

The NCTCUG Journal

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Volume 28 Issue 1

Keeping Up

By Paul Howard, NCTCUG

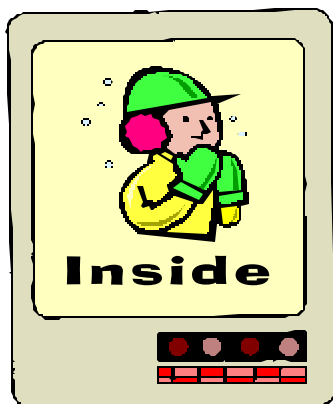
New Year — again!! It seems like I just got used to saying and writing “2004.” Now I’ve got to remember “2005” — could it be age that’s the problem here? One of my email correspondents recently concluded a message with “You have to grow old, you don’t have to grow up!”

Well, I won’t beat the dead horse about New Year’s resolutions to back up your vital computer data this year, since I know you took my last plea to do that to heart. Instead, I’ll remind you of the necessity for adding spyware protection to your computer’s arsenal against malefactors. For example, at our last NCTCUG meeting of 2004, we updated Lavasoft’s Ad-Aware SE to a newly introduced version on the group’s demo system, as well as downloading new virus definitions for AVG Anti-Virus.



I fortify my home system with Spyware Blaster, Spybot Search and Destroy, and Ad-Aware. My choice is Norton Internet Security for firewall and anti-virus protection. The key is updating the definition files for protection programs, and being sure the scans are run. Automatic updating and scheduled scans are features of most of these programs. However, I believe in the “belt and suspenders” approach, and take

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The Internet

by Aubrey Stewart, President of the Tri-City Computer Club, California

ISP's — Internet Service Providers

INTERNET ACCESS — Phone Line / DSL / Cable / Satellite / Wireless

INTERNET SECURITY — Firewalls / Back Door Trojan / Denial of Service Attacks / Personal Data/ Identity Theft

VIRUS — Anti-Virus Protection/virus Real or Hoax / Free Online Virus Scanners / Update Virus pattern Subscription / Updating via Auto and Manual

COMPUTER CARE — Defragmentation / Hard Disk Drive Scan Disk / Safe-Mode

Internet Service Providers

1. **FREE.** Juno, NetZero, HotMail, Yahoo, ZDNet Mail

WWW's: juno.com, pocketmail.com, email.com, zdnetmail.com, yahoo.com

2. **PAID.** AOL, Compuserve, NC Times, NetHere, AT&T WorldNet, NetZero, Juno, Earthlink, A-1 Internet Service Provider, TNS, CWNet Hosting, SBCGlobal.



Internet Access

PHONE LINE — The theoretical maximum speed is 56,000 bits per second or 56 Kbps.

(small b is for Bits and large B is for Bytes). Eight bits equal 1 Byte and 1 text character equals 1 byte. The practical speed attained is actually around 30 to 44 Kbps with a slow speed of around 20 to 24 Kbps during peak usage times (i.e. when the kids get home from school). A connection Icon shows up in your Task Bar area when the computer is online. Placing the cursor over this Icon opens a Box that shows the number of bytes sent and received plus the current speed. Costs can vary widely from \$6.95 a month to \$40.00+ a month.

DSL — Digital Subscriber Line. The uploading speed is usually 128 Kbps; downloading speed is usually 1500 Kbps (1.5 Mbps). Speeds will vary according to peak usage times. A DSL line allows the computer to use the phone line, but does not tie it up while the computer is online. **CAUTION** — You need to remember that your computer is ALWAYS connected online as soon as it is powered on. That is, of course, as long as the DSL modem is powered on. Turning it OFF will close the online connection. A Firewall is a **MUST** for DSL access. Typical cost for DSL can be around \$50 to \$65 a month. Currently SBC Yahoo DSL has a special offer for a one (1) year commitment for \$26.95 a month, when you do online signup. Beware – they charge \$200.00 if you do an early cancellation. After the first year the monthly charge becomes \$49.95.

CABLE — The uploading speed is usually 256 Kbps and downloading speed is usually around 3000 Kbps (3.0 Mbps). Again, speeds will vary according to peak usage times. This service is provided by the local cable TV companies. Special pricing usually applies when you subscribe to more than just the Internet access and typical costs can be around \$29.95 a month up to around \$45 a month.

SAVE yourself rental fees of usually \$10.00 a month on the cable modem and purchase one of your own. Check pricing at www.pricewatch.com or go to www.pricegrabber.com

SATELLITE — Dish TV Network, Direct TV. Usually uses phone line access for uploading and satellite downloading. Check your local telephone book for the number of local providers that also do installation and compare prices. Speed of downloading is usually very fast, but phone line uploading is quite slow. Pricing varies widely. This is also an ALWAYS on connection.

WIRELESS — There are many wireless Internet providers all around the U.S. You must be located within their Radio Signal Footprint for service. Uploading and downloading speeds at various rates are available with pricing determined by the speed. Usually the maximum will be around 1.5 Mbps. This is also an always on connection. Check the local telephone pages for the number of a local provider.

