



The Cursor



Monthly Newsletter of the Washington Area Computer User Group

Meeting Location:
OLLI, 4210 Roberts Road
Fairfax, VA



Next Meeting:
October 15, 2011



**Gabe at Learn 30 with Kathy
Jacobs onscreen**

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Presidential Bits

by Geof Goodrum

President WACUG, president(at)wacug.org

Using articles he wrote for Slickdeals.net, Gabe Goldberg encouraged us to take action when we don't get what we expect from our business dealings during the September Learn 30 session. Two examples of successful complaining that Gabe cited were sending a letter to the CEO of Hewlett-Packard (HP) when a retailer would not replace a defective toner cartridge, and expressing his disappointment in a letter to a Pennsylvania resort manager when he discovered that a five star restaurant at the resort was closed during the period he had reservations there. In the first case, HP contacted Gabe and shipped a new toner cartridge to him at no charge. In the second case, the manager arranged for the restaurant's chef and staff to cater Gabe and his wife with a meal of their choice during their stay. Gabe has kindly permitted The Cursor to reprint his Slickdeal articles; the first of four articles is in this issue.

During the main presentation in September, Kathy Jacobs, President of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG, of which WAC is a member) and Microsoft PowerPoint MVP, gave us a live, online tour of the features in Microsoft's PowerPoint 2010 presentation software. Kathy emphasized improvements in this version, including the ability to embed video clips within the PowerPoint file (instead of link external video objects), and demonstrated video effects such as reflections. Other popular features Kathy demonstrated were slide transitions and animations. Kathy pointed out that, to its credit, Microsoft removed the random transitions option, which encouraged misuse of the feature (i.e., overuse of transitions distract from the content). Kathy also had a "Stump the Expert" session when she took questions from the audience and provided immediate answers and demonstrations. Kathy's presentation slides, with links to web sites from recognized PowerPoint experts, will be posted on the WAC Recent Meetings web page, <http://www.wacug.org/recmtgs.html>. Until then, you can visit Kathy's web site for PowerPoint tips at <http://www.onppt.com/ppt/homepage.html>.

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Lloyd's Web Sites for October 2011

by Lloyd Johnson

Columnist, Washington Area Computer User Group

Visit www.wacug.org for past issues of Web Sites with hyperlinks.

1. Deadspin has water-cooler sports scores, stats and gossip about your favorite athlete or team — www.deadspin.com.
2. Free On-line Dictionary — www.thefreedictionary.com.
3. Films101 is a movie data base of films strongly recommended by critics and filmmakers — www.films101.com.
4. Recycle anything at Earth 911 — www.earth911.com.
5. Howcast is the best source for fun, free, and useful how-to videos and guides — www.howcast.com.
6. Learn How to Tie Knots (boating, fishing and other purposes) — www.animatedknots.com.
7. New York Times. The Old Gray Lady looks fetching on the small screen — www.nytimes.com.
8. Free home-inventory software — www.knowyourstuff.org.
9. Clips of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and other Silent Movie Legends — <http://silent-stars.com/Slapstick/home.html>.
10. Internet Movie Database — www.imdb.com.



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
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NCTCUG

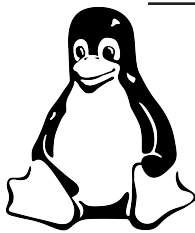
WACUG

OPCUG

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At the October 15th meeting, Bill Walsh will share the pros and cons of the Apple iPad2 tablet during the Learn 30 session, showing off some of the many features, and giving everyone a general idea of what all the fuss is about. For the main presentation, I'll present the fundamentals of the GNU/Linux operating system and Open Source software, provide tips on how to get started with GNU/Linux, and demonstrate both a specialty GNU/Linux operating system distribution that runs directly from a CD as well as the latest version of Ubuntu (v11.10, Oneiric Ocelot), one of the most popular general-purpose GNU/Linux distributions.

See you there!



Linux and Open Source News

by Geof Goodrum
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Review: HP Pavilion g6 Notebook PC and Ubuntu 11.10 beta

After months of personal debate, I decided to purchase a laptop computer. I favor Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) processors, despite a preponderance of Intel systems on the market. I compared budget (~\$300) laptops, including ASUS and Gateway models featuring the AMD Fusion E350 1 GHz dual core processor at MicroCenter and Best Buy. The cutting-edge AMD Fusion processors integrate the graphics processor (GPU) with the central processor cores into an "Accelerated Processor Unit" (APU) to improve performance and power efficiency in a small form factor.

