mac, and MS Windows systems. The Editor also submits the newsletter PDF file online to an Office Depot store for printing, as well as a copy by e-mail to the WAC webmaster for posting on the WAC web site for online delivery. The Editor also submits printing receipts to the Treasurer for reimbursement.

**Labeling and Mailing:** Most of WAC's newsletter distribution is online, but we still print and mail approximately twenty copies to members each month. This volunteer duty is to pick up the printed newsletters from their nearest Office Depot (location coordinated with the Editor), receive label data by e-mail from the Membership Chair, print and affix labels to newsletters, fold, seal, stamp and mail the newsletters from the local Post Office. The distribution volunteer submits postage receipts to the Treasurer for reimbursement.

Please send e-mail to me at [president\(at\)wacug.org](mailto:president(at)wacug.org) if you are interested in helping out. WAC is a volunteer organization, and we depend upon your support. I plan to hold a meeting with volunteers before the April general meeting to review the volunteer duties and logistics in more detail.



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## Vintage Computer Festival

*Submitted by Evan Koblentz*

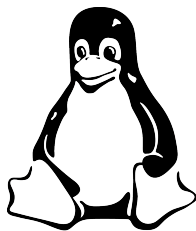
Vintage Computer Festival East 7.0 (VCF) is scheduled for May 14-15 at the InfoAge Science Center, in Wall, New Jersey.

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VCF is a celebration of computer history. There will be historical lectures, hands-on workshops, an exhibit hall of live demonstrations, book sale, consignment, museum tours, and more.

Details and video clips of past VCFs are posted at <http://www.vintage.org/2011/east/> and <http://www.facebook.com/vcfeast7> .... it only costs \$10 to enter (with all proceeds going to the non-profit museum), and kids get in free. So, for anyone who fondly remembers the days of minicomputers, punched cards, paper tape, programming front panels in hex, 8-bit hacking, or just traversing the Oregon Trail – this is the event for you.



## **Linux News**

*by Geof Goodrum*

*Washington Area Computer User Group*

### **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 distributions 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](mailto: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](http://distrowatch.com) for the period March 3 – 31, 2011.

Alpine Linux 2.1.5  
Bodhi Linux 1.0.0  
Calculate Linux 11.3  
Clonezilla Live 1.2.8-23  
Foresight Linux 2.5.0  
Fusion Linux 14  
Gentoo Linux 11.0  
GParted Live 0.8.0-5  
IPFire 2.9 Core 47  
Joli OS 1.2  
Linux From Scratch 6.8  
Linux Mint 10 "LXDE"  
Macpup 520  
Mandriva Linux 5.2 "Enterprise Server"  
openSUSE 11.4  
openSUSE 11.4 "Edu Li-f-e"  
Peppermint OS Ice-10012010  
Sabayon Linux 5.5 "E17", "LXDE", "Xfce"  
Saline OS 1.3  
Scientific Linux 6.0  
Scientific Linux 6.0 "Live"  
SuperGamer Supreme 2.5  
Trisquel GNU/Linux 4.5  
Ultimate Edition 2.9  
UTUTO 2011  
Vinux 3.0.1  
Vyatta 6.2  
Zenwalk Linux 7.0  
Zenwalk Linux 7.0 "Openbox"  
Zorin OS 4 "Business"

### **Linux Software of the Month: April 2011**

The software described below can be downloaded at the links provided or copied onto a USB flash drive at the WAC meeting. However, please check the online package management tool included with your GNU/Linux distribution first, as installation is often just a click away.

**Free Pascal** – v2.4.2. <http://www.freepascal.org/>.  
Modified GNU Library General Public License  
source code and packages for Debian and RPM-based

*Continued on page 5*



GNU/Linux distributions by the Free Pascal Development Team. Originally named FPK-Pascal, Free Pascal is a 32 and 64 bit Turbo Pascal and Delphi compatible Pascal programming language compiler for DOS, Linux, Win32, OS/2, FreeBSD, AmigaOS, Mac OS X, Mac OS classic and several other platforms (the number of supported targets grows all the time, although not all of them are on the same level as the main ones). The Free Pascal compiler is available for several architectures, x86, Sparc (v8,v9), ARM, x86\_64 (AMD64/Opteron) and Powerpc. An older version (the 1.0 series) also supports m68k. The compiler is itself written in Pascal and is able to compile its own sources.

**Hedgewars** – v0.9.15. <http://www.hedgewars.org/>. Free GNU General Public License source code and executable packages for Debian, Ubuntu, Fedora, ArchLinux, and openSuSE Linux by Andrey Korotaev et al. Hedgewars is a turn-based strategy, artillery, action and comedy game, featuring the antics of pink hedgehogs with attitude as they battle from the depths of hell to the depths of space. As commander, it's your job to assemble your crack team of hedgehog soldiers and bring the war to your enemy. Features: Hilarious and devastating turn based combat for up to 6 players; Both local and network multiplayer, with optional AI opponents; Battle on an infinite number of randomly generated maps, with over 20 environments; Utilize 47 (and counting) devastating weapons including the piano strike and explosive robotic cake; Play the game your way, with 18 different game modifiers, tweak almost every aspect of the match; Customize your team, with over 120 costumes, 30 graves, 12 forts, 100s of flags and unique voice packs; Huge battles with up to 48 hogs; Play both singleplayer and multiplayer minigames; Plugin your own custom maps, costumes, and other artwork. Requires Qt >= 4.5, FreePascal >= 2.2.4, SDL >= 1.2.5, SDL\_net >= 1.2.5, SDL\_mixer >= 1.2, SDL\_image >= 1.2, SDL\_ttf >= 2.0, CMake >= 2.6.0, lua = 5.1.