WORLD WIDE WEB — The Internet consists of millions of computers inter-connected around the world. There are a number of Internet browser's available for viewing the Web. Popular ones include Internet Explorer, Netscape, Opera and Mozilla, for use with Windows PC operating systems. The purpose of a browser is to convert the HTML language of Web site programming into the graphical presentation you see on your monitor and interact with. Surfing the Web means you are going from one Web site location to another, or several others. The Homepage is the initial screen page you see at a Web site. Your computer has a History folder where a listing of ALL Web sites you ever visited will be stored (unless you set your History folder to delete the web site information after a certain number of days). There is also a Favorites (or Bookmarks) folder where you can store Web site addresses for future visits; it provides a quick return process. Every computer connected to the Internet has an IP address. Sometimes it will remain the same number and then there are ISPs that issue a different IP address number every time you get on the Internet. This is why a Firewall is an absolute MUST with ALWAYS on access.

COOKIES are a tool used by some Web sites to store information on your hard drive without you knowing it. They are used to keep track of the Web pages that you visit on a particular Web site. With this information, the owners of the Web site can then target you for specific forms of marketing. Many people consider them an invasion of their privacy. You have the choice to set your Security Options to accept, disable, or require your approval before a cookie can be stored on your computer. Your Web Browser will usually offer this configuration control. Refusal to accept the cookies will, however, more than likely keep you from being able to view many of the Web site locations.

UTILITY PROGRAMS — There are several types of utility programs that are designed to clean out some of the folders in your computer when they become stuffed with various items of information from the Web sites you have visited. A Cookie removal program is a very popular utility program. There also is a folder called Temporary Internet Files on your computer. Many Web sites will put some form of data there as well, again, without your knowledge. Not to worry, there are utility programs that will clean out this area also.

WEB SITE ADDRESSES — There are two types of addresses for every Web site. One is called the URL (an acronym for Universal Resource Locator), such as www.sears.com, and the other is the associated IP address (Internet Protocol), such as 255.36.245.15. The address box of a Web browser will find the Web site using either of these addressing formats.

NETWORK SECURITY — Never (repeat) NEVER give out your Social Security Number over the Internet. It is just too risky to do this on a form at a Web site or in an email message you might send. Theft of your identity could very well result from this mistake. It has actually happened to many people. A Firewall program (software) will allow you to completely shut off access into your computer over the Internet. What access do I speak of? Did you know that your computer has exactly 65, 535 revolving doorways that are just waiting for some-

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one to slip in without your awareness? This is how a computer Hacker can gain access into your computer and you will usually NEVER know that it is happening. These revolving doorways are referred to as PORTS. Anytime your computer is active on the Internet, it is sitting on the 'net with all of these pathways available to anyone who knows how to utilize the entry method. There are lists available that include all of these Ports and show their common (legal) usage and their abnormal (illegal) usage by Hackers. These "Back Door" entries will allow someone to gain full access to any and ALL data you have stored ANYWHERE on your hard drive. That includes EVERY folder and file you have on the drive. Ever order anything on the Web and type out a credit card number for payment? That is something a Hacker can track down and view whenever they want to. Full REMOTE CONTROL of your computer is even a possibility for the smarter Hackers lurking on the Internet. They can also track your every keystroke, entry of passwords or anything else you type in. You should use extreme care when you put personal data into the PC, and then have that computer connected to the Internet.

Ever hear the old saying "Two Heads are Better Than One"? Well, with today's lowered costs of buying a very capable basic computers, it just might just well be a consideration to have two computers for your home computing experiences. Keep one for personal data and document preparations, etc, that is NEVER used to access the Internet.

FREE FIREWALL — Software is available on the Internet: www.zonelabs.com Stop the Crackers from invading your computer looking for personal information.

VIRUSES — A computer infestation is any unwanted program that is transmitted to a computer without the knowledge of the user or owner, and is designed to do varying degrees of damage to data and software. A virus is a program written to potentially do harm to someone's computer. They normally do not do physical damage to the com-

puter. Usually the worst scenario is that the Boot Sector of the hard disk will be corrupted by the virus and the computer will be unable to be used at all, until a new hard drive is installed to replace the defective one.

THERE ARE FOUR MAIN FORMS OF INFESTATIONS that exist today: Viruses, Trojan Horses, Worms and Logic Bombs. Viruses are the most common of the four. SO...it is of **UTMOST IMPORTANCE** that all users of a computer install and maintain anti-virus software. These are designed to discover and remove a virus. There are several forms of viruses: Boot Sector, File, Multipartite, Polymorphic, Encrypting and Stealth. Anti-virus software attempts to detect a known virus by looking for their distinguishing pattern that is called the Virus Signature. Virtually EVERY DAY, more new viruses are uploaded to the Internet. The anti-virus companies find them and dissect them to discover their signature. Then they publish the UPDATE to their PATTERN FILE on their Web site and this is available for the owners of that anti-virus software to download into their anti-virus folder. Then the updated program can be on full alert to detect any of the newest viruses running around the Internet. So, EVERYDAY DO YOUR UPDATE! These anti-virus companies usually include one full year of updates with the initial sale. BE SURE AND DO A RENEWAL OF YOUR SUBSCRIPTION for Updates.

VIRUSES...

