

The NCTCUG Journal

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Keeping Up

By Paul Howard, NCTCUG

Last time, I mentioned putting a page on the Group's web site about computer protection. The topic has had extensive coverage in the press lately, with articles in the Washington Post and Consumer Reports magazine, among others. Based on those publications, I added a number of links to additional software products for fighting viruses, spyware, and other ugly realities of modern computing.

[see <http://www.nctcug.org/protection.html>]

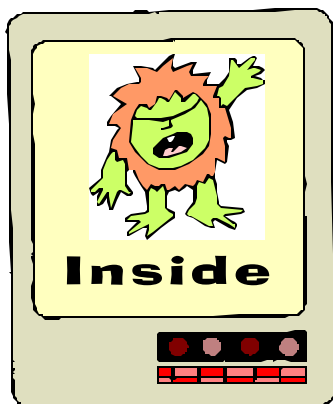
Checking out the web sites for these products has been interesting, because the business is truly international. From Iceland, the home of one of our sentimental favorites, FProt, I found companies originating in Finland, Russia, Germany, Czech Republic, Romania, Cyprus, and Malta, in addition to the US. Some, like Eset, makers of NOD32, a highly-rated antivirus product, made uncovering their home base difficult, but I'm reasonably certain they're of



Czech origin. Several of these companies offer "free for home use" versions, and software that will work from a floppy, for those times when your computer is really hosed up.

Technology prices keep falling. Just as the cost of 512 megabyte USB key chain drives seemed to settle around \$80 with a rebate, an ad arrived with an additional \$30 rebate on such a unit. I seem to

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Getting To Know Google

By Billy Mabray, Oklahoma City PC Users Group

These days, whether you consciously choose it or not, your Web search engine is probably Google (<http://www.google.com>). That's because most search sites, whether they admit it or not, are powered by Google. And, why not? Google rose to the top of the search engines because its formula provided more relevant search results than any other. Also, its deceptively simple page makes it fast and easy to use.

I say deceptively simple because, underneath that friendly, colorful logo is a powerful search system that can accept queries as complex as you want to make them. Many people don't realize that if they do not find what they want on the first try, there are techniques they can use to improve their results. There are also ways to search Google that are more appropriate for certain specialty queries. And, Google is hiding a few extras that take it beyond a search engine into an amazing reference tool.

Let's start with an example. We're cooking dinner tonight, and we need a recipe for spaghetti sauce that does not use sugar. We might go to Google and type in this:

no sugar spaghetti sauce recipe

Google tells us we have about 56,000 results to wade through. A daunting task, considering the first page doesn't seem to contain anything relevant. The first thing we will try is grouping our search terms into phrases, using double-quotes. This tells Google that certain words should be searched for together. So, we try this:

"no sugar" "spaghetti sauce" recipe

That certainly narrowed things down, didn't it? This is a good technique to use when your search contains a lot of common words that could appear together in different contexts than what you are looking for. Unfortunately in this case, our first page of results is still not as relevant as we would like. The next thing we will try is searching for pages that do not contain a certain term:

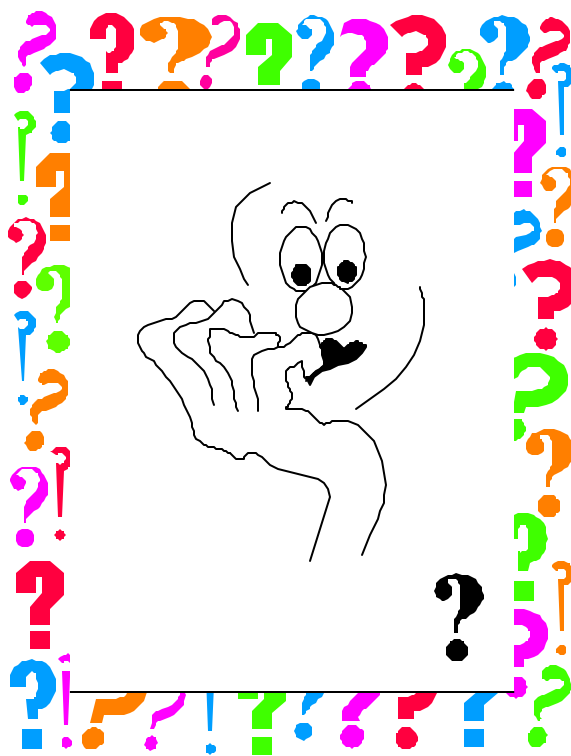
sugar "spaghetti sauce" recipe

This tells Google that we want pages that are about "spaghetti sauce" recipe, but specifically do not contain the term sugar. That seems to have done it—our first page of results is chock full of spaghetti sauce recipes that don't use sugar. "Subtracting" a term can also be useful when what you are searching for has multiple meanings. For example, if you are re-searching the "Holy Grail," you might want to add "-Python" to your search to eliminate all the references to the movie Monty Python and the Holy Grail.

Now, maybe spaghetti sauce is too specific—we might want to also consider marinara sauce. In that case, we use Google's or syntax:

sugar "(spaghetti | marinara) sauce" recipe

When there are multiple words that will satisfy our search, we can group them with parentheses and separate them with the "pipe" character—a vertical line that is most likely on the right-hand side of your keyboard. Google will then search for references to "spaghetti sauce" or "marinara sauce."