**Linphone** – v3.4.3. <http://www.linphone.org/>. Free GNU General Public License source code and executable packages for Debian and Ubuntu Linux by Simon Morlat. Linphone is an audio and video Internet phone with GTK+ and console interfaces. It uses the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP), and is

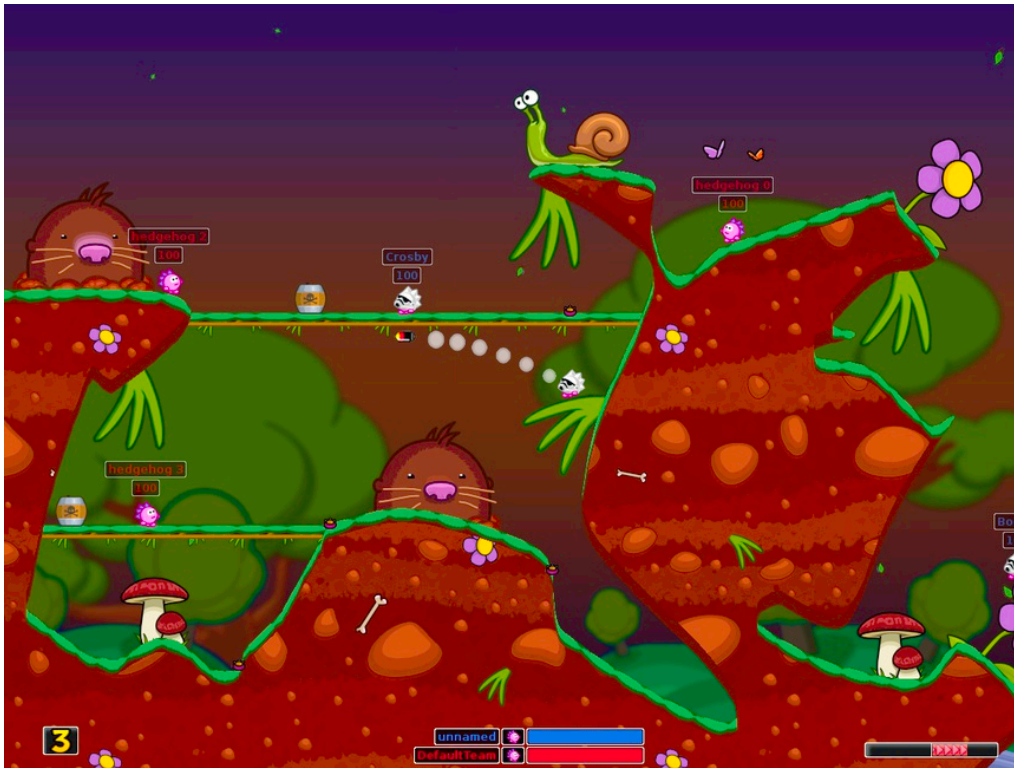
compatible with most SIP clients and gateways. It can use various audio and video codecs such as Speex, GSM, G711, ilbc, amr, Theora, H263-1998, MPEG4, H264, and snow. This version improves Mac OS X integration with desktop menus, better sound system handling, and binary bundle generation for ease of installation. It also improves memory usage and fixes a few SIP bugs.

**WordPress** – v3.1. <http://wordpress.org/>. Free GNU General Public License scripts by the WordPress Development Team. WordPress is a software script that, together with PHP v4.3 or greater, MySQL v4.1.2 or greater, and a web server (e.g. Apache; Nginx), provides a point and click menu-driven framework for a standards-compliant, professional looking web site that is easy to maintain with no knowledge of web programming required. WordPress is the most widely used framework for self-hosted blogging web sites, and is highly customizable with thousands of widgets, themes and plug-ins, both free and commercial. New features include the admin bar, which provides easy access to common administrative tasks from the front-end for logged in users; internal linking, which lets you easily search for and link to existing content within your site from within the WYSIWYG editor; a standard set of post formats, enabling the creation of tumblelog-type sites; archive pages for custom post types; advanced taxonomy; and custom field queries.

**Kernel Source** - v2.6.38. <http://www.kernel.org/>. Free GNU Public License source code for all platforms by the Linux community.