THE MAIN ROUTE INTO A COMPUTER

For a virus, it can be with an EMAIL ATTACHMENT. Another method is on a Floppy Disk someone gives you that you then open from the diskette drive onto your Hard Disk. ALWAYS do a virus scan of ALL disks you place into your floppy drive BEFORE installing or opening anything onto the Hard Drive.

Virus Scanning software takes a look at ALL of the email coming into and going out of your computer, to see if it detects a virus. The virus in an email will HIDE INSIDE AN ATTACHMENT. NEVER OPEN AN EMAIL ATTACHMENT... PERIOD! until the anti-virus program has inspected

the email, and then it is still NOT a good idea to open any attachments. It could have a BRAND NEW virus attached that has NOT yet been included in the latest updated Pattern File you installed earlier in the day.

People can send out an email with a virus in their attachment and never know they sent it. It is very, very risky to open any email attachments.

SET A PATTERN for yourself where you do the update check for your anti-virus program **FIRST THING EVERY MORNING**. Then go ahead and **DOWNLOAD** your email.

To find out if A VIRUS NOTICE YOU JUST RECEIVED IS REAL OR A HOAX, there are Web sites you can check to become properly informed. Here are just a few:

www.hoaxbusters.ciac.org
www.hoaxinfo.com
www.hoaxkill.com
www.viruslist.com
www.vmyths.com

ONLINE FREE VIRUS SCANNERS. There are several anti-virus software companies that provide **FREE** online virus scanning. Here are just a few:

www.housecall.antivirus.com (Trend Micro)
www.ravantivirus.com.scan (RAV Antivirus)
www.grisoft.com (AVG Antivirus)
www.pandasoftware.com/activescan (Panda Software)

If you have any questions or inquiries, please contact me through my Web site:

www.ez4ucomputerclasses.com.

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Online And In Person

By Billy Mabray

Oklahoma City PC Users Group

In the early days of the Internet, a common fear was that people would spend too much time online, creating a world of isolated loners. Computer users would stop spending time in the real world, preferring to type instead of talk. While this may be true for some people, many others are finding the Web has enhanced their social life, not hurt it. The proliferation of e-mail, instant messaging, and chat rooms are evidence that people are connecting more now than ever before.

What about real life social interaction? People still like to meet in person, and there are many Web-based services to help people do just that. These services are blurring the lines between virtual and real communities. People are finding friends online and getting together in real life. Others are using the Internet to keep in touch with their real-life acquaintances. Internet users are finding they can connect with other people better than they ever have before.

A common example of virtual communities creating real-life friendships is PC user groups. People typically learn about their local group through that group's Web site. Much of the group's communication is done online. For these groups, though, the real point of using the Internet is to facilitate real-world get-togethers. Meetings, presentations, and study groups bring people together who have similar interests, but would otherwise have not found each other. Web sites and mailing lists allow for efficient communication, while group activities create opportunities for learning new things and meeting new people.

Meetup.com offers a similar service, but for a broader range of topics. Meetup.com arranges monthly get-togethers in cities around the world on a vast array of topics. For example, the third Tuesday of every month is International Poker Meetup Day. If you are interested in meeting poker players in your area, visit the Web site, type in your zip code, and join the poker meetup

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Global Positioning System—Where Exactly Are You?

By Joe Schmitt, Tampa Bay Computer Society, Florida

This is the first of a three article series on the Global Positioning System. The first discusses what the system is and how it works. The two subsequent articles will delve into receivers and uses to civilians.

For centuries, man has relied on the most rudimentary of tools to navigate. Things like a compass or sextant, and later a timepiece, were the best he had. In the past, the most difficult task of a ship's captain was to maintain the location and heading of a ship pounded by winds and currents. As time went on, those tools were perfected and improved. Though they worked well, they were not perfect. It was a time consuming process to mark position; early airplane pilots often navigated using existing landmarks and roads because the speed of their craft made traditional methods cumbersome.

A system called Loran (Long Range Navigation) was developed in the 1940's that utilized radio pulses which were projected on board a ship using a cathode ray tube, similar to your computer monitor. Though accurate to a degree, this system was expensive and offered only a limited area of use.

The global positioning system is a revolution in the way we navigate today. The global positioning system is a set of satellites that just like Loran that use radio signals to determine position. Popularly known as GPS, the system uses a "constellation" of 24 satellites in high orbit to determine position in latitude and longitude. In addition to position, the system also can determine altitude and speed.

GPS was first implemented in the early 1970s as a way for the military to improve its ability to navigate and position vehicles. This system eventually evolved to include civilian as well as military uses. In the early days of GPS the signal was intentionally diffused to deteriorate the accuracy of civilian receivers. This use of selective availability as the Department of Defense (DOD) calls it, rendered civilian receivers accurate only within a hundred yards or so. Imagine having the unit telling you make a turn on the next

road after you've passed it. In 2000, President Clinton took a serious look at the system and its potential to the civilian population. Selective availability was disabled on May 2, 2000 making the system accurate to within thirty feet or so.