At this point, we've become so intrigued by what we can find with Google, we've completely forgotten about dinner. Now we are interested in just how many different chicken casserole recipes we can find. Here's one way:

"chicken * casserole" recipe

Notice the asterisk. This is called a wildcard. It tells Google that we don't care what word comes between chicken and casserole, but there should be something there. This can be particularly useful when you know most of a title of something, but are unsure of all the words. This particular search brings back all kinds of chicken casserole recipes. Something tells me we better just eat out tonight.

Besides its standard Web search, Google has many specialty searches that are triggered either by a keyword or simply by what you are searching for. For example:

site:microsoft.com "Internet Explorer" patches

This searches for references to "Internet Explorer" patches on microsoft.com only. If your favorite Web site does not offer a search function, this is a pretty good substitute.

Maybe we want to know which sites on the Web link to the OKC PC User's Group Web site:

link:okpcug.org

We can also tell Google that what we are looking for is in an Adobe Acrobat PDF file:

filetype:pdf refrigerator manual

Google pays attention to what you are searching for, and offers helpful services based on what it thinks you want. For example, have you ever noticed Google shows your search words in the blue bar above your results? The search terms that are underlined link to a definition of that word at dictionary.com. If you spell a word wrong, Google will prompt you with the correct spelling and ask if you would like to search for that instead.

Google has many tricks like this up its sleeves. Search for a phone number, and Google will do a reverse lookup on the number. Search for a name with a city and state and/or zip code, and Google will look up their phone number. Search for an address and you will get links to maps of that location. Include a zip code with your search terms, and Google will offer you local results—Web sites for locations near the zip code, ordered by distance. You can even type in a shipment tracking number, and Google will figure out who the shipping company is and give you a link to the tracking information.

Google offers some services that have nothing to do with searching. Try this:

$68.12 + (68.12 * .2)$

The Google calculator will return the result of this computation. Fun, although, admittedly, not particularly useful. The Google calculator can be useful though, for things like conversions:

68mm = ? inches

You can do all kinds of conversions using Google—a handy tool whenever you get around to making that spaghetti sauce.

Google is much more useful than most people realize—we've only scratched the surface of what Google can do. If you are interested in more, check out Hacking Google by Tara Calishain and Rael Dornfest. It includes many more search tips, and information for programmers who want to include Google search results in their applications. As you explore what Google can do, you will probably discover that Google feels like more than just a Web site.

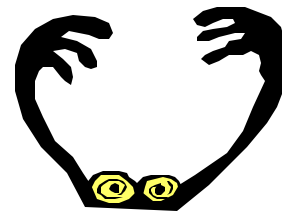
In fact, Google is your friend.

Billy Mabray and his wife, Angela, own Smart Goat, a local software development and web design business. They are members of the OKCPCUG. Comments or questions on the article are welcome and can be addressed to: billy@smartgoat.com.

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Internet Annoyances

by Sherry Zorzi, Secretary, Cajun Clickers Computer Club,
Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Advisor for Region 8.



The Internet is full of creepy-crawly beasties. Spam, popups, hoaxes, cookies, spyware — what are these critters and how do I tame them???

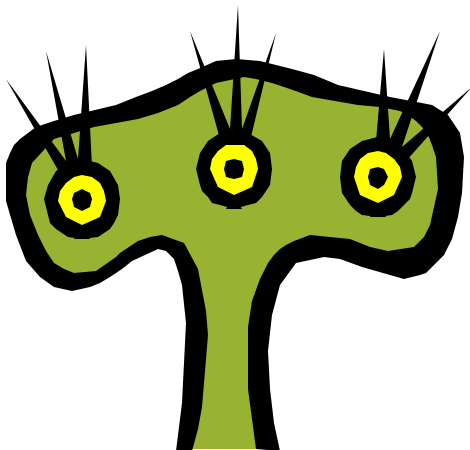
Spam — unsolicited, usually commercial email, also known as UCE. You can't stop it; the best you can do is try to limit it.

- Don't post your address on publicly-accessible websites (newsgroups, chat rooms, directories). Web "crawlers" harvest these addresses for spammers' mailing lists. You can obtain free, "throwaway" email addresses at sites like Yahoo (www.yahoo.com) or Hotmail (www.hotmail.com) to use in these situations.
- When you register for a legitimate website (Microsoft, Amazon, Delta Airlines, etc.), opt-out of any newsletters or mailings they offer to send you. If opting out is not offered, don't register for the site unless you want advertising email!
- Use "filters" in your email program to automatically route suspected spam to a special folder, which you can check periodically and delete. Or use special (free!) software, like MailWasher (www.mailwasher.net) or K9 Spam Killer (www.keir.net/k9.html) to automatically check incoming mail and handle suspected spam for you.
- Don't ever follow directions to "unsubscribe" or stop receiving mail, unless you know you are dealing with a reputable source. Replying to the message or clicking a link to supposedly unsubscribe is often just a ruse by the spammer to verify that your email address is valid and that you are naïve enough to open spam. You will get more, not less, spam!
- Use SpamCop (www.spamcop.net) to report spam. The service is free. They will automatically report, in your name, the true source of the spam to the appropriate ISPs.
- Send a copy of the spam, with full headers, to the Federal Trade Commission at uce@ftc.gov. They keep a database of fraudulent spammers.
- Support strong legislation at the state and federal level to stop the scourge of spam!!! Write, call or email your Senators and Representatives and urge them to support strong legislation.

Popup — advertising that "pops up" in a small window of its own. Some websites pop up an unsolicited ad in a window on top of the page you are trying to view. Others hide the popups beneath the site you're visiting, so that you see it when you finally close your main window. Some sites pop up several, or even dozens of popup ads — sometimes "freezing" the computer. The new popup scourge is controlled by one or more programs hiding on your computer, causing popups even when you are not online! They are all bad, bad, bad!