**See Linux software screenshots on the next page.**

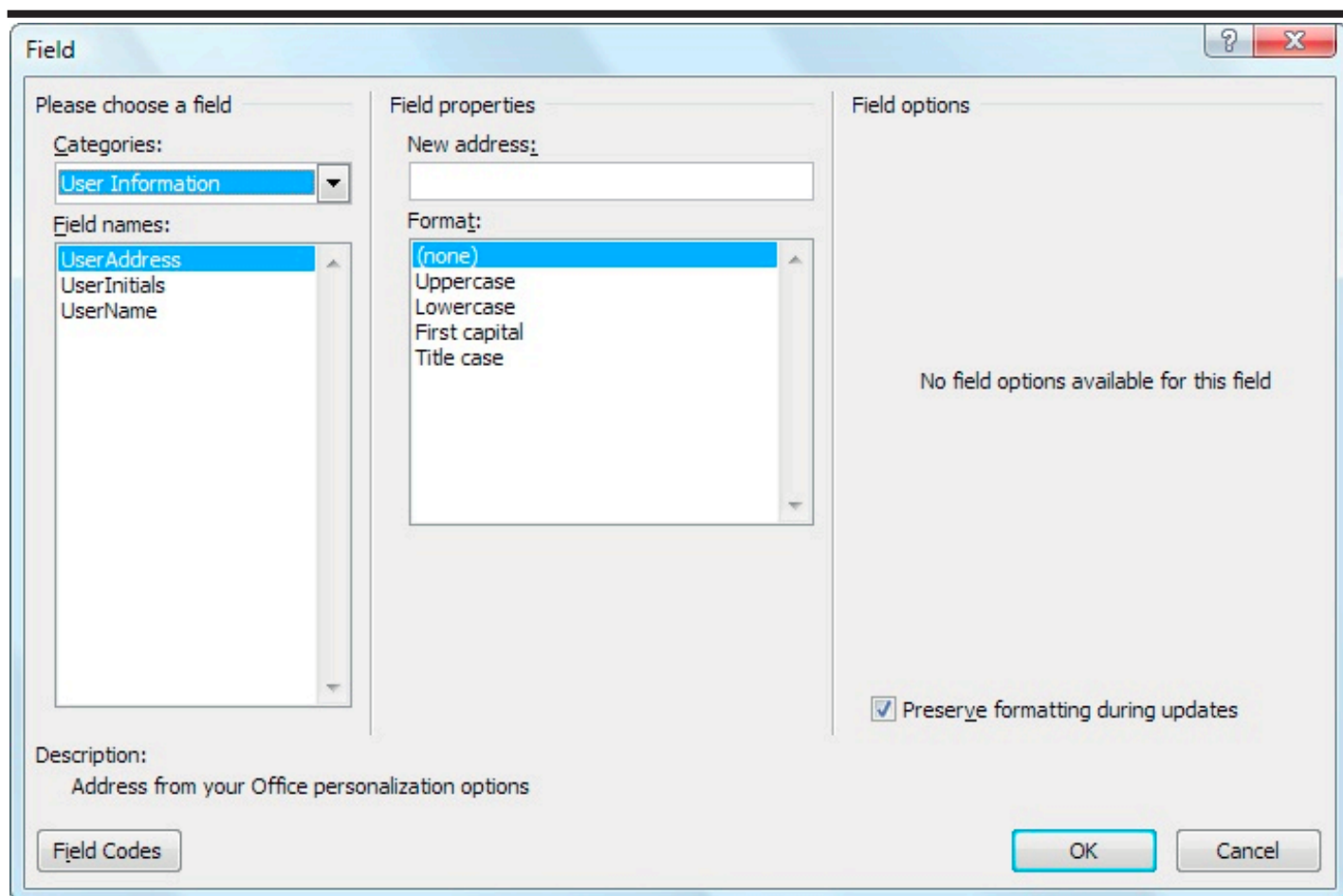




Hedgewars Screenshot



Linphone Screenshot



The Field dialog box

## Word Tips: Inserting the User's Address

Word automatically maintains several items of information about you, as a user. One such item is your address, which is changed on the User Information tab of the Options dialog box. If you want to automatically insert the user address in your documents, you can follow these steps:

1. Position the insertion point where you want the address inserted.
2. Make sure the Insert tab of the ribbon is selected.
3. In the Text group, click Quick Parts. You'll see a drop-down menu.
4. Choose Field. Word displays the Field dialog box.
5. In the Categories drop-down list, choose User Information.

6. In the Field Names list choose UserAddress.
7. Click on OK to close the dialog box and insert your field.

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## Excel Tips: Copying Values

There are many ways that you can use Excel's tools to fill out various cells in a worksheet. One of the most common tools is to copy a cell (or cells) and then paste them into other cells. The only problem with this approach is that when you copy cells, you also copy the format of the original cells into the target cells. What if you just want to copy the values from the original cells, but retain the formatting already applied in the target cells?

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You probably already know that you can use the Paste Special option from the Home tab of the ribbon (Excel 2007 and 2010) or the Edit menu (older versions of Excel), and then choose the Values option to paste just the values. If the target cells are right next to the original cells, there is an even easier way to accomplish the same task. Simply follow these steps:

1. Select the original cells whose values you want to copy.
2. Right-click on the fill handle (at the bottom right-corner of the selection) and drag the selection to encompass the target cells. When you release the mouse button, a Context menu appears.
3. Choose the Fill Values option. Excel fills the target cells with the values from the original cells; the formatting remains unchanged.