So how does all this work? Well, as mentioned previously, there are 24 satellites orbiting the earth that broadcast radio signals. To better understand the system, a simple idea of two-dimensional navigation must be explained. Suppose you are in a field with one of those sign posts that point to a bunch of different places with distances. The top arrow of the sign says Montgomery, Alabama – 139 miles. The next arrow down says Savannah, Georgia – 217 miles. The third arrow points to Nashville, Tennessee – 231 miles. Now sit down at your favorite map and draw a circle around Montgomery with a radius of 139 miles. Next draw a circle around Savannah and Nashville with the radius the distance on our imaginary sign post. Where those three circles all intersect is roughly Atlanta, Georgia. Easy enough to understand, huh?

GPS works with the same principal. The receiver determines its location by its distance from the satellites. Hold it one minute! But those aren't satellites stationary? Well the satellites move on a predictable path and within a consistent time frame. Inside each GPS receiver, is a programmed almanac of the position of each satellite based on time. Each satellite broadcasts a signal which moves at the speed of light. By measuring how long the signal takes to reach the receiver, distance from the satellite is determined. Using three or more satellites the receiver can then triangulate its position very much the same way we did with our imaginary signpost.

These kinds of accurate calculations with radio signals require precise timing, so on each satellite is an atomic clock which is monitored and corrected by ground stations. Using the accuracy of the atomic clock, a code pattern is broadcast from the satellite at a starting point. The receiver knows what time the

signal left the satellite based on the portion of the code it is currently receiving. Measuring the time it took for the signal to reach the receiver by comparing the segment of code received with the time in the receiver, the distance to the satellite is determined. The distances from three or more satellites are compared and the position is formulated. That position is then displayed on your receiver as a set of coordinates, or graphically on an electronic map.

Using this pattern the receiver checks and adjusts its internal quartz clock to match that of the atomic clock. So, in addition to knowing where you are, you also know the precise time. Imagine having an atomic clock in your pocket! The receiver also can determine speed by measuring its change in position over time. This is a three dimensional arrangement and so altitude is also calculated.

This is all great and wonderful, but there are some issues. Gravitational pulls from the sun and moon affect the orbits of the satellites. Changing atmospheric conditions also can affect how well the signal travels from the satellite to the receiver. To combat this, the DOD has several ground stations that constantly monitor the signals and make adjustments in the satellites as necessary. In addition, there are two geo-stationary satellites which are in a fixed position in the sky on both sides of the earth. These systems are called WAAS, or Wide Angle Augmentation System. This system's sole purpose is to correct for the issues that affect the accuracy of the broadcast code.

Now with a simple receiver, John Q Public can use a multibillion dollar DOD system. At this time it is estimated that there are approximately 200 civilian users for each military user of the system!

Next month, I'll discuss the different types of receivers available to you as a consumer and some neat things that can be done with them. In the mean time, check out these interesting sites:

Official page for GPS management:
Gps.losangeles.af.mil

NASA page on GPS:
Gpshome.scc.nasa.gov

U.S. Navy GPS Timing Operations:
Tycho.usno.navy.mil/gps.html

Block II specifications:
http://www.spaceandtech.com/spacedata/constellations/navstar-gps-block2_conspects.shtml

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Use Run Commands For Fast Access To Almost Everything

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

Did you know that the Run command is the Swiss Army knife of Windows' built-in apps? Using it can make your computing time move along more quickly and smoothly.

Available since Windows 3.1, the Run command is often overlooked by users except as an option for installing programs, although techies use it frequently to access various system diagnostics and information.

But the average computer user should take a closer look at Run for its versatility to start programs and utilities, to open files and folders, to open web sites (when connected to the Internet), and as an alternative to placing shortcuts on the desktop.

To use Run, left click on the Start button. Click on Run. If you hate to take your fingers off the keyboard to access Run, you can avoid using the mouse by pressing the Windows key on your keyboard and the letter "r". Commands are typed into the open box.

For example: In the open Run box, type `msconfig` to give you quick access to the Startup Configuration tab. Click on the StartUp tab, and check or uncheck boxes of programs you want to run on Startup. (You will be prompted to restart your computer. If you want your custom startup to take effect immediately, click OK.) MSCONFIG is one of the Run commands you will probably use often.

Following are other Run commands for you to try out. (If you get hooked on Run, you can search Google for "run commands" to find others. There are lots of them! Many will include "switches,"

familiar to DOS users, that will allow some of the commands to be customized.)

`calc` (opens calculator utility)

`cdplayer` (opens cd player)

`charmap` (opens character map utility)

`clipbrd` (opens clipboard utility)

`command` (opens DOS window at command line)

`defrag` (opens defrag utility)

`drvspace` (opens drive space utility to compress drives, etc.)