However, just as I was about to buy, I found a Hewlett-Packard Pavilion g6-1b50us laptop on sale for \$419 (after tax) with \$50 HP rebate at Staples. Although slightly more expensive, the g6 has more RAM and disk, more raw processing capability, an HDMI video output, and AMD Premium Vision qualification that the other budget models did not have. To summarize the g6 features:

RAM: 4 GB DDR3 (expandable to 8 GB)

Hard Disk: 500 GB 5400 rpm SATA

Processor: AMD Phenom II P650 dual-core 2.6GHz 64-bit processor

Graphics: AMD Mobility Radeon HD 4250G GPU

Display: 15.6" 1366x768 (16:9 widescreen) LED

Network: Ralink RT5390 802.11 b/g/n wireless; Realtek RTL8101E/RTL8102E

Media: DVD±RW dual-layer burner; SD card reader; Webcam (640x480) with integrated microphone

I/O Ports: USB 2.0 (3); HDMI; DB15 analog VGA; Ethernet; microphone in; headphone out

Physical: 5.22 lbs; 14.72"L x 9.65"W x 1.20"H

Battery: 6 cell 47WHr Lithium Ion

The system came with Microsoft Windows 7 Home Premium 64-bit edition pre-installed. Although I run GNU/Linux operating systems exclusively, I view the built-in "tax" by Microsoft grants me a license to run proprietary Microsoft audio and video codecs within Linux on the system. Also (to my dismay), the HP utility to update the system firmware only ran under MS Windows. I also found that the entire 500 GB hard disk was allocated to four primary partitions: Windows 7 loader (NTFS), Windows 7 primary (NTFS), Windows 7 recovery image (NTFS), HP Tools (FAT32).

I could not add partitions to install GNU/Linux since the maximum of 4 physical partitions (including extended partition) were already allocated. Before making changes, I first tried to create Win7 system recovery DVDs with the HP utility. The utility successfully burned the first of two dual-layer DVDs, but failed to burn the second and I could not find a way to restart from the second disc. If needed, HP offers system recovery DVDs for purchase. Instead, I backed up and verified the small HP Tools partition to an external USB drive, then used the freely downloadable Parted Magic Live CD GNU/Linux distribution to resize the Win7 primary partition to 60 GB, delete the HP Tools partition, create an extended partition in the newly unallocated space, and restore the HP Tools partition within the extended partition. I

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used the remaining unallocated space in the extended partition to install Ubuntu Linux.

I installed the beta release of Ubuntu 11.10 (Oneiric Ocelot) that features Linux kernel 3.0, which includes newly-released Ralink wireless network device drivers; the Ubuntu network manager immediately discovered local wireless networks and I was able to connect to my home network by adding my WPA2 network passphrase. I also recommend selecting the encryption option for the user home directory during installation, particularly if the laptop will be used outside the home or for personal information such as financial or medical records.

While the early Ubuntu 11.10 beta exhibited a number of bugs (which can be reported to developers easily with the built-in apport utility), bugs have been steadily decreasing and stability increasing with frequent software updates from the developers. I found that the g6 video and 3D graphic performance is excellent for desktop use; OpenGL hardware acceleration is more than sufficient for 3D screen effects and 3D games and simulations, though would not satisfy gamers wanting full detail/full resolution settings on fast-paced games. A nice feature of the touchpad support is the “edge scrolling” feature (on by default) with vertical scroll by moving a finger along the right edge of the touchpad. However, I did uncheck the “Enable mouse clicks with touchpad” feature, which tended to make the cursor wander the screen while typing (discovered while typing this article).

For those like me who actually run the laptop on the lap (not recommended, by the way), this system never got uncomfortably warm, and fan noise was low but audible.

In summary, Ubuntu 11.10 is a good fit for the HP Pavilion g6 laptop, even in Ubuntu’s beta state, though repartitioning MS Windows before installation is a bother (other installation options allow running Ubuntu as an application within Windows, or directly from USB thumb drive or CD). The final release of Ubuntu 11.10 is scheduled for 13 October 2011 (<https://wiki.ubuntu.com/OneiricReleaseSchedule>).

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 free download 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](http://distrowatch.com) for the period August 31 – September 28, 2011.

ArchBang Linux 2011.09
BackBox Linux 2
Bodhi Linux 1.2.0
CAINE 2.5
CentOS 5.7
Clonezilla Live 1.2.10-14
Fuduntu 14.11
GeeXboX 2.0
Incognito Live System 0.8
IPCop 2.0.0
IPFire 2.9 Core 52
KNOPPIX 6.7.1
Kororaa Linux 15
Linux Mint 201109 "Debian GNOME", "Debian Xfce"
Linux Portable Security 1.2.4
LliureX 11.09

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Macpup 528

Pardus Linux 2011.2

Proxmox 1.9 "Virtual Environment"

Qomo Linux 3.0

Scientific Linux 5.7

Tiny Core Linux 4.0

Trisquel GNU/Linux 5.0

VortexBox 1.10

Zentyal 2.2

Featured Linux Software of the Month: October 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.

CG Madness – v1.3.

<http://www.fluxparticle.com/cgmadness/>. Free GNU General Public License source code and executables by Sven Reinck. CG Madness is based on the classic game Marble Madness. It is running on OpenGL and uses current techniques like light maps, bump-mapping and reflection shader. With all features available you can play the game with a cool looking metallic golf ball. It also has an editor where you can create your own levels. If you have done so and you want to share the level, you can upload it. It has a modification "CG Portals" in which you will be able to throw Portals towards walls and floors, so you can reach unreachable places.

FxMovieManager – v5.3.