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## **Are You Secure?**

*by Constance Brown*

*President, Canton/Alliance/Massillon User Group, Ohio*

*January 2011 issue, The Memory Map*

*[www.camug.org](http://www.camug.org)*

*president (at) camug.org*

Security is one of the most common concerns with today's computer based communications and transactions. How can I secure my personal computer? Should I do banking online or is it safer to write checks and mail them? Is it safe to purchase products online? How much can people learn about me through online access? These questions are some of the most common I hear expressed by my students. Let's look at some of these concerns.

First of all, we need to secure our personal computers. Most of us have high speed access in today's world. If you leave your computer turned on and internet access turned on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, you are more vulnerable than someone who has dial-up access and has to get offline in order to place phone calls. Dial-up is so slow that hackers

don't usually want to fool with it and users with that type of service are usually online only short periods of time. Those with high speed connections through DSL or cable can shut off their modems or turn off their computers. I have high speed access and VOIP phone service. So shutting off my modem is not an option for me.

That is one reason I turn off my computer if I am not going to use it for several hours. I also prefer to place my documents on an external drive that I disconnect if I choose to leave the computer running while I go to town.

Your personal computer needs to be protected with anti-virus and anti-spyware programs. It should also be protected with a firewall. One is included with Windows. A router provides an additional level of protection. It plugs into the modem and your computer plugs into it. When some would-be hacker tries to get to your computer, it finds the address of the router instead. Most routers come with programs to protect you. It is often necessary to update the router software to keep the protections as up-to-date as possible.

If you are using a wireless router in order to send signal to other wireless devices, you will want to secure your wireless network with strong encryption and a strong password. When you choose passwords for your network or for your bank accounts and online stores, be sure to choose a strong password with meaning to you but not to others. A word that is not in the dictionary is best.

You will want to mix upper and lower case letters, include numbers, and a special letter if the site allows it. Let's look at a couple of passwords. Here are examples of two commonly chosen passwords that are dreadfully insecure: 123456; abcdefg. Here is an example of a strong password: E4g\$JwQy. Normally passwords should be 8 characters or more.

Is online banking secure? Many people pay their bills and monitor accounts regularly online. Banks require the use of a browser with specific standards of security. For example, if you are still using Internet Explorer 6, your bank most likely will not allow you to set up online banking. If anyone uses your computer other than yourself or your spouse, you will

*Continued on page 9*



most likely NOT want to allow the site to remember your login information. Over the past two years, banks have added levels of security including a picture id of your selection from choices they provide in addition to the login name and password. The only time I would not be comfortable doing banking or providing credit card information for other types of transactions would be in places providing free public Wi-Fi.

Is it safe to make purchases online? Buyer be informed! All major retail companies have online stores. These have securities in place. After all, these corporations have much to lose if their names were soiled by identity theft.

There are quality “Mom and Pop” stores online. And there are thieves, just as in the real world. If you have questions, check with someone more experienced than you before placing your credit card or bank card information with a company online. There are multiple, wonderful companies. There are some frauds.

Beware of emails that pretend to be from the FBI, PayPal, and Amazon, Chase bank or other well-known financial institutions claiming that there may have been fraudulent activity on your account and telling you to click on a link provided in the email to verify your account information. DO NOT DO THIS! If you have questions regarding your account, open a separate browser, type in the address yourself, and then login and check on things. Be sure to forward the email to the fraud division of the company it claims to represent. That is the best way to track down these identity thieves.

How much can people learn about you online? More than you think! Public information has always been available. You used to look up addresses in telephone books. And you could go to the auditor’s office to look up information about someone’s property. You could look up addresses on maps. Now all that information is readily available through the online white pages and the auditor’s web sites. Of course there are many map services. A GPS can guide you precisely to the locations you program into the system. Try “Googling” your name and the city in which you live. You will find references to your comments in the local paper, information about you

that is included in online publications and anything else that is public.



## **Tor, Anonymity On-line**

*by Dick Maybach*

*n2nd (at) charter.net*

Tor protects your privacy when you are on-line in two ways: (1) it prevents other users of the network you use to reach the Internet (for example a public Wi-Fi hotspot) from seeing the data you exchange and with whom you communicate and (2) it hides your identity from those with whom you communicate. For most of us, item (1) is more important. For example, when we use a Wi-Fi hotspot to access the Internet, every byte we send and every one we receive is accessible to all its other users. One defense would be to add a separate defensive tool for every offensive one, which is the approach taken to foil Windows viruses. The result will surely be the same – an ever-increasing kit of defensive programs to counter the never-ending supply of offensive programs. A much sounder approach is to run Tor, which defends against all such attacks; as a result you need install only one tool. Item (2) is probably less important to you; it prevents sites you visit from knowing who you are or what other sites you’ve visited. We are seeing ever more intrusions into our privacy by governments and businesses, and Tor was developed to help us preserve our privacy, safety, and dignity in the face of this. Although Tor is legal in all countries, you can do illegal things using it. In this way, it’s similar to the gas pedal on your car, which is essential if you want to go someplace, but must be used with restraint to avoid awkward and expensive discussions with the law.

