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Keeping Up

By Paul Howard, NCTCUG

While most of my user group colleagues might not recognize the term “LAN Party” they’d recognize the concept — dragging computer equipment to meetings and trying to safely carry it. I’d be hard pressed to guess how many dozen times I’ve negotiated stairs with a tower case in my arms. I found a solution in the CYBERGUYS catalog — a GearGrip Carrier — straps and a handle that allow you to carry a CPU case like a briefcase. The one I purchased works for systems up to 60” in circumference and 70 pounds for 17 bucks. They have similar tools for flat panel and CRT monitors.

In the past, I purchased a CaseLogic Auto organizer from CYBERGUYS that allows me to store maps, sunshades, hats, gloves, ice scrapers, snow brushes and assorted other vehicle detritus in a folding cargo bag that will fold flat when unneeded. When I need to carry passengers, I can shift the whole thing to the trunk, and don’t need to spend minutes chasing down all the stuff floating around the back seat. A larger model can also be used to keep grocery bags upright in your trunk.



Just when I thought I’d cured my “master antenna system” TV reception problems both UHF and VHF stations started looking awful about two weeks ago. I thought the new amplifier I replaced the defective twenty year old one with had suffered an early failure. Up into the garage attic again — swap amplifiers (I had a spare, after my last adventure in TV land), and ... reception still awful. Thank heavens for the FRS walkie talkies — at least I didn’t have to scramble up and down the ladder to check the changes in reception as I made changes — I could ask Linda to check the TV. Not much left in the signal path — I replaced the matching transformer and first section of coax to the input side of the am-

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Configuring A Basic User's PC

By Gabriel Goldberg, APCUG Advisor, Region 2;
Columnist, AARP Computers and Technology Website

Don't be alarmed by the high-falutin word "configuring". It just means deciding what components—otherwise called "parts"—will perform various PC functions. It's like old-days car buying: reviewing a dealer