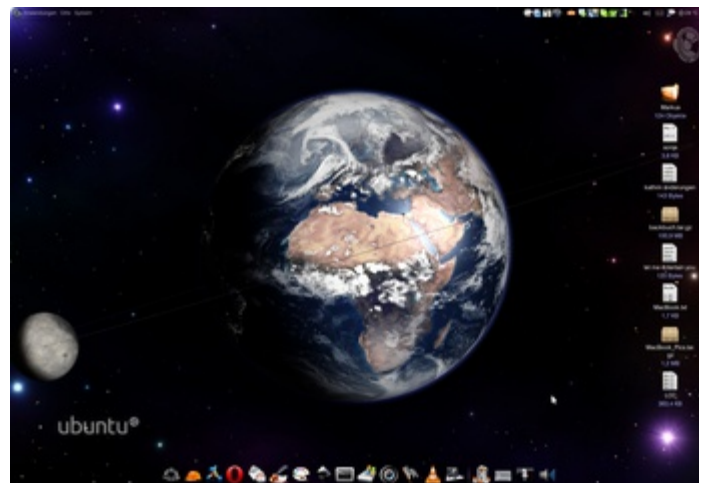
<http://stagione.interfree.it/index.html>. Free GNU General Public License source code by Luigi Ziviani. FxMovieManager is a file manager written to help with managing movie files and video clips. It includes a file manager, a playlist and acts as a simple front-end to MPlayer. Both filemanager and playlist can display thumbnails of movie files making it easier to work with video clips and order different pieces of the same movie.

Tiny Core Linux – v4.0.

<http://distro.ibiblio.org/tinycorelinux/welcome.html>. Free GNU General Public License ISO CD image by Team Tiny Core. Tiny Core Linux is a very small

(<12 MB) minimal Linux GUI Desktop. It is based on Linux 3.0 kernel, Busybox, Tiny X, and Fltk. The core runs entirely in RAM and boots very quickly. Also offered are Micro Core, a 8 MB image that is the console-based engine of Tiny Core, and Multi Core, which includes Tiny Core, Micro Core, networking tools and an installer. Micro Core contains CLI versions of Tiny Core's programs allowing the same functionality of Tiny Core's extensions, only starting with a console based system. It is not a complete desktop nor is all hardware completely supported. It represents only the core needed to boot into a very minimal X desktop typically with wired Internet access. The user has complete control over which applications and/or additional hardware to have supported, be it for a desktop, a netbook, an appliance, or server, selectable by the user by installing additional applications from online repositories, or easily compiling most anything you desire using tools provided. Tiny Core requires a minimum of 46 MB of RAM and a 486DX processor.

xplanetFX – v2.3.3. <http://mein-neues-blog.de/xplanetfx/>. Free Free4all License v0.1 source code and executable Debian and RPM packages by Markus Schmidt. xplanetFX relies on Hari Nair's xplanet software and ImageMagick image processing software to create high quality renderings of mother earth with realistic clouding and lighting effects as your desktop wallpaper with "realtime" update capabilities. A GUI is included to configure download of real-world cloud maps, sun reflections, atmospheric effects, orbital characteristics, and manage background themes.



xplanetFX on Ubuntu desktop

Excel Tips: Understanding Manual Calculation

When you change a value in any cell of a worksheet, Excel automatically recalculates all the other formulas within the worksheet. This means that Excel is always up to date, based on any changes you may have performed.

If you have an absolutely huge worksheet or a terribly slow computer (or both), then doing a calculation after every change can get very tedious. In these situations, you can actually spend more time waiting on Excel to finish calculating than you do on entering information.

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The Formulas area of the Excel Options dialog box

The screenshot shows the 'Excel Options' dialog box with the 'Formulas' tab selected. The left sidebar contains links to Popular, Formulas (selected), Proofing, Save, Advanced, Customize, Add-Ins, Trust Center, and Resources. The main area is titled 'Change options related to formula calculation, performance, and error handling.' and is divided into three sections: 'Calculation options', 'Working with formulas', and 'Error Checking'.

Calculation options

- Workbook Calculation**
 - ☒ Automatic
 - ☐ Automatic except for data tables
 - ☐ Manual
 - ☒ Recalculate workbook before saving
- ☐ Enable iterative calculation
 - Maximum Iterations: 100
 - Maximum Change: 0.001

Working with formulas

- ☐ R1C1 reference style
- ☒ Formula AutoComplete
- ☒ Use table names in formulas
- ☒ Use GetPivotData functions for PivotTable references

Error Checking

- ☒ Enable background error checking
- Indicate errors using this color:
-

Error checking rules

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cells containing formulas that result in an error	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Formulas which omit cells in a region
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Inconsistent calculated column formula in tables	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unlocked cells containing formulas
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cells containing years represented as 2 digits	<input type="checkbox"/> Formulas referring to empty cells
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Numbers formatted as text or preceded by an apostrophe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Data entered in a table is invalid
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Formulas inconsistent with other formulas in the region	

At the bottom right are 'OK' and 'Cancel' buttons.

The answer to this problem is to configure Excel so that all calculations are done manually. This is easy to do by following these steps:

1. Display the Excel Options dialog box. (In Excel 2007 click the Office button and then click Excel Options. In Excel 2010 display the File tab of the ribbon and then click Options.)
2. Click the Formulas area at the left of the dialog box.
3. In the Calculation Options section of the dialog box, make sure the Manual radio button is selected.
4. Click on OK.