The best way to squash popups is with free software like Popup Stopper (www.panicware.com). Works perfectly and the price can't be beat!

Hoax — fictitious email forwarded around the Internet by your well-meaning friends. Flesh-eating bananas, large corporations controlled by Satanists, viruses that cause your computer to catch fire — all



are fabricated hoaxes. Most of us have at one time been taken in by one of these, forwarding it to everyone in our address book only to be embarrassed to find out it's a fake. Any email, even if it's from your mother, that says "Please forward this to everyone in your address book" is a hoax. Any email that promises you will get something for nothing is a fake.

- Never, ever forward anything to everyone in your address book, no matter how "true" it sounds. Even if it is supposedly from IBM, Microsoft, or the government.
- Type a few keywords from the email into a search engine like Google (www.google.com) and follow several of the links that come up. You should quickly discover that the mail is a hoax.
- Before you hit "forward", check out the "story" on one of the websites that specialize in debunking urban legends and hoaxes:
 - Snopes (www.snopes.com)
 - Urban Legends (www.urbanlegends.com)
 - HoaxBusters (www.hoaxbusters.com)

Spyware — technology that aids in gathering information about a person or organization without their knowledge. Spyware usually comes "hidden" within software you voluntarily install. Along with what you wanted, you also get a small piece of software that installs itself behind the scene and sends back information on your surfing habits to an advertiser or marketing company.

You can control spyware with some free tools available on the web. The tools will either prevent spyware from getting on your machine, or remove it once it is there.

- Ad-aware (www.lavasoftusa.com)
- SpyBot Search and Destroy (<http://beam.to/spybotsd>)

Cookie — a small text file placed on your computer by a website you visit. Cookies can be innocent, but some operate as spyware. Spyware-controlling software like Ad-aware will control spyware cookies, too. You can also exercise some control over cookies in Internet Explorer by clicking Tools, then Internet Options. Click the "Privacy" tab to allow or disallow various kinds of cookies on your system. Be aware that some features of some sites won't work properly unless you allow cookies.

Virus, worm — a piece of programming code that causes some unexpected and usually undesirable event, such as spreading itself (in your name!) to everyone in your address book, locking up your computer, or deleting important files. They can be transmitted as attachments to an e-mail, as downloads, or be present on a diskette or CD.

- Install antivirus software and keep it up-to-date. Popular brands include McAfee Virus Scan, Norton Antivirus, and TrendMicro PC-cillin. Free antivirus software, which works well, is available at www.grisoft.com. House-Call, a free online virus scanner, is available from TrendMicro at http://housecall.antivirus.com/housecall/start_corp.asp.
- Don't allow "autopreview" features on your email programs. When an email message is previewed, it is really "opened," which can trigger a virus.

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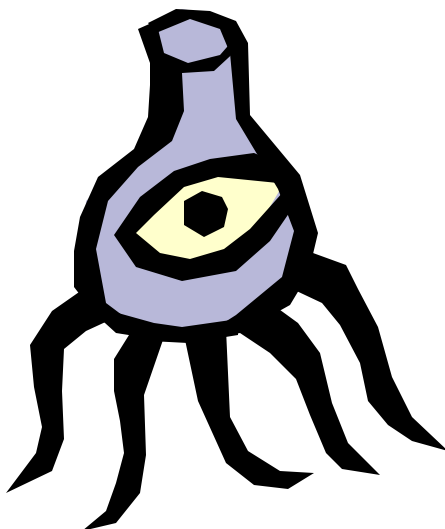
- Don't open emails or attachments from unknown sources. Even when mail is from a trusted source (such as your mother), don't open any attachments unless you are expecting them without checking with the source first to be sure they intended to send the attachment and are sure it's virus-free.

Trojan horse — similar to viruses and worms, Trojan horses are particularly nasty as they can open up ports on your computer, making it possible for an intruder to control your computer remotely.

Anti-virus software is not great at catching Trojan horses. You should install and periodically run a Trojan scanner, such as the free SwatIt (www.swatit.org).

If you use the available tools, your Internet experience will be more pleasant for you, your computer, and for all your email correspondents. Don't forget the most important tool of all — **YOUR BRAIN!** Use it.

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How And When To Enable Windows XP's Firewall

By Linda Gonse, Editor, Orange County IBM Users' Group, California

Most users are aware of a need for an antivirus program and a firewall in order to be protected from regular, daily Internet threats.

What some may not know is that Windows XP has a built-in firewall. While it lacks the bells and whistles of a full version firewall, such as Norton or Zone Alarm, it is still useful.

You can enable it by going to Control Panel and clicking on the Network Connection icon. In the Connections window, right click on the name of your connection and click on Properties in the drop-down menu. Click on the Advanced tab. Check the box next to "Protect my computer and network by limiting or preventing access to this computer from the Internet." Then, click OK.

Follow these steps each time you wish to enable the firewall for other Internet connections on your computer.

But, before enabling XP's firewall, you should be aware of these points:

- It must not be used through software or hardware routers.
- It only works on incoming Internet traffic, not outgoing traffic from spy-ware, Trojan viruses, or hacker tools.
- On local area networks (LANs) with other computers, it will block File and Printer Sharing.
- It can be turned on or off for each of your dial-ups, LAN, or high-speed Internet connections.