Tor hides not only what you say, but also who you say it to. You could use it to communicate back home from a location where disclosing your country of origin or religion might expose you to unpleasantness or risk. This feature also allows you to circumvent restrictions that your ISP has placed on the Web sites you visit. It’s used by individuals, businesses, activists, reporters, the military, and law enforcement for investigations and to protect themselves, their

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organizations, and those with whom they communicate. Using it, you can surf the Web, exchange e-mail, use instant messaging, and transfer files. However, please don't just install it and assume you're safe. You need to change some of your habits, and reconfigure your software. Tor by itself is NOT all you need to maintain your anonymity.

Tor consists of two parts – a public, secure virtual private network (VPN) and the software to access it. The software is free and available for Windows, Mac OS X, Linux, and some smart phones at <http://www.torproject.org/>. Most PC and Mac users will want the Tor Browser Bundle, which includes the Firefox browser. (For reasons you can read on the Tor Web site, neither Internet Explorer nor Safari is suitable for secure browsing.) The Tor VPN is distributed and accessible worldwide, is free, and is provided and maintained by volunteers. Because the network consists of thousands of independent Web sites, it's quite robust; there is no single point of failure.

How does Tor work? When you access the Internet with it, you first communicate with a Tor Directory Server over an encrypted link (one with a URL beginning `https://`). Here, you obtain a list of available Tor Nodes. The Tor software on your computer selects at least three of these; call them Node 1, Node 2, and Node 3. It then sets up a secure link to Node 1, which forwards your traffic to Node 2, which forwards it to Node 3. All these links are secure, and only Node 3 can decrypt your packets. Finally Node 3 sends your packets to your desired end site. Note that if the end site is secure (indicated by a URL beginning with `https://`), even Node 3 can't read your data. Packets coming to you follow the reverse path, Node 3 encrypts them in such a way that only you can do the decryption. As far as the end site knows, it is communicating with Node 3; it has no way of finding your computer's URL. An observer on your local network knows only the URL of the Tor Directory Server and Node 1; he can't find the location of the end site or read any of your packets. Only Node 1 knows your location, and only Node 3 knows that of the end site. Note that Node 3 can also see the data you exchange, unless you're using end-to-end encryption, i.e., talking to a site with a URL beginning `https://`.

When you install Tor, you will also install the Torbutton add-on for Firefox, which allows you to turn Tor anonymous browsing on and off. Turning Tor on changes some of Firefox's operation.

- None of the cookies you acquired during normal browsing will be available. This is because cookies can tell the site you are communicating with a lot about you and which sites you've visited. As a result, you will have to reenter passwords where they are required. These cookies will return when you toggle Tor off.
- Some sites will be displayed in a foreign language. Since they don't know where you are, they assume you are located in the same country as Node 3. See the Tor site for work-arounds.
- You will see moderate delays while surfing the Web. There are at least three intermediate sites on the path to your final destination, and several layers of encryption are involved. While the delays are noticeable, I haven't found them to be obnoxious, and I consider it a good trade-off to achieve better security.

Many users need only browser access to the Internet when away from home, since through it they can also exchange e-mail and transfer files. (I've found that the FireFTP add-on is convenient for the latter, but see the Tor site for instructions on how to configure it and follow these exactly.) If you want to use secure instant messaging, use Pidgin, which Windows and OS X users can obtain by installing the Tor IM Bundle, available on the Web site. (Pidgin is in most Linux repositories.) You can't use Tor for file sharing, i.e., using BitTorrent; instead use the I2P network, <http://www.i2p2.de/>. See the Tor site for how to configure other Internet access programs, including some that provide access to your home computer. However, if you really need access to files on your home computer, it would be better to transfer them to your laptop or to a cloud service before you go. Otherwise, a power transient or other failure could disable your computer until you return home to restore it.

Accessing the Internet away from home without Tor is like driving without insurance, you can almost always get away with it. That doesn't mean it's a smart thing to do.

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Monthly Circulation: 60

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## The 2011 WACUG Board of Directors and Volunteers

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Dues are collected on an Annual basis and include download access to WAC's monthly newsletter, *The Cursor*, in PDF format.