`dxdiag` (for DirectX, sound, input devices-joysticks, etc. info)

`freecell` (opens freecell game)

`mplayer2` (opens Windows Media Player 6.4)

`msconfig` (accesses programs that run on startup)

`mshearts` (opens hearts game)

`msinfo32` (accesses system resources info)

`notepad` (opens program)

`regedit` (accesses command to edit the registry)

`rsrctmr` (loads resource meter utility in system tray)

`scandiskw` (accesses scan disk utility)

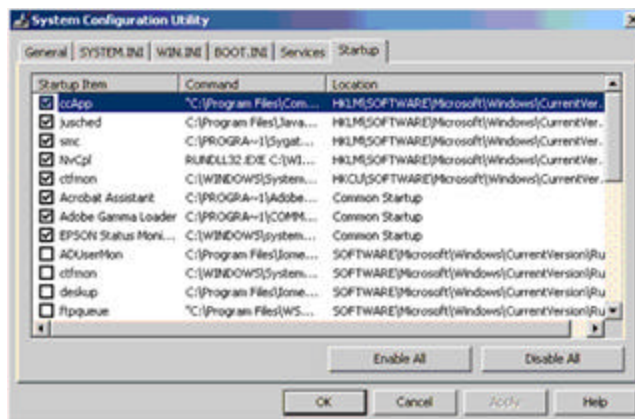
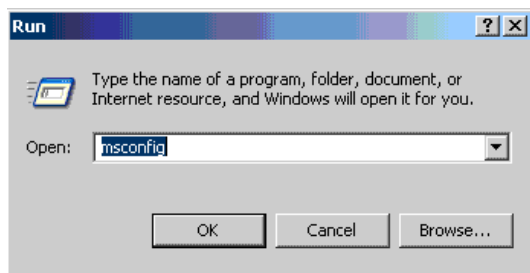
`scanregw` (registry scan)

`sndrec32` (opens sound recorder)

`sndvol32` (opens sound volume utility)

`sol` (opens a solitaire game)

`sysedit` (accesses the System Configuration Utility)



sysmon (opens system monitor utility)
 win.ini (accesses file that loads some Windows components)
 winipcfg (displays Internet connection/adaptor info)
 winver (displays the Windows version installed on the computer)
 wmplayer (opens Windows Media Player)
 wordpad (opens program)
 wupdmgr (connects to Windows update)

Using the Run box can also give you a jump start on addressing your email messages. Go to Run and type in `mailto:<desired email address>` and press OK. (Example—`mailto:editor @orcopug.org.`) Your e-mail application will open to display a blank new message that already has the email address you typed in the 'To:' field! You can even check web-sites by typing in a web address in Run. (Example: `http://www. orcopug.org.`) When connected to the Internet, you will be whisked to wherever you want to go.

Among the switches you can type in the Run box to customize tasks are `attrib`, `move`, and `xcopy`. DOS command and switches, and instructions on how to use them in conjunction with Windows Run, are at http://www.Techiwarehouse.com/DOS/XP_DOS_Tutorial.html, and <http://www.computerhope.com/msdos.htm#02>

As you type commands in the Run box, a list of your Most Recently Used (MRU) commands — a history of the commands you've used — accumulate. The growing list can come in handy, because you can just click on any command to activate it without re-typing it.

On the other hand, you may not want to wade through a long list, or you may not want others to have access to the visible commands. In these cases, you need to clear the MRU commands. Here are two ways you can do that.

- 1) Right click the start button and go to properties. Click on the radio button next to Start Menu and click on the Customize... button. Then, click on the Advanced tab. Locate the Run box and check the box on the left. Then, click on clear history.
- 2) You can navigate to `HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\RunMRU`. This is where you will find all the commands in the Run history. Delete the ones you don't want. But, backup the registry first!

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nearest you. Members vote on where to meet each month, and they RSVP through the Web site. If enough people RSVP, the get-together will take place. Meetup.com offers many features for communicating with other members, planning agendas, and more. There are literally thousands of topics, with new ones being added all the time, so you are bound to find something you are interested in.

For those who are interested in communicating and

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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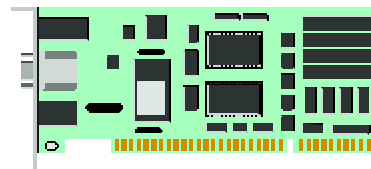
spending time with friends they already have, there are online services to help with that too. Yahoo Groups, for example, lets you set up your own personal portal. A Yahoo Group includes a mailing list, photo gallery, polls, online chat, and more. You can set up a group for your family and invite all your relatives to join. Then the whole family can upload photos, plan the next reunion, or talk about what's been going on in their lives. Similarly, sites like Classmates.com or Reunion.com allow old classmates and military personnel to reconnect with each other. These services are a great way for people who don't get to see each other very often to stay in touch.

Along the same lines is a wave of new services known as social networking applications. There has been an explosion of these sites in the past

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Tech News (September 2004)

By Sue Crane, Editor, Bearly Bytes, Newsletter of the Big Bear Computer Club



The Check Clearing Act for the 21st Century Act goes into effect Oct. 28 and will encourage the banking industry's use of image technology. If you ask for a canceled check for proof of payment, you'll likely receive an IRD (Image Replacement Document) instead.

This fall, Californians will start paying \$6 to \$10 more for every monitor, flat panel, laptop and TV sold in the state—the result of a recycling law that will take effect Nov. 1.

Google queries can return Web sites that list personal information including names, addresses, phone numbers, and credit card data of hundreds of card holders. Google would not comment, but they've decided to allow anyone to request the removal of any document that includes a Social Security or credit-card number—simply send a note to help@google.com with a link to the page. So far this year, Visa has had 20 sites pulled from the Web for trafficking in stolen credit cards.