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Don't Be A Victim Of Health Scare Stories

By **Alicia King Padgett**, Alicia-apcug@comcast.net, **APCUG Advisor For Region 9**

Health scare artists are utilizing the Internet as a medium for terrorizing the public, and unfortunately many adults are taking the stories seriously. These tall tales are often written citing evidence and research that sounds legitimate. Frequently an e-mail is sent to you from a reliable friend who had received it from another acquaintance who had "personal knowledge or personal experience" with the alleged dangerous item. The health scare messages are always the same — whatever it is will make you sick or even cause death.

If you try to research accurate health information about the topic sent, you may literally become caught in the Web, where health hoaxes and urban medical myths run rampant. Many of these Web-sites appear to have valid researched data.

Before you decide to believe or, worse forward e-mail with serious health claims, do a little checking. Start on the Web with www.urbanlegends.com or www.snopes.com that catalogue the more persistent rumors. These two sites also detail persistent legends on other topics in addition to health scare stories.

Then go to reliable health sites, like:

www.mayohealth.org for general health

www.medhelp.org especially good for cardiology

www.oncolink.org for cancer

www.cancer.gov for cancer

www.navigator.tufts.edu for nutrition

www.fda.gov for latest updates on food/drugs as well as extensive archives

So keep yourself informed and don't become one of the individuals caught in a web of confusion by believing the stories and passing them on to others.

Many of us have been victim of health-related frauds, myths, and fallacies. We have to make many decisions about our health and care and want to make them will informed. This site will keep you up-to-date on the latest findings on health care frauds.

Quack Watch is an informative site that deals with such issues like growth hormone scams, coral calcium, and acupuncture. It has a section on allergies and alternative medicine. You might want to start with *Tips for Navigating our Web Sites*. In the "Quackery" section you will find the following sections: Seven Warning Signs of Bogus Science, Ten Ways to Avoid Being Quacked, Signs of a "Quacky" web site.

Always seek a second opinion, but please peruse www.quackwatch.org

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How Does One Track The Origin of Spam?

By John Brewer, Oklahoma City PC Users Group, Oklahoma

Spammers are ingenuous people. They hide the origin of the spam and are masters of obfuscation. Recently, litigation has been filed under federal law. It is interesting to investigate how the spammers were identified. A recent article in the New York Times turns on the light regarding this method of tracking.

“The government’s first criminal case under a new law outlawing some types of spam e-mails was based on low-tech investigative methods: Authorities followed the money. Investigators said Thursday they tracked defendants by purchasing a weight-loss product for \$59.95 and waited to see who collected the money.”

“The cyber scam artists who exploit the Internet for commercial gain should take notice,” said Jeffrey G. Collins, the U.S. attorney in Detroit. Federal law now makes it a felony to use falsehood and deception to hide the origin of the spam messages hawking your fraudulent wares.”

Court papers described a nearly inscrutable puzzle of corporate identities, bank accounts and electronic storefronts used to send hundreds of thousands of e-mail sales pitches for fraudulent weight-loss products. The FTC said angry consumers forwarded more than 490,000 e-mails from the operation from January until April—more than from any other spam outfit worldwide during the same period. Beales called it a dubious distinction.

CNet News reported that “according to court documents, the four men are accused of generating hundreds of thousands of different e-mails that hid their



identities and advertised a weight loss patch. The e-mails were sent out under a variety of company names, including AIT Herbal, Avatar Nutri-

tion and Phoenix Avatar, identified collectively as the Avatar Companies. The e-mails were allegedly sent to millions of e-mail accounts over the course of several years.”

However, the CNet article also reported that the federal law has not eliminated spam and that the volume of spam has actually increased since the implementation of the law. “Despite the existence of Can-Spam, companies that monitor the volume of junk e-mail believe that the legislation has done little to discourage the distribution of spam. E-mail service company MessageLabs reported that more than 67 percent of all e-mail sent in April 2004 was considered spam, up from 59.9 percent in February and 52.8 percent in March, when volume temporarily dipped. The Feds bringing the heat against these spammers and their clients is a great victory for everyone who’s been victimized by spam,” said Mark Sunner, chief technology officer for New York-based MessageLabs. “At the same time, with spam volumes increasing 30 percent since the Can-Spam law went into effect, there is a whole new contingent of spammers in operation. These contemporary spammers are now dressing up their messages so they appear to be legitimate. In spite of effective lawsuits, complaints and arrests, spammers are still finding ways to beat the system.”

The Federal Trade Commission announced in an April 29 news release that “that the deceptive claims violate the FTC Act and that the spoofing and failure to provide an opt-out capability violate provisions of the recently enacted CAN-SPAM Act. At the FTC’s request, U.S. District Court Judge James F. Holderman entered a Temporary Restraining Order requiring an end to illegal spamming and deceptive product claims and freezing the defendants’ assets.

In addition, the FTC announced a second action against an Australian company, Global Web Promotions Pty Ltd., an Australian company that the FTC alleges is responsible for massive amounts of spam in the United States.” Global Web not only adver-

tised a diet patch similar to the one in Phoenix Avatar, it also claimed its human growth hormone products "HGH" and "Natural HGH" could "maintain [a user's] appearance and current biological age for the next 10 to 20 years." Experts cited by the FTC dispute the claims, and the FTC alleged the claims are false. The products do not contain growth hormone of any sort, according to papers filed with the court. The products are shipped to consumers from within the United States. The diet patch was sold for \$ 80.90 and the HGH products cost \$74.95.

"In both cases, the FTC introduced as evidence thousands of examples of the defendants spoofing a wide array of victims, including AOL, Microsoft Network, and other companies and individuals. Spoofing involves forging headers on e-mail to make it appear that they came from an innocent third party. Undeliverable e-mail is returned to the innocent victim, often flooding their servers and interfering with normal operations. This process not only is prohibited by the CAN-SPAM Act, it also has worked real hardship on innocent businesses."