### **Annual Dues: \$25.00**

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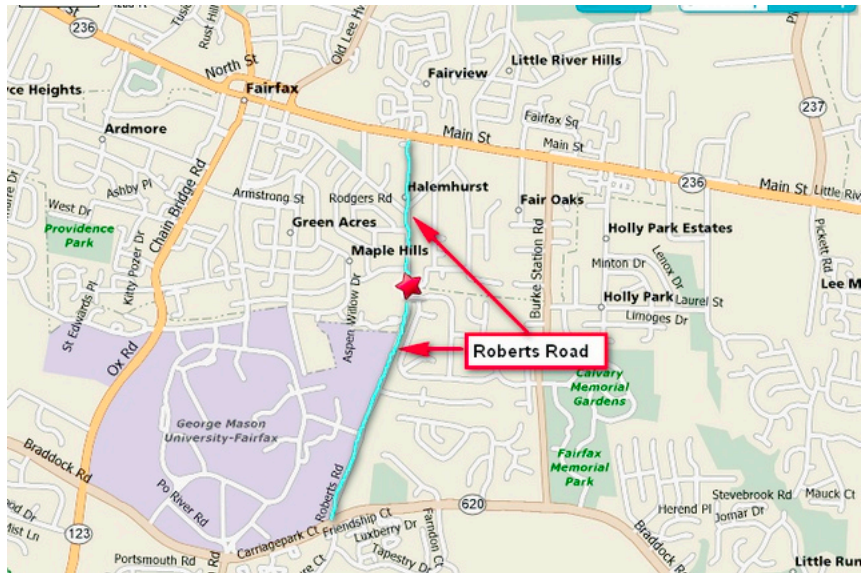
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## eBooks

by Wil Wakely

President, Seniors Computer Group, CA

February 2011 issue, Bits and Bytes, The Official Electronic Newsletter of the SCG [www.SCGsd.org](http://www.SCGsd.org)

[wilw\(at\)adnc.com](mailto:wilw(at)adnc.com)

It took a long time for e-books to arrive on the scene, but now they are here in a swarm, offering many styles, file formats and displays. In a few years, when standards are established, this confusing variety will disappear. Currently, the major players are Kindle by Amazon, Nook by Barnes & Noble, Sony eReader, and a lot of fledglings trying to get their foot in the door.

The concept of the e-book is great: a portable electronic book containing hundreds of titles; low cost books in digital format so no paper printing is required; variable type font selection for ease of reading; immediate downloads for impulse purchases; access to the Web for blogs, magazines and newspapers; audio text-to-speech for when your eyes are tired. And I know of other advantages besides these. Recently, there has been a price war and Amazon and others have slashed prices drastically. I predict that Walmart will have an e-book for \$39.95 in the not too distant future. The e-book concept has been around for years; I recall promoting the idea 25 years ago, but at that time the technology was not yet available to make it practical. What was missing was an inexpensive low cost display; cheap large memory; a fast computer chip; and a small, lightweight, powerful battery. None of these existed at that time, but now they are here and the concept has been actualized.

Several types of displays are now available: Kindle uses a black/white display called e-ink. It is low power for long battery life and reflective so sunlight doesn't fade it; in fact, it is viewed best in bright light. The downside is that a book light is required to read in bed without disturbing your bed partner.

The Nook is a color display using liquid crystals, which is poor in bright light and a battery power hog. However, it is color and can be viewed in the dark, the darker the better.

Qualcomm has developed a color display called Mirasol that uses interference colors like butterfly

wings or oil-on-water; it also uses very little power for long battery life. Like the Kindle, it is reflective for viewing in bright light. Although holding great promise, it is not yet on the market, but is due later this year in some e-book. Every day hundreds more books become available in digital format. Google claims to be converting almost every book in print to digital format, and they have the resources to do it. Amazon and Barnes & Noble offer huge book selections on their Web sites. Surprisingly, Amazon sold more digital books last year than printed ones.

A major problem is the plethora of file formats that are too numerous to describe here.

For more info go to: <http://bit.ly/fznE77> In time, these will boil down to just a few standard file formats. In the meantime, there are free conversion programs which will allow you to read almost any file format on your e-book, regardless of the model.

If you are an avid reader, I would recommend that you consider an e-book. It will save you money in the long run on the cost of books (NY Times Best Sellers, \$9.99 and many free ones), Plus, all the neat features make it a joy to use.



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## Panoramas using GIMP

By Cal Esneault

President and leader of many Open Source Workshops & SIGs, Cajun Clickers Computer Club, Louisiana

February 2011 issue, Cajun Clickers Computer News

[www.clickers.org](http://www.clickers.org) / <http://cccclinuxsig.pbwiki.com>

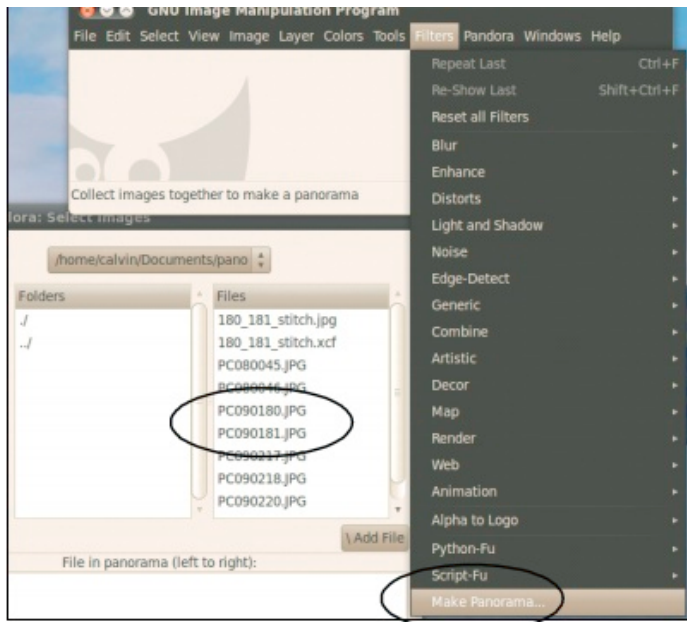
[cjesne\(at\)bellsouth.net](mailto:cjesne(at)bellsouth.net)

Small point-and-shoot cameras are great to carry around on vacation. However, due to the smaller geometry and limited angular response of digital sensors, wide-angle shots are limited. One solution is to take slightly overlapping shots and combine them during post-processing into a single scene. Below are two photos I took from a hill overlooking a scenic harbor. Even at the widest setting, I was not able to capture the whole scene.