Intel will incorporate changes in its 65-nanometer strained silicon manufacturing process beginning in 2005. Circuits made on the 65-nanometer process can boost performance or cut power consumption or do both. The enhanced version can increase performance by 30 percent. With strained silicon, Intel is at least a generation ahead. Competitors IBM and AMD who have also begun to include strained silicon in chips. In 2009 Intel expects to be making 32 nanometer chips.

Mayo Foundation will use IBM's Blue Gene super-computer for mathematical modeling required to understand gene and protein structures and their interactions to get clues about disease causes. The technology, aimed at improving diagnosis, curing diseases and developing individualized treatment, may help Mayo understand which genes might be responsible for certain diseases, including various cancers.

Researchers have developed a way to print sheets of solid animal tissue by filling inkjet cartridges with animal cells, or "bio-ink" and using basic AutoCAD design software. The scientists are designing and generating tissue that could someday save heart patients who need new cardiac tissue and allow doctors to study, scan, and duplicate exactly what a patient needs and develop custom treatments.

A free program from eMachineShop.com may be an inventor's dream. The program lets people design 3-D objects (such as car parts, door knobs, etc.) in metal or plastic and then order them online. The software checks to determine whether a design can be made, tells the customer how much it will cost, and sends the design to a "real world" machine shop for manufacturing.

Freescale Semiconductor Inc. received certification from the FCC on Monday for its ultra wideband chip set. UWB (ultra wideband) wireless technology is expected to replace USB as a peripheral connector for PCs and could enable a new generation of wireless devices. The first generation products support 100-110 Mbps and the road map aims for speeds of 220 Mbps by the end of the year.

Sony's new television technology allows viewers to zoom in, pan and tilt their perspective in television broadcasts. Sony said the new DRC-MFv2 or "Digital Reality Creation Multifunction" controller chip will help to unlock and take more advantage of the level of detail available in high-definition digital video.

Digital Lifestyles believes it's got exactly what teenage computer users want. The hip-e computer is white with screen and keyboard framed in fuzzy pink fur. Or a leopard skin. Or a graffiti pattern.

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Hoaxes, Chain Letters, Sob Stories— Check Them Out, Don't Forward

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor, Region 2;
Columnist For AARP's Computer And Technology Web Site



Email Hoaxes— Check 'em Out, Don't Forward

Spam and malware—nasty virus, worm, spyware, and such software—turn many peoples' email inboxes into bloated wastelands. Anti-virus and anti-spyware tools help prune the weeds. But another hazard lurks as innocent-seeming email: hoaxes, chain letters, and sob stories, all urgently demanding that you “Forward this to everyone you know, right now!”.

Many of them come from well-meaning friends, relatives, and colleagues. Others come from legitimate mailing lists you've subscribed to, and some surely come as spam. They often have a common structure: they tell a plausible story, cite seemingly authentic sources, contain specific details, offer a compelling reward or threaten something scary, and issue a call to action.

Before following the instructions, remember that something isn't true just because it's on the Internet, whether as an email or a Web page article. It was said early-on that the Internet makes everyone a publisher. While that can be true, it doesn't mean that everything published is true or well-intended.

I've seen earnest warnings posted to work-topic mailing lists, such as a story about a new method of carjacking becoming common at gas stations. A five-second Google search on carjacking hoax “gas station” revealed dozens of links such as <http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org/HBScareChains.shtml> which

show the warning to be a hoax. A similar bogus post cautioned not to blink headlights at cars driving with their headlights off at night, lest one become a target for gang violence. Searching on headlights “gang initiation” revealed sites including <http://www.snopes.com/horrors/madmen/lightout.asp>. Another type of hoax masquerades as virus alerts, suggesting searching for a specific file on your PC, warning that its presence indicates infection with the virus, and suggesting deleting the file. No surprise, a simple search on the given filename combined with the word “hoax” reveals the warning's hoaxish nature. A funny parody of such warnings equates following the instructions with banging oneself in the head with a hammer, then sending hammers to everyone you know, telling them to bang themselves in the head. The full text is at

<http://mailman.theapt.org/pipermail/sfobug/2004-March/001080.html>

Many hoaxes have been around for years; some will soon celebrate tenth or higher birthdays. Just like cicadas—due in many areas this year on their every-17-year visit—hoaxes ebb and flow, decline and are rediscovered and rebroadcast. Hardy perennials include myths of Bill Gates paying people to forward email so he can track it, and of a Neiman-Marcus cookie recipe ripoff. Another deals with Congress planning an email tax, urging recipients to complain to their legislators and forward the alert. Sometimes details undermine the claims (the supposed Congressional bill number is invalid), sometimes they're well-crafted. But the important lesson isn't remembering specific debunked hoaxes, it's being suspicious about potentially fictitious news and being able to search for reliable information on such matters.

Remember that Web sites are not equally definitive and reliable. There's a big difference between a niche/hobby/advocacy site—perhaps newly

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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.

Selections From The DealsGuy

Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer User Group

When working the Handicap show I was impressed with the technology I saw. There are computers with sensors capable of detecting even eyebrow or eye movement that can be used to control certain things. There is too much to go into detail, but it was sure interesting to see all the technology available for the handicapped. One product was a special computer in the \$8,000 range that has tremendous capabilities. Legislation exists concerning the provision of whatever technology would help a student if certain tests suggest that a technology is necessary to help them. To find out more about how this legislation works, try a search for "IDEA", better known as "Individuals with Disabilities Education Act." If you know anyone severely handicapped, a test and that legislation could help him or her.