"The FTC charged Global Web Promotions Pty Ltd., Michael John Anthony Van Essen, and Lance Thomas Atkinson with violations of the FTC Act and the CAN-SPAM Act. The FTC has filed a motion requesting that the Court issue a Temporary Restraining Order barring further illegal spam and stopping illegal sales and shipment of products. The Global Web Promotions Pty case was brought with the assistance of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the New Zealand Commerce Commission."

Finally, it looks like some spammers may be headed for the slammer. No one will be disappointed and maybe prosecution of slammers will give future spammers pause to think about their activity ... or will they just become more clever in their pursuit of the dark side?

John Brewer practices law in Oklahoma City, is a member of the Governor's and Legislative Task Force for E-Commerce, and enjoys issues relating to eBusiness and cyberspace. There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

How To Safely Troubleshoot Your System

By Siles Bazerman, User Group Columnist, Orange County IBM PC Users' Group, Cali-

As long-term readers of this column are aware, I belong to a number of special interest Yahoo groups. Over the past few months I have been having a problem on several of them opening files. It finally dawned on me that it was with one particular file "server" (for lack of a better word, as I really do not know if it is a real server, a virtual server or a file folder at Yahoo). As Yahoo groups have grown they have been adding areas for storage. They now have f1 to f6. My problem was with f4 files.

Questions submitted to Yahoo Group Help were of no help at all as usual. This area is preprogrammed and will answer questions regardless of whether or not the answer is related to the question you asked. Apparently you are only supposed to have problems that fit in their preconceived program. This was not one of them.

By the way, this is being written not to show how clever I am at problem solving, but to show an example of how to problem solve. The most important utility to use is the one behind your eyes and between your ears. Before you take any action think carefully, back up, and think again. Then take one step at a time. If you do several at once and it fixes the problem which one was the fix? What can be restored to before the fix?

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Back to the task at hand. I did try to view the files using both HAL and Barbie. I received the same error on both; page cannot be displayed at this time. This occurred also in safe mode with networking where no drivers are loaded and most programs are not started. Even turning off all startup items was no help. Accessing the files from my son's computer was successful. This indicated the problem was at my end and not a glitch at Yahoo.

Now it was time to think. Even though both HAL and Barbie are both running Windows XP Pro, they have totally different programs loaded. This included the anti virus programs. So, why the similar results? Then I realized they both use the same router to access the DSL line. The next logical step would be to disconnect the router. Before we do, let us take a look at the rule of unintended consequences. What will happen if we connect to the Internet without the router?

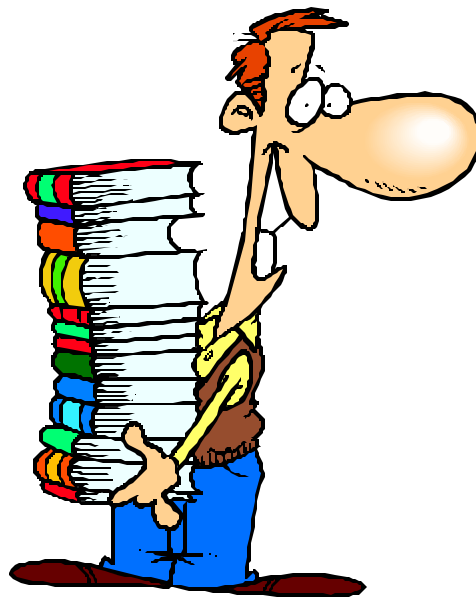
First, my network would go down. No big deal as that is a temporary condition restored with the router reconnected. But, the router also serves as a hardware firewall. This function would be lost, and in today's atmosphere I would never run on the Internet without a firewall, even for a short test. There are just too many flakes out there trying to cause as much damage as possible. So, I made sure my anti virus program had the latest updates. I also updated Ad-aware, and Spybot – Search and Destroy. I also enabled the built-in Windows XP software firewall. Then I created a new restore point and also backed up my C drive with V2i Protector. If I did somehow become infected with a worm or Trojan I had a way out. Since there were no other problems that I could see I removed the router and tried to view the files again. Success!

In order to protect the system while continuing to troubleshoot the problem I reinstalled the router. I also disabled the Windows XP firewall, as I really do not like it. It does have its functions however. The next step was to go to the web site of the router manufacturer, D-link, and see what information was available. Although there were no FAQs covering this problem, there was a firmware update. I downloaded the instructions for performing the update.

I printed out the instructions, as the upgrade cannot be accomplished with much else running. This is an online update that requires a reset of the router and a reconfiguration of it. I then reconnected with the web site and updated the firmware. Reset and reconfiguration followed. Now for the moment of truth. I again tried to access the problem files, and could now view them perfectly. I still do not really know why only some files were inaccessible before, but I had the cure. I can only assume that there was something in the address of the section that the router did not like.

I hope I have shown you something about how to proceed with trouble-shooting and about the hidden traps to look out for.

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NCTCUG's Financial System

by Paul Howard, Treasurer

Our group's Bylaws require an annual financial report to be prepared by the treasurer for the Board of Directors, and that this report be communicated to the membership. While the financial shenanigans in the corporate world have resulted in the federal Sarbanes-Oxley Act, few requirements have devolved on the non-profit community to affect their financial reporting. Over the past several months, the board has discussed these issues, and this article is one of our efforts to better advise the membership about the stewardship of the group's resources.