Now, Excel does not calculate your worksheet automatically. Instead, you must press F9 whenever you want to update the results displayed within your worksheet.

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Creative Griping Makes Friends and Brings Rewards

by Gabe Goldberg

In a perfect world, there'd be no problems with hardware, software, or services; businesses would be fully staffed with articulate human beings ready to accommodate all requests, and every product would meet or exceed customer expectations.

But that's not how things work on planet Earth in 2010. Instead, things break quickly or are badly designed; customer service is outsourced to far-away lands; and even when they're accessible, company staff often isn't responsive.

So what to do? Nobody I know is cut out for frontier living, self-sufficiency, and subsistence farming. That means we're all making the best of living in our techno-fragile and sometimes irritating culture. So let's have at it.

First, when life's little outrages intrude, avoid the temptation to accept them as unavoidable—and,

worse, unfixable. Just as slickdeals tips help you find bargains, a few techniques and some practice can remedy a bad situation or even turn it pleasant.

Stay Calm and Be Convincing

Complaining courteously to the right person with a specific remedy in mind can be rewarding. If a company Web site has a "Contact us" link, start there with an email or telephone connection. Be polite, identify yourself, mention how you're connected to the organization (current or potential customer, etc.), and describe your dissatisfaction.

If you're always happy after your initial dialogue with a company, you're a unique individual, and you can stop reading now!

Too frequently, however, a first complaint contact goes nowhere. That's when to escalate. Calling may work but you'll likely deal with a low-level (and low-powered) call center. So writing is better.

No matter how you're communicating—phone, email, instant message, letter, online support chat—keep records of contact names and what's said. These are essential for recapping, summarizing, and (especially) escalating. If it's a large company or you expect to have further contact with them, request a case or "ticket" number for tracing your request.

Use company Web sites, Google, and other online resources to identify and locate senior executives. Check Web site links such as "About us", "Press room", and "Investor relations". Write to the CEO by name and title, briefly describing, with a tone of regret, what went wrong. You certainly won't hear back in person from Ms/Mr. CEO, but most large companies have an Office of the Chairman with staff to calm down and cheer up unhappy customers. Pursuing matters to the top works. After Starbucks' Web staffers were unresponsive to a complaint, escalating to the chairman resulted in an apology and a \$50 store card.

Remain courteous. Don't rant or threaten and surely don't overuse CAPITAL letters. That makes your message hard to read and look like a crude ransom note. No matter what you're told, emphasize that you're not angry at whoever you're speaking or

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emailing with and that you understand they're probably bound by company policies. Staying calm and cheerful sets you apart from most people and improves the odds of your getting satisfaction.

Be brief but complete. Provide enough history and detail to be clear and compelling but don't ramble or include non-essential details.

Be precise. Quote error messages, identify people involved, list event sequences so you're believable. When I complained that a Web site didn't use encryption for processing credit card information, the owner at first disagreed but when I proved my assertion, he was outraged—at his Webmaster, for botching security. He then asked what I'd intended to purchase and sent it to me free, along with other items.

Include good news. If you're a long-time customer, had a recent pleasant experience with the company, can praise a particular employee, or have ever recommended the company's products or services, say so. If whatever you're griping about was a mixed picture, begin by describing what you liked.

Let Companies Turn Problems Into Rewards

Raise issues when there's time and flexibility to remedy them. For example, when finalizing a stay at Nemaquin, a luxury Pennsylvania resort, I was unhappy to learn that two signature restaurants would be closed during our planned stay. Instead of suffering in silence or—with difficulty—changing our travel dates, I politely contacted the general manager to suggest that guests be informed of such restrictions when initially making reservations. He agreed, and offered to have his Five-Diamond chef prepare a fantasy meal for us including anything we requested. His only advice was, "Challenge the chef." So we did—and the world-class chef and two assistants spent three hours serving us privately, with Champagne and cocktails, on a day that the restaurant was indeed closed. And—as arranged in advance—one of the most memorable meals of my life cost half the normal price of dining there. So a problem identified early and solved graciously resulted in my being a huge fan of the resort, the general manager, and the chef.

Complaining, even to the top, doesn't always work. I've certainly been ignored—received no response—and received dismissive responses offering neither apology nor any gesture of atonement. When this happens, the final option is going public via Twitter, blogs, etc. Many companies monitor their online reputations and respond to credible complaints with remedies.

But usually, company management values and responds to customer feedback; I've established cordial relationships with executives by identifying areas needing improvement. Writing letters is easy and inexpensive enough—and after sending a few you'll have stock phrases that make it simple—that it's worth doing to remedy all but the smallest problems.

Five minutes and a stamp has been a small price to pay for a \$50 Starbucks card, a unique luxury meal, Web site merchandise, and many hundreds of dollars worth of refunds, merchandise, and services.

Gabe Goldberg has developed, worked with, and written about technology for decades. This article originally appeared on the slickdeals.net Web site, <<http://slickdeals.net/>>. © Gabriel Goldberg 2010.