Disappearing Rebates

I discovered a new problem concerning rebates. I've had good luck with OfficeMax rebates in the past, but the last two I sent in ended up with a follow-up phone call later by me only to be told that the check

was sent on a certain date and cashed on a certain date; end of conversation. I gave them the benefit of the doubt for the first one, but when I got the same answer for the second one, I know I keep better records than that and we have no problem with mailboxes in our neighborhood. A \$10 rebate wasn't worth any further efforts, but that's making me more gun-shy of rebates.

How About Helping Microsoft!

My thanks to Joe Barth of Alamo PC Organization for sending this information. Joe says; "They are seeking people to participate in Microsoft product evaluations and get free software. Ever wanted to talk to Microsoft about that one feature you wished the company would change in a product, or on a Web site? The Usability Research Group at Microsoft is interested in talking to you! All participants will receive a software gift for participating in a study." Check [<http://www.microsoft.com/usability/jump1.htm>].

Time Is Of The Essence

Here is a sophisticated time and data management software, C-Organizer Professional, which offers PC users a digital Planner, Event Scheduler, Calendar, Notebook, Address Book, Password and Bookmark managers, all packed up into one powerful and easy-to-use application. C-Organizer can bring out and help to cultivate time architect skills even in the most hopeless time prisoner. For further information, go to [<http://www.csoftlab.com>].

User Group people can get it for \$25.00 rather than the usual \$35.00 price by downloading (4.15 MB) at [<https://secure.element5.com/shareit/checkout.html?productid=167248&language=English&COUPON1=248QHM>] for the discounted price. I doubt there is any help for me and my scarcity of time. I'm supposed to be retired, but so far, I have only managed that part time, (mini-part-time).



Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC) Meetings

WAC Meetings will be held on January 22 and February 26, 2005 (NOTE: 4th Saturday!), 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM. at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA. The January topic will be "Alternative Internet Browser Demonstrations"

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/>

How About A Great Relational Database!

I called Alpha Software to order the new version of Alpha 5 on special, and while talking to the order-taker, he remembered me so we created a deal for my readers. Alpha Software has been offering their database for years and has continued to improve it. They have introduced Alpha 5 ver. 6 and user group members can get a deal on it. Remember that Alpha 5 is a relational database that has some exciting new features. Check their Web site at [<http://www.alphasoftware.com>] for full information. You can build Web-accessible database applications without any programming. You can access and work with your data no matter where it resides if you have an Internet Web Browser. Alpha 5 uses Genies, which are similar to Wizards, but they say Genies are better.

It offers action scripting with hundreds of predefined actions that can be used for building applications without writing one character of code. Alpha's Visual Report Writer will also impress you with its ease of use, and lets you accomplish custom layouts and many other tasks. As suggested above, it also works with HTML and supports Active X. Read more about it on their Web site and you will see that Alpha 5, ver. 6 is even more outstanding than ever. I've used Alpha Software's database for my own purposes for years and I'm no expert.

The retail price for Alpha 5 ver. 6 is \$349.00, but during January and February of 2005 you get a tremendous discount, just \$179.00 if you download it (24 megs). To do that, e-mail Brett Johnston at [brett@alphasoftware.com] with the code "dealsguy" in the subject line to make arrangements

for downloading. If you prefer to have it shipped, e-mail Brett with "dealsguy" in the subject line. You can also call Brett at 800-451-1018 Ext. 11. Shipping is \$12.00 in the US, \$30.00 to Canada.

Working On Your Icons?

I received this announcement from Roman Rudnik, Marketing Communications Mgr. of ArcticLine Software, which produces Bee Icons. He states: "Bee Icons is an icon customization tool that allows you to change over 250 system icons in Windows 95/98/Me/2000/XP, individually or using icon themes. I think you will find our software interesting. Designed for Windows 95/98/Me/2000/XP, the application allows changing over 250 standard icons separately, one after another, or all together using one of the many Bee Icons Themes. Along with Desktop, Drive and Folder icons, the program can successfully change icons on the Windows XP Start Panel. (DealsGuy note: Check the product page: <http://www.beeicons.com/features.php>.)

"We offer 15% discount for user group members. If you are interested, please e-mail me at [roman@beeicons.com] and I will send you a Discount coupon code. This code should be entered during registration process to get the discount."

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>]. I have posted new Web pages with announcements I received in 2004. Sorry they are not well organized, but what is there was a lot of work, as they all have to be edited.



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time each week where I manually check for the latest updates and run a scan. I find that particularly necessary for my backup computer and laptop, which don't get as much use as my primary machine. You can find links to a wide variety of computer protection resources on our web site, at: <http://www.nctcug.org/protection.html>

“Thumb” or “keychain” drives — flash memory devices with an integral USB connector that plugs into your PC — are proving to be a great resource for sharing files. We heartily recommend you invest in one or more, and bring them along to NCTCUG meetings, so we can share useful free-ware and shareware programs. Thumb drives are an easy way to transfer files between computers, provided both have USB ports.