In 1990, Intuit's Quicken program began to be used to maintain records of NCTCUG's finances. Prior to this, accounting paper spreadsheets were used — imagine this — we were a computer user group, but still using pencil and paper for financial records! We had used the services of a CPA for several years, who helped set up a series of accounts, and helped provide the financial reporting needed to establish our eligibility for IRS non-profit status.

As time passed, the need for the sophistication of accrual accounting waned, as the group shrank and the number of financial transactions diminished. The Board recognized that financial record keeping on a cash flow basis, similar to keeping a home checkbook, was sufficient. Treasurers Fred Boots and Joe Mazur found ways to use more of Quicken's features to better represent and track our finances. Quicken has evolved to be easier to use and now allows more space for notes and explanations.

NCTCUG utilizes a business checking account for our month to month financial needs. Many years ago, our board established a "rainy day fund" in the form of a six month Certificate of Deposit account. Since we began tracking this account in Quicken in October '92, we have withdrawn \$500 at a time in April '96, April '97, and October, '99, to provide funds for on-going operations. The CD account balance is now slightly larger than in '92 — so we've harvested \$1500 in interest for club operations, while retaining our asset base in the CD.

Club revenue primarily takes the form of member dues checks and donations, picked up at the post office by President Jim Rhodes, who details the

items received in an electronic file. This file is emailed to Secretary Roger Arnold, who maintains a consolidated file of these so-called PO files, as well as the club's membership records. The file is also sent to the treasurer, and Ron Schmidt, First VP, whose duties outlined in the bylaws include chairing the Financial Oversight Committee. All revenues are passed to the treasurer, who records them with details in Quicken, prepares deposit slips in duplicate, and provides a Quicken transaction detail printout for record keeping purposes that is associated with the deposit slip and PO file.

Expenditures are approved by the Board through an annual budget process, with specific authorization for unanticipated requirements. All disbursements must be approved by the First VP, which is recorded on a transaction detail sheet, and associated with appropriate receipts. All disbursements are by check, which requires the signature of the treasurer and one other officer. Details of all expenditure transactions are recorded in Quicken. Prior to each board meeting, the treasurer provides account balance and cash flow reports to Board members as PDF files via email. Comparison reports of year over year, or budget vs. YTD may also be provided. Financial data is stored on the club demo computer as a backup and for examination by the Board or members as needed.

Every two years, the Board forms an audit committee, and all the paper records of receipts and expenditure, bank statements, and Quicken reports are reviewed and reconciled. The chair of the committee, who cannot be an officer with account signature authority, prepares a report of findings and recommendations (if required). The Board will direct the treasurer to take actions or adopt methods and procedures, based on the audit committee's report.

The group's fiscal year runs from October 1st to September 30th. The annual financial report will be published next month, when September's records are available. Members are welcome to attend Board meetings, and are particularly invited to join the financial oversight and audit committees. Questions are welcome at meetings, or to the President, 1st Vice President, or Treasurer at any time. \$

Selections From The DealsGuy

Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer User Group

Quick Reply For Your E-mail

Since three editors forwarded this announcement to me, (thanks for bringing that to my attention), I decided there was sufficient interest for the DealsGuy column to include it. Unlike most announcements, this one also offers a discount for user group members. Here is the announcement, but edited: "Our company, ErstenWare, would like to announce the release of Quick Reply 2.07, a god-sent gift to any e-mail user for Windows 98/ME/NT/2000/XP. We'd like to offer your members a 15% discount off the regular price of \$19.95. The discount coupon code is - "975409871341" and is redeemable at [http://www.erstenware.com/quick_reply/discount.html].

"With this application, any person can free him/herself from having to explain over and over again what the refund policy is, where to get certain information, how to pay for a product or service or who should be contacted in the event of emergency. Even regular 'non-commercial' users with heavy e-mail volume can save up to 50% of time previously spent

answering e-mails by creating mini-templates - a set of phrases regularly used. Quick Reply is very good at maintaining an orderly database of snippets, replies, sentences or text fragments that can be inserted into the body of an e-mail or even a regular letter within a second. Any typical reply can be customized and personalized on the fly and inserted via dragging and dropping. The program supports hotkeys and macro commands. The content may be reformatted and copied to clipboard as well."

News From Aladdin

Aladdin has a new user group coordinator. If you didn't see this posted on my Web site, Ernest Breaux is the new kid on the Aladdin block and will take care of your UG requests. He announced new products and here are his descriptions:

"Four essential Computing solutions from Aladdin Systems; Internet Cleanup 4.0, StuffIt Deluxe 8.5, Spring Cleaning and SpamCatcher For windows are now available.

"Introducing New Internet Cleanup 4.0. This offers the most powerful protection yet for users who want to protect their privacy and guard against spyware. Spyware slows down your computer, invades your privacy and can reveal sensitive information. These new tools eradicate spyware and prevent sensitive information from leaving your computer. IC4 includes a Personal Information Blocker that safeguards names, phone numbers, addresses, credit card information and bank account numbers. IC4 prevents these and other specified pieces of information from being transmitted over the Internet without users' permission. In addition, IC4 includes file and folder locking as well as application locking features. Only IC4 provides the user all of the tools necessary to protect their privacy, security and PC, all in one complete and integrated package.



Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC) Meetings

WAC Meeting will be held on October 16, 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM. at Micro Center, Nutley St., Fairfax, VA.
Topic: Quicken 2004.

You do not need to be a member to attend. For more information on WAC meetings and events, call the WAC AnswerLine (voice) at (703) 370-7649. Also see WAC's Web Site at

<http://www.wacug.org/>

“Special offer! \$19.99 for Internet Cleanup 4.0, regularly \$29.99, offer valid through the end of Sept.
[<http://www.aladdinsys.com/ug/cleanup>]

“ZIP, ACCESS, BACKUP, AND SEND! StuffIt Deluxe makes using the Internet fast, safe, and secure! Whether you store data securely in space-saving archives or safely send it to friends and co-workers, StuffIt makes it easier than ever to backup, upload files, and more, automatically! Reclaim wasted space on your hard disk! Store data in archives up to 98% smaller than their original size! Quickly and easily backup your data! Schedule backups to happen while you are away! StuffIt will take care of it all and send you a message when the backup is completed! Super search your data! Get instant access to any file whether it's on the network, in a local hard drive, or even burned onto a CD in the office next door, StuffIt will find it for you! Integrated with Windows and Microsoft Office! 100% integration with MS Word, Excel and Outlook eliminates 90% of your keystrokes. Compress, save, and send in a single click!

“Special offer! \$29.99 for StuffIt Deluxe 8.5, regularly \$39.99, offer valid through the end of Sept. [<http://www.aladdinsys.com/ug/stuffit>]

“One-click cleanup. Easy for you. Good for your PC. Programs and pictures, folders and files, it's amazing how quickly a hard disk fills up! When the time comes to clean up, let Spring Cleaning carry the load. From deleting duplicates to archiving programs, Spring Cleaning puts a suite of easy-to-use tools and one-click solutions at your fingertips. Fix Registry problems caused by old files nothing makes your computer more unstable than a Registry full of junk. Bad data builds up over time, causing error messages and a host of other problems. Spring Cleaning sweeps out the clutter to keep your system running smoothly.

“Special offer! \$19.99 for Spring Cleaning, regularly \$29.99, offer valid through the end of Sept.
[<http://www.aladdinsys.com/ug/spring>]

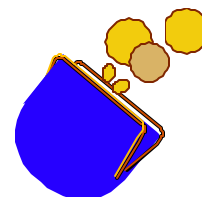
“Special offer! \$19.99 for SpamCatcher, regularly \$29.99, offer valid through the end of Sept. [<http://www.aladdinsys.com/ug/spam>] I featured SpamCatcher three months ago so I know you are already familiar with it.

Nab That Spam

I have complained about spam and Paul Witheridge says I should try POPfile to conquer that problem. He claims it is 99% successful for him and best of all, it is free. Download it at [<http://sourceforge.net/projects/popfile/>]. I have not tried it since I have another philosophy about spam filters. After it has filtered your e-mail, you will probably take a look at what it filters out to make sure it didn't remove something you would have wanted. If I have to look it over anyway, I might as well just do it all in the first place. However, Paul says it is easier and quicker to look at the filtered e-mail, and with the amount of spam I am now receiving, I may try it. Be aware that there are limitations. It does not work with Web based mail as the name POPfile suggests. Anyway, I'm including his suggestion for your perusal. I thought the Web site was confusing, but I'm told the help file in the software is much more understandable for setting it up. There is also a good help forum at [http://sourceforge.net/forum/forum.php?forum_id=213100].

Paul says K9 is another popular software --- smaller, simpler, less capable than POPfile, but quite popular, and also free. Check it out at [<http://keir.net/k9.html>]

This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [bobclick@mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for interesting articles from user group newsletters. I also posted some interesting NEW Web site pages for your viewing. They contain new product announcements that I received over a period of time. More will be forthcoming when I get the ambition.



(Continued from page 1)

recall the hard drive pioneers paying more than \$1000 for a 5 meg drive, and we all shook our heads trying to figure out how you could possibly ever fill one up.

The same set of ads included an offer of Scansoft's Paperport 9 for \$30 after rebates. This is a great program, in my opinion, for scanning things and turning them into PDF files that can be viewed on the web. It also includes a module that allows "printing to PDF" — so anything you send to a printer can be turned into a PDF file.

What's really surprised me is the apparent rebound in prices of CD-R media. For a while, the prices on even name brand media had dropped to the point where it was frequently possible to get a package of 50 CDs for \$5 or less, sometime even free after rebates. Lately, the low price of a 50 pack will be \$20, with deals reducing the cost to around \$10 with buy one, get one free promotions. So, has everyone taken to backing up so regularly the CD manufacturers can't keep up with demand?

Upgrades

I've been doing a bunch of upgrading to my computers recently. My backup desktop system uses an AMD Duron 1300 processor, and has always seemed somewhat sluggish. I added a new video card from Micro Center with 32 megs of video RAM, to replace this machine's "video on the motherboard" which shared system memory. This system was using PC100 SDRAM, and I'd been keeping my eyes open for a deal to supplement this.

It's amazed me that this older memory is often priced higher than the "latest thing" — so I hadn't seen any tempting bargains. The motherboard only has two SDRAM slots, and they were occupied with 256 and 128 meg modules. Several weeks ago, an ad appeared for a 512 meg module of PC133 memory, which this motherboard also supports, so I jumped at it and took advantage of a \$30 discount. This memory was from PNY, and surprisingly, I got the rebate back before I was able to publish this article.

Months ago, I responded to one of Chuck Robert's articles and demos on system backup by buying a housing for a USB backup drive and USB add-in card. I later discovered that I'd failed to scrutinize the box closely enough, and the card wasn't a USB 2.0 spec. Both my desktop systems had USB 1.1 ports.

I've now added cards to both systems that provide four external 2.0 ports, unfortunately on the rear of the system, and one internal port on the card. I probably won't be able to use the internal port, unless I find a flash card reader or another such device that will fit in a 3.5 inch drive bay — the only available space on either of my systems.

The installation of the cards went reasonably smoothly, although I had to change slots in my backup system for the card to be recognized. I also found that when I installed the USB 2 card in my primary system that the card slightly pulled out of the PCI motherboard slot, as I tightened the card mounting screw. During upgrades to other systems, I found similar problems with cards not fitting properly, and wound up doing surgery on the mounting bracket with a Dremel Mototool. Granted, the system case could be the problem, if the plane of the motherboard and the back of the case aren't at a ninety degree angle. However, I'm inclined to suspect poor quality control in production of the cards and their mounting brackets.

Now I have to drop a hard drive into the housing and start backing up !!



Is DOS Really Dead?

By Charlie Paschal, PPCC

Microsoft official made the break with DOS with Windows 2000. Although it tried to “fake” out the public by saying that Windows ME did, it wasn’t true. With some information off the Web, a true bootup diskette can be made that will access ME with a floppy.

That’s not true with 2000 and XP, which makes a true break with DOS — you can’t start either operating system with a boot disk. You can, though, bootup an ill-acting system with a boot disk that contains the correct files out of your root directory.

Both 2000 and XP use an NTFS file system — if you use the native file system the system expects—that supposedly can’t be accessed with a floppy. There are certain floppies—available on the Internet — that can be used to access NTFS volumes.

Another floppy, also available on the Internet, allows a user to boot from it to a version of Linux that allows someone to access and change the administrator’s password. It’s useful for someone who has forgotten the administrator’s password.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



NCTCUG Information

NCTCUG, Post Office Box 949, Arlington VA 22216

Club Information call: 301-577-7899

Web Site: www.nctcug.org

Officers and Directors

All officer terms expire 2003

President	Jim Rhodes	703-931-7854
1st VP	Ron Schmidt	301-577-7899
2nd VP	Roger Fujii	703-280-1243
Treasurer	Paul Howard	703-860-9246
Secretary	Roger Arnold	301-946-7770

Director: term expires

Bill Walsh	2004	703-241-8141
Blair Jones	2004	202-362-7344
John Keys	2004	703-451-0896
Nick Wenri	2004	703-759-3938
Fred Cook	2005	703-921-1749
JJ Davies	2005	703-379-9222
Sy Fishbein	2005	703-536-5894
Dean Mires	2005	301-931-2400

Article Submissions

Articles, helpful hints, and other items of interest to readers of the NCTCUG Journal are always welcome and will be published as soon as possible after submission. Priority is given to members' contributions. Items may be submitted via modem to the BBS or on diskette. Submissions to the BBS should be uploaded to the Newsletter Conference and a message left for the Editor. Files should be straight ASCII, unformatted, with CR only at end of paragraphs; no indents for paragraphs should be used. Preferred format for diskettes is MS-DOS 3½ 720k or 1.44Mb. Diskettes in other formats may be submitted but there will be a considerable delay in processing. If absolutely necessary, items may be submitted in hardcopy only but these will also meet with delay.

Membership Policy

The National Capital Tandy Computer Users Group, Inc. is a non-profit [501-c(3)] organization founded in 1977 to educate users of all Tandy computers and MS-DOS compatible computers. Membership dues are \$25.00 (U.S.Funds) per year, with a \$5 surcharge for international mail. Membership in NCTCUG includes membership in all SIGs, access to the BBS and software libraries, and subscription to the Journal published 10 times per year. Applications may be obtained at any club meeting, by downloading from the BBS, by calling one of the officers or board members, or by writing to the club. A sample newsletter, membership application and related information may be obtained by enclosing \$1 and mailing your request to Jim Rhodes, 201 S. Kensington Street, Arlington VA 22204.

Advertisement Policy

Members' advertisements: Ads are accepted from members for non-commercial purposes at no charge. Copy should be sent to the Editor in the same format as article submissions. Commercial Advertisements: Ads are accepted from commercial advertisers at the rate of \$60 per full page, per appearance, with discounts for multiple insertions. Smaller ads are priced accordingly. Payment for ads must be made in advance of appearance. Advertisers must supply a permanent address and telephone number to the editor.

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COMPUCENTER BBS

Is no longer in operation. It has been replaced by the 'compucenter' mailing list at <http://groups.yahoo.com/>

If you are moving
Please send your change of address to the club PO box as soon as possible to avoid missing issues.

Thank You!

Election Notice

The NCTCUG Annual Meeting will be on October 6, 2004, at 7 pm at Carlin Hall. Elections will also be held then. Elections for the Board of Directors will also be held then. A combined election announcement and ballot will also be emailed to members.

All officers and four member-at-large positions are up for election. All the incumbent officers are standing for re-election. Four people are running for member-at-large positions:

Bill Walsh, John Keys, Nick Wenri (incumbents), and Charles Throneburgh.

Anyone interested in running for any position, please contact any officer or board member.

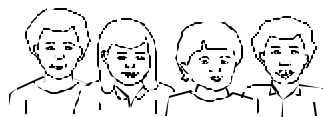
Thank you!

October 2004

1st Wed. (10/6) **7 p.m.**
Virginia General Meeting
Club Elections

4th Wed (10/27) **7 p.m.** Internet SIG

3rd Monday (10/18)
7 p.m. Board of Directors



All meetings are at **Carlin Hall**, 5711 S. 4th St., Arlington VA: East off of Carlin Springs Rd, just south of Arlington Blvd/Route 50.

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P.O. Box 949
Arlington VA 22216

First Class