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This and That or Things that May Interest You

by Lynn Page

*Editor / Webmaster, Crystal River Users Group, FL
September issue of the CRUG newsletter
www.crug.com
editor (at) crug.com*

Protect Your Word Files

In Word 2007 click the Office button and select Prepare and Encrypt Document. Enter and verify a password in the dialog box. In Word 2010 select Info on the File tab. Click Protect Document and then Encrypt with Password. Enter and confirm the

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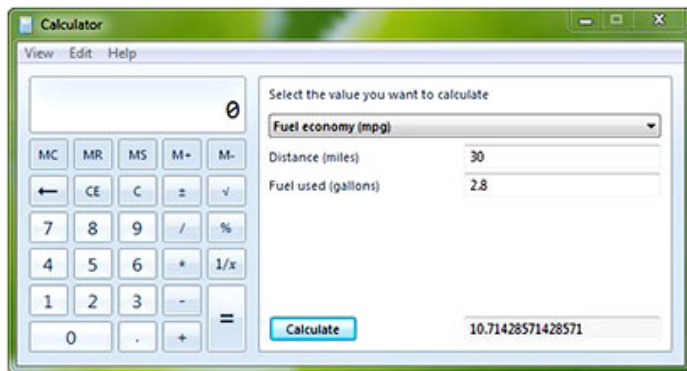
password. Be sure to remember any passwords you use.

Windows 7 Optimize Your Display

Windows 7 has tools for optimizing an LCD. Click the Start button, type display in the search field and press Enter. Click the Calibrate Color link to start a wizard that helps adjust gamma, brightness, and contrast for the LCD. The Display options also contain Adjust ClearType Text. This wizard helps adjust the font smoothing effects and text readability on the screen.

Calculator

Windows 7 calculator is deceptively powerful. It looks a simple calculator, but look at the View drop down menu to see Scientific, Statistics and Programmer views. It even has different unit conversions, date calculations, and spreadsheet-type templates for various tasks. So the new Calculator can perform simple calculations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division but also offers the advanced capabilities of a programming, scientific, and statistical calculator.



Magnifier

Magnifier enlarges and is part of the Ease of Access Center. To open, click Start, and then type Magnifier in the Search box. It has three magnifying modes. Full-screen mode magnifies the entire screen. But you might not be able to see the entire screen at one time. With Lens mode the area around the mouse pointer is magnified. Moving the mouse moves the area of the screen that's magnified. In Docked mode a portion of the screen is magnified and the rest of the desktop unchanged. You can define a scale factor and docking position.

Review: Digital Photography Composition for Dummies

by Donna Kamper

Member, Tucson Computer Society, AZ

September 2011 issue, TCS eJournal

www.aztcs.org

donna (at) kamper.com

What's the difference between an amateurish snapshot and a gallery-quality photograph? There are lots of variables, but the right "composition" makes the viewer's eye snap to the essential element that tells the story.

If there were only one way to tell a story photographically, it'd be easy. It used to be. Plop the subject in the middle and click. But does that really "tell the story?"

This book, by a professional photographer, breaks down and explains the subject of composition element by element. Contrast, distance and patterns as well as lines, shapes and forms are introduced and their relevance to your photography is pointed out

A minimal amount of space is spent on the equipment (camera, lenses, tripod, etc.) and the basics (aperture, focal point, ISO, etc.). I felt it was enough space/time for the subject, and the author states it's expected that the reader has a basic understanding of their equipment.

The subject of composition itself is then addressed, which covers how to use points of interest, framing and even color as an essential element.

The concept of "leading the eye" or "drawing the eye" is referenced frequently. Multiple techniques are demonstrated and illustrated.

This became particularly helpful when the subject was lighting.

The names and descriptions of lighting methods (Paramount, Rembrandt, Broad lighting) are all very well, but actually showing how the light falls on a subject allows the novice (reader) to actually understand (and remember) its effect.

This is a copiously illustrated book, as one about photography should be. The best part is not simply that there are a lot of photos, mostly in color, but that

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they're relevant and helped me to understand certain points.

A broad range of subject matter is covered, which I also found particularly helpful. There are a lot of large, intimidating (expensive) books out there focused solely on "landscape" or "portrait" or "still life" photography. This small and inexpensive volume covers all those subjects and more quite nicely. Each subject does differ, and there are concise descriptions not only of those differences but the methods for adapting to them.

Because Dummies books are written by different authors, I feel like it's a bit of a gamble delving into one. This one is a big winner. It's obvious the author knows his subject in a way only someone doing the work does, but he's also one of the *avis rara* who can also explain it well.

About: Digital Photography Composition for Dummies

Author: Tom Clark

Publisher: For Dummies / www.dummies.com

ISBN-10: 0470647612

ISBN-13: 978-0470647615

Price: \$29.99, \$21.89 @ Amazon



Review: Universal Mini Mount

by George Harding

Treasurer, Tucson Computer Society, AZ

September 2011 issue, TCS eJournal

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When you're in your car (or motorcycle or boat), what do you do with your mobile device? Put it on the seat—slips down so you can't find it; put it on the dash—always slips off; put it in your pocket—hard to get to when you need it? Try the Mini Mount. It's a simple device that attaches to any flat surface and holds just about any mobile device smaller than a tablet.

You make sure the flat surface is clean, then place the base on that surface, push down the clamp lock and you are set to put your mobile phone in it. There is a sticky surface on the mount that holds your device

securely and can be swiveled or tilted to suit your need.