Windows 98 users will need USB driver software, usually included with the thumb drive on a CD or available for download from the web. XP users should find true “plug and play” functionality — the computer will recognize the drive when it's plugged into a USB port. Copying files is a simple matter of “drag and drop.”

Member Jorn Dakin advises care if your USB port is on the front of the computer near the floor — apparently an “ask me how I know” moment. Rampaging shoes and thumb drives are incompatible. We suggest plugging in a USB hub to a port on the rear of the machine, and locate the hub on top of your machine or desk. You may need a powered hub if your USB devices get significant power from the USB port — some scanners, printers, and external optical drives, for example.

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launched—and a long-running site committed to factual analysis, concerned about its reputation, and providing updates, clarifications, and corrections when needed. Credible and well-regarded debunking sites include <http://www.urbanlegends.com/> and <http://www.snopes.com/>. A wonderful reference for all-things-virus-related is <http://www.vmyths.com/>; its False Authority Syndrome writeup explains how misinformation spreads and why it's important to consider the qualifications of people and organizations making assertions.

Another type of “forward me now” email is sob stories. The granddaddy of Internet tear jerkers is Craig Shergold. A real boy (eight years old in 1989) had a real brain tumor. People close to Craig used a paper chain letter to solicit get well cards to cheer him up and earn listing in the Guinness Book of Records. They succeeded: the million cards received in less than a year took the record. After 30 million, a philanthropist heard of Craig and paid for surgery. Craig has recovered; he and his family have pleaded for an end to cards. But with Internet-powered networking and new people constantly discovering this

“worthy cause” and forwarding appeals to everyone they know, the torrent is unending. The whole story is at <http://urbanlegends.about.com/library/weekly/aa102997.htm>.

Then there are chain letters—what can I say? Unless you've signed up for the “chain letter of the day” club, you're probably not happy to see them. Especially armed with dire threats or implausible promises, chain letters are an imposition on the recipient.

Perhaps once a novelty, especially if they carried interesting paper letterheads and postmarks, with creative handwritten endorsements, emailed chain letters are simply a modern-day irritant. Just don't do it!

Before forwarding anything to anyone, especially to a mailing list or “everyone you know”, consider whether your potential addressees really want to receive it. If it's a hoax, chain letter, or sob story, they probably don't. A better course of action is to quietly discard sob stories and chain letters, and to research hoaxes and send debunking information back to the sender.

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Ron Schmidt introduced me to a magazine I'm finding fascinating, "American Heritage of Invention and Technology." The Fall issue of this quarterly includes an article on the introduction of the first transistor radio, fifty years ago. Finding components to fit in a shirt pocket case, let alone increase the yield of functioning transistors to commercial quantities was a challenging project in the '50s — now we have multiple millions of transistors in our computers' CPUs and memory chips. Other articles of interest in that issue included topics of Colt's revolver, the loss and recovery of four hydrogen bombs over Spain after a crash of a B-52 and KC-135 tanker, tunnel boring machines, insect traps, and the development of the GPS system.
<http://www.inventionandtechnology.com/>



One of my "round tuit" projects this year will be putting up a web site in attempt to get back in touch with old friends from college radio station days. Santa brought me a Konica Minolta Dimage Scan Dual IV — a slide scanner. I've got several boxes of slides from that era, and until getting the scanner, had no way to add those images to the web site. But, along with the tool, one needs know-how. Scanning the slides is going to take real work — the supplied software has lots of settings for scanning resolution in and out, as well as image correction features. Here we go — scampering up the learning curve again !! The package also includes a copy of Photoshop Elements Version 2.

NCTCUG Information

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Club Information call: 301-577-7899

Web Site: www.nctcug.org

Officers and Directors

All officer terms expire 2003

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Director: term expires

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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!

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year: Friendster, LinkedIn, Orkut. The idea here is to map relationships — someone invites you to join, and you in turn invite all your other friends to join. The Web site shows you people who are directly connected to you (friends), as well as those who are connected to you through other people (friends of friends). You can then use the service to keep in touch with your friends, and to meet new people through friends you already have.

So, are these virtual or real communities? The line is blurring, and the distinction between the two will most likely disappear in a few years. Technology continues to improve the way we interact. Rather than turning us into loners, the Internet is helping us to make new friends, and to keep in touch with old ones.

February 2005

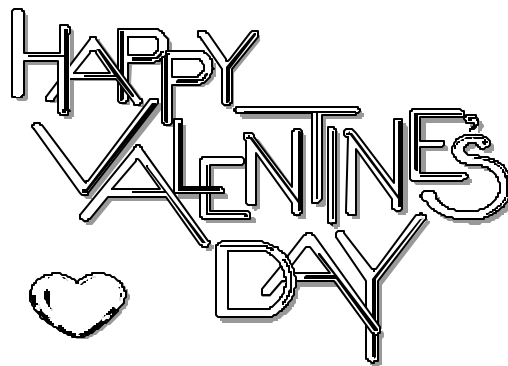
1st Wed. (2/2) 7 p.m.
Virginia General Meeting

4th Wed (2/23) 7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (2/21)
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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First Class