GIMP is a sophisticated open-source photo editing tool which is available as a free download for most operating systems (Windows, Linux, Mac OS). To create panoramas, however, you have to download a

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plug-in called Pandora. Once you have it installed, you find it as the last item in the Filters menu (see screenshot). Clicking on this item will open an image loading dialog from which you select the pictures you want to merge (the two pictures I selected are circled). Upon opening the image files, you will find that they are on multiple layers, and Pandora has automatically shifted the images so that they are aligned. This is not always perfect, so you may have to select one of the images and shift it using the Move tool.



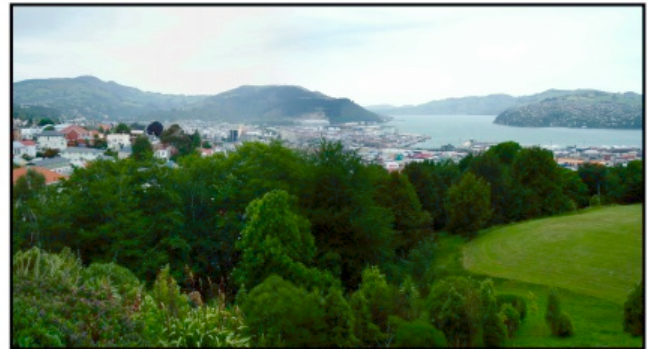
The recommended procedure for panoramas is to determine the exposure, match this exposure in manual mode, and then take all pictures at the same setting. Unfortunately, my simpler camera didn't allow for this, so the auto-exposure for each picture

was slightly different. Any exposure variance is readily seen when the pictures are super imposed. Using the GIMP brightness control for one of the layers, I could easily adjust the picture to have uniform exposure for both layers.

GIMP saves pictures in a native “.xcf” format. Prior to exporting this image to the more conventional “.jpg” format, I had to Merge the Layers and Flatten the image.

Then, using Save As, I gave the picture a name with the jpg suffix (a conversion tool is embedded in the program, and you can adjust the picture quality for saving).

Below is the final panorama shot showing the much broader view. Making panoramas is a good way to



get these wide shots without having to carry around a much heavier DSLR. It takes a little practice, but the technique is within the scope of most users.



## Browser Wars Intensify With Release of IE9, Firefox 4 - Part 1

by Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:

<http://www.mozilla.com>

<http://www.microsoft.com/ie>

<http://www.beautyoftheweb.com>

I have made it no secret that Microsoft's Internet Explorer has not been my favorite browser. While it is integrated at the system level with all recent versions of Windows (except in Europe), Internet

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Explorer (IE) has had a reputation for being slow, bloated, insecure, and lacking many of the enhanced and improved features of its feisty competitors, such as Firefox, Google's Chrome, Apple's Safari (Windows version), and Opera. In the early 1990's, when the World Wide Web was in its infancy, a university developed browser known as Mosaic had a near monopoly, with Netscape appearing as a potential competitor. Not to be left out in the cold, Microsoft decided to get into the browser business in 1995 with its Internet Explorer utilizing code licensed from Mosaic, and included with OEM versions of Windows 95, and Microsoft Plus! for Windows 95. Mosaic, which I personally used for several years, was phased out as Internet Explorer and Netscape fought it out for consumer acceptance and dominance in the browser market.

Netscape had some success becoming the dominant browser in terms of market share in the late 1990's, and then declined as Microsoft encouraged computer stores and internet service providers (ISPs) to give away countless copies of IE, while Netscape depended on sales revenue in order to survive. This behavior by Microsoft resulted in a successful antitrust suit by Netscape against Microsoft, but the decision was too late to save Netscape. It was very difficult for the commercial product Netscape, produced by the Netscape Communications Corporation, to compete against the well-financed Internet Explorer being given away for free by Microsoft. AOL purchased Netscape, but did not actively pursue its development, discontinuing it in 2007, and releasing its last security patch in 2008 (source: Wikipedia). In 1998, Netscape released most of the code base for Netscape Communicator under an open source license, meaning that anyone could develop software based on the open source code. Mozilla was a code name used by Netscape for its Netscape Communicator software in development, and that code became the basis for the now popular Firefox browser, which owes its birth to that early Mozilla code.