The sticky surface on the mount is covered by a plastic film which you peel off. If you want to put the mount on another surface, you need to save the plastic film for transport. The sticky surface is refreshable with glass cleaner. And best of all, the adhesive doesn't leave any residue behind!

I tried it out in my car. My dash is all curved surfaces so I mounted it on the windshield. It adhered quite well, especially with the vacuum attachment that makes it so easy to fasten it to just about any surface.

The device mounting area was accessible by rotating it properly. I was not able to affix my iPhone to the mounting area in a vertical position, but setting it sideways worked fine. The vertical position would have partially blocked the speakers on the iPhone, but the sideways position did not. I listened to my music in a hands-free method.

This is an inexpensive, easy way to use your mobile device while in your car. There are other mounts available for different devices, even an iPad. One even attaches to the auxiliary power outlet!

About: Universal Mini Mount

Vendor: Cobra

www.cobrahandsfree.com

Price: about \$25



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Monthly Circulation: 60

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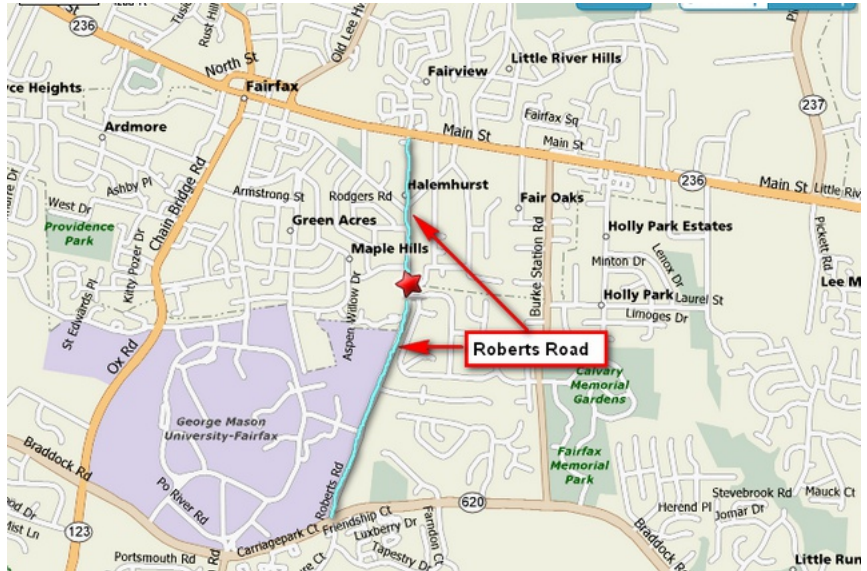
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October is National Cyber Security Awareness Month

by Ira Wilsker

It is that time of year again. In 2004, with the fear of cyber war increasing, and early indications of cyber attacks already taking place against our critical infrastructure, private organizations, and government agencies, President Bush issued a proclamation declaring that October, 2004, would be “National Cyber Security Awareness Month” (NSCAM). Every October since, Presidents Bush and Obama have made similar declarations, acknowledging the degree of threats that we all face, in terms of cyber security. One consistent factor in the declarations and implementations of the program is that it is not just our public and private agencies that have been threatened, but our personal safety and security is at extreme threat as well. Our personal computers can be unknowingly hijacked by a foreign power or terrorist organization, and under remote command, be used to launch a potentially devastating cyber attack against our government or infrastructure, simultaneously coming from millions of our personal computers!



National Cyber Security Awareness Month

National Cyber Security Awareness Month is a joint public - private partnership between the Department of Homeland Security (www.dhs.gov/files/programs/gc_1158611596104.shtm), the National Cyber Security Alliance (staysafeonline.org/ncsam), and the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (msisac.cisecurity.org). Together, these three organizations have brought together government agencies (federal, state and local), educational institutions, corporations and community service entities to promote a coordinated national program designed to educate everyone on the risks endemic in the cyber world, and methods to harden our computers and other smart devices from cyber attack.

Taking the lead is the National Cyber Security Alliance (NSCA), which is providing the primary coordination of activities, supplying free informational materials that anyone is free to copy and distribute (staysafeonline.org/cybersecurity-awareness-month/ncsam-tip-sheets). There is one common thread in all of these NCSA documents (staysafeonline.org/cybersecurity-awareness-month/about-ncsam-2011); “It starts with STOP. THINK. CONNECT., a simple action for all of us to employ to stay safer and more secure online. STOP: Before you use the Internet, take time to understand the risks and learn how to spot potential problems. THINK: Take a moment to be certain the path ahead is clear. Watch for warning signs and consider how your actions online could impact your safety, or your family’s. CONNECT: Enjoy the Internet with greater confidence, knowing you’ve taken the right steps to safeguard yourself and your computer. By incorporating Our Shared Responsibility and STOP. THINK. CONNECT. into your online routine, you will be doing your part in protecting yourself, your family, your community and your country.”

To assist individuals and families in securing their computers, the NCSA has published a variety of “tip sheets” including Gaming Tips for Kids, Gaming Tips for Parents, Internet Safety and Security Tips for College Students, Internet Safety and Security Tips For Parents, Mobile Safety Tips, and Social Networking Tips. If individuals would follow and apply the tips presented in these documents, we and our families may become much safer and more secure while online. Support for these NSCA activities comes from several dozen private companies, non-profit organizations and government agencies (staysafeonline.org/cybersecurity-awareness-month/2011-ncsam-champions). The NCSA website also has age appropriate activities and learning materials for children that may be freely used by school teachers and parents.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is most aware of the degree of danger that we are facing from cyber attack on our computer and domestic infrastructure. DHS says, “The most serious economic and national security challenges we face are cyber threats. America’s economic prosperity and competitiveness in the 21st Century depends on

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effective cybersecurity. Every Internet user has a role to play in securing cyberspace and ensuring the safety of themselves and their families online.” (http://www.dhs.gov/files/programs/gc_1158611596104.shtm)

While most of us are by now aware that we need to secure our personal computers, there is also an extreme need to secure our business, government and educational computers, as well as harden our infrastructure to cyber attack. Several governmental and educational agencies have made free materials available to train employees, and increase awareness of the need for increased and improved cyber security. The United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT), a part of the Department of Homeland Security has released a two-page brochure “Protect Your Workplace, Guidance on Physical and Cyber

Security and Reporting of Suspicious Behavior, Activity, and Cyber Incidents” (www.uscert.gov/reading_room/brochure_securityguidance.pdf). While only two pages, this brochure contains pertinent information on Cyber Security Guidance, reporting Cyber Security Incidents, Physical Security Guidance, reporting Suspicious behavior and Activity, and a listing of the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) phone numbers. The information in this brochure is not just appropriate for government agencies, but is also relevant to any other business, college or other organization, as all of them may be vulnerable for a targeted cyber attack. In order to help facilitate cyber security, US-CERT also has a series of free posters and other information available which can be printed and placed around the workplace (www.uscert.gov/reading_room/distributable.html).

State, cities, counties, and educational institutions are also active participants in the National Cyber Security Awareness Month activities. Several states, such as Georgia and Maryland, have issued statewide proclamations and implemented statewide activities to promote cyber security activities. Recently Maryland announced its “CyberMaryland, an aggressive business development and marketing initiative to strengthen Maryland’s burgeoning cybersecurity industry and protect the nation’s digital

infrastructure.” (source: news.yahoo.com/maryland-recognizes-national-cybersecurity-awareness-month-160244986.html). Maryland Governor O’Malley, in declaring the state’s active participation in National Cyber Security Awareness Month said, “As a state and as a nation, we face unique security challenges. Maryland has a vital network of cybersecurity assets—from entrepreneurs who work to stop cyber attacks by developing new and cutting edge technologies to educators who are training the next generation of cyber warriors. Together, working with our federal and local partners, we have an opportunity to create jobs and uphold our responsibility to protect and defend the nation’s digital infrastructure.”

In Georgia, “Governor Deal has proclaimed October as Cyber Security Awareness Month. It’s part of a nationwide effort to share information about protecting business and personal data.” Georgia has compiled and published a directory of computer security resources for home users and IT professionals which can be found online at gta.georgia.gov/00/press/detail/0,2668,1070969_167558063_163659118,00.html.

In Texas, several colleges and universities have announced programs and events to enhance cyber security awareness in recognition of National Cyber Security Awareness Month. One good example is Texas State University, in San Marcos, where it is sponsoring a series of informational events, culminating in a “Cyber Security Awareness Day 2011 (October 26th)”. Texas State University explains the importance of National Cyber Security Awareness Month as, “Our shared responsibility means each of us must do our part—whether it’s using stronger security practices in our day-to-day online activities or helping raise community awareness, we can all contribute towards this common goal” (security.vpit.txstate.edu/training/csam_2011.html).

While it is a great idea to set aside an entire month to promote awareness of the cyber security threats that we all face, and to widely distribute information on methods and technology to secure our computers, this is a practice that needs to be implemented and practiced 12 months a year, not just in October.

Microsoft FixIt

by Ted Wirtz

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July 2011 issue, nibbles & bits

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My home computer is an HP Pavilion running Vista SP2. It has a memory card reader built into the top faceplate on the front of the computer that is capable of reading many of the common memory cards used in a digital camera. I commonly use it to transfer images from my digital camera which happens to use either SD or SDHC memory cards. (SD cards come in capacities up to 2 GB per card. SDHC cards come in capacities greater than 2 GB.)

Recently I inserted an SDHC card, and instead of seeing pictures, Vista saw it as a blank card and wanted to format it. Not good. Obviously I didn't want to format the card because I knew there were images on it. I ejected it and inserted a SD card. Vista saw images. Reinserted the SDHC card. No images.

I put the SDHC card back in my camera fearing the worst. All the images were there. Whew!

Okay, the card is good, but for some reason, now my system would not recognize SDHC cards. Bummer. Why SD but not SDHC? I didn't have time to mess with it then. I needed to get to my pictures. I connected the camera via a USB port and transferred the images that way. Clumsy but effective.

A couple of weeks ago I decided to attempt a fix for my reader. I opened up Device Manager and looked at the readers. No exclamation marks. Windows doesn't see any problem with the devices. Okay, maybe I need to update the drivers. I asked the system to check, and it reported later drivers were available. I installed the updated drivers and tested the reader. No joy. I still could not read SDHC. Tried an SD card. Oh great, now Vista can't read either type!