Now in the spring of 2011, the browser wars continue with the almost concurrent releases of Internet Explorer 9, Firefox 4, and Google's Chrome 10. Despite the clout of the powerhouse Microsoft, the alternative browsers are reducing the market share of

IE. According to a recent article in USA Today (March 16, 2011 edition), citing a report by Net Applications, Internet Explorer's market share has dropped to 57% of the browser market, with Firefox a distant second with 22%. Chrome, being heavily promoted by the giant Google and its vocal group of users is third at 11%, followed by Apple's Safari with 6%, and the feisty European product, Opera, taking 2% of the browser market. While there are some lesser known browsers in use, some of which are technically excellent, these five browsers make up about 98% of the market.

Internet Explorer 9 is now being heavily promoted by Microsoft as the browser of choice optimized for Windows 7, but also runs well on Vista (not all enhanced IE9 features will work on Vista). Both 32 and 64 bit versions are available for free download from Microsoft ([microsoft.com/ie](http://microsoft.com/ie)). Sadly, Internet Explorer 9 will not run on Windows XP, and unless there is a change of heart at Microsoft, IE 8 will be the last version of Microsoft's browser that will run on the now discontinued Windows XP. According to Microsoft, there are "9 reasons to get Internet Explorer 9." The first reason for upgrading (or switching) to IE9 is speed; according to published results, IE9 is up to six times faster than IE8 because it utilizes hardware acceleration (available in most newer computers) to load and display web pages. IE9 is less cluttered and more visually appealing by minimizing the number of controls, only having the most basic controls displayed in the browser. The new version allows the user to "Pin" his favorite websites to the Windows taskbar, which will directly open (mouse click) the websites without first having to load the browser, speeding their display. The new IE9 has eliminated the separate search box on the toolbar, now combining the search and address bar into a single unit that performs both functions, the search being performed on whatever the user selected as his preferred search engine, with Microsoft's own Bing search engine being the factory default. Combining both functions in a single place saves valuable real estate on the desktop, freeing up more space for web pages. IE was among the last of the major browsers to incorporate tabbed browsing, and has now redesigned the "New Tab" (CTRL-T is the shortcut) which provides quick access to the most

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visited websites. Tabs that have been closed can be reopened, including tabs closed in the previous browsing session. With personal privacy becoming a more sensitive and serious internet issue, IE9 offers something in each tab it calls “InPrivate Browsing”. According to the explanation built into IE9, “InPrivate Browsing helps prevent Internet Explorer from storing data about your browsing session. This includes cookies, temporary Internet files, history, and other data. Toolbars and extensions are disabled by default.”

One complaint that users have had about previous versions of IE was its often long time to load, primarily due to the “add-ons” selected by the user. IE9 now incorporates an “Add-on Performance Advisor” that informs the user about the performance degradation of selected add-ons, and allows the user to selectively disable or uninstall any unnecessary add-ons. Another new feature in IE9 is called “Tracking Protection,” which helps protect the user’s privacy by limiting the information that some websites collect without the knowledge of the user. One of the popular add-ons utilized in earlier versions of IE was some form of download manager, because the download manager built into IE lacked the ability to effectively pause and restart downloads. Earlier versions of IE also lacked the ability to check downloaded files for malware or other malicious content at the time of download, a function performed by many of the third-party download managers. In IE9, downloads can be paused and restarted by the integral download manager, which also notifies the user if the downloaded file could harbor malicious content or other forms of malware.

Another feature built into IE9, that is not listed by Microsoft as one of the top reasons for using IE9, but which I found especially beneficial is what IE9 calls “Smartscreen Filter,” a feature that provides protection from a variety of web born threats including anti-phishing protection, phishing being one of the most common methods of identity theft which uses counterfeit websites to trick users into disclosing personal data, typically credit card numbers, bank account numbers, ATM card numbers, PIN numbers, passwords, and other sensitive personal information, and displays the real website address rather than the spoofed web address. Another

function of Smartscreen Filter is “Application Reputation” that reduces unnecessary warnings on reputable files that are downloaded, while showing severe warnings for downloads that may have a high degree of risk. The Smartscreen Filter also includes anti-malware protection that helps protect the computer from malware and other malicious software that may enter the computer through the browser. This feature is smart, in that it will either block an entire malicious website, or have a “surgical block” that can block purloined pages on an otherwise legitimate website, without blocking the entire website. Smartscreen Filter is integrated with the download manager previously mentioned, providing some protection from dangerous downloads. Based on the threat level, some downloads may be immediately blocked, while others will present the user with an appropriate alert giving the user the choice to delete, run, or save the questionable program or file.

Internet Explorer 9 is a very good choice for users of Windows 7, with its enhanced and optimized features that work with Windows 7, as well as its greatly improved performance, safety, and security features. While lacking some of the “bells and whistles” available with Windows 7, Internet Explorer 9 will offer Vista users increased performance and safety as well. Windows XP users cannot use IE9 as it is incompatible with XP, and must continue to use IE8 or an alternative browser, such as Firefox.

In Part 2, I will discuss the features and advantages of the newly released Firefox 4, and compare them to Internet Explorer 9. In a future column I will be evaluating Google’s newly released Chrome 10, and Opera 11. Hold on; the browser wars are heating up as some strong contenders are in the fight.