I went back to Device Manager, and selected "Roll Back Driver." Vista reported the driver was successfully rolled back. Time to test. Uh Oh. I still can't see any images on either type of card. I've gone from the frying pan into the fire!

Time to Google my problem. Google found something that sounded a lot like my problem.

Solution: use Device Manager, delete the devices, reboot, let Vista re-discover the devices and all should be well. Only it didn't solve the problem.

Device Manager found the devices, reinstalled them, no exclamation marks, but they still can't read any of my cards.

Time to search the Microsoft site. I found a somewhat similar problem listed, where somebody was having a Firewire problem. Recommended solution: Use the Microsoft Fix It program.

I downloaded and installed the program. The program opened up showing a series of problems that it could check. I scrolled down until I found "Hardware devices not detected or not working."

I clicked the Run button and crossed my fingers. The program reported it had found hardware changes might not have been detected, and had successfully updated. It also checked that Windows Update was configured to install drivers (Figure 2).

Okay, time to see if my problem was fixed. Yes! I can now read both types of SD cards just like when the machine was new. Problem solved.

I don't know if the Fixit program can solve other problems as easily, but I'm definitely going to keep this program installed on my computer. It's a keeper.



Save Money on Telephone Calls

by Sandy Berger

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Many of us remember when we all paid a monthly fee to the telephone company for our landline and paid exorbitant rates for long distance service. If you had friends or relatives living far away, those monthly bills could really add up. You may even remember that when a call from afar would come in, the person who answered the phone would promptly announce that the call was "long distance" and the recipient of the call would rush over to the phone so the connection time would be kept as short as possible.

Thankfully, all of that is in the past. Technology has

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brought us many ways to keep in touch with friends, family, and business associates around the world quite inexpensively.

There are actually two different technologies that have greatly impacted our telephone-type communications. First is the emergence of cell phones. Today most of us are using cell phones for everyday communications. Since cell phones work on “minutes” rather than distance, you can basically call anywhere in the US more economically than you can with the old “long distance” service that the telephone companies provide. Each cell phone company offers somewhat unique features, but all are money-savers. For instance, some carriers allow you to call anyone else on that carrier at no charge. Some have special evening and weekend rates. Some allow you to list up to ten telephone numbers that you can call at any time with no charge.

Cell phone charges are generally much more expensive when you want to call overseas, but there is a great technological solution for that too. It is the second technology that has greatly impacted telephone-type communications. It is called VoIP, which stands for Voice Over Internet Protocol. VoIP uses the Internet to make telephone calls. Most of the major telephone and cable companies now offer some sort of “Internet” calling packages. Other companies like Vonage and Net2Phone have made a splash in this industry.

VoIP allows you to use your broadband Internet connection to make phone calls. VoIP service through a major carrier often offers additional features that you not generally offered through a regular telephone service plan. With a VoIP plan from a telephone or cable company you can often get voicemail, call forwarding, caller ID, and 3-way conference calling at no extra cost. Some VoIP providers also offer online account management, online voice mail, detailed call logging, and call-forwarding.

You can also use VoIP with any “telephone-type” company involved. You simply use your computer to make calls. Skype is one of the most popular services of this type. And the price is right. Making Skype calls from computer to computer is totally free. If you hook up two computers that have webcams, you can make video calls where you can see and talk with

someone at the same time. You can also call from your computer to landlines and mobile numbers in the US and Canada for \$2.99 a month. If you don’t want to be tied to the computer, you can purchase a Skype telephone that uses your computer to call, while you talk on a traditional-type telephone handset. You can also access Skype from many mobile phones. This lets you to place calls without adding to your minutes. There are many Skype competitors like GoogleTalk, Yahoo Messenger, and iCall.

There are also other unique VoIP solutions. You may have seen magicJack advertised on late night TV. It is a small device that plugs into the USB port on your computer. With magicJack you get your own telephone number. You can make calls right from the computer screen or you can attach a regular telephone to the device and use it to make free phone calls in the US and Canada. I have a set of wireless phones attached to the magicJack that allows me to make and receive calls anywhere in the house. If a friend or relative also has a magicJack, you can make free calls to them even if they are on the other side of the world. magicJack costs about \$40 for the device and first year of service and \$20 a year for service after that. It’s pretty useful and inexpensive.

By the way, if you have a land-line telephone number that you want to keep, you can move it (port it) over to a mobile phone. magicJack says that starting this August you will also be able to use your old telephone number with the magicJack, as well. So you don’t even have to give up your old number to use the new technologies.

Whether you use a cell phone or a VoIP solution, you should realize that VoIP call may not be perfect. Cell phones sometimes drop calls and have areas where you can get service. Services like magicJack and Skype are dependent on your broadband Internet connection. So if your connection speed is good, the call will be excellent, but if your Internet slows down, you may get a poorer call quality. Yet, both of these solutions will save you money and you may find, like me that occasional slight inconvenience is worth the cost savings. I gave up both my business and personal land line almost two years ago. I now rely on my cell phones, Skype, and magicJack. I am saving a bundle and enjoying every minute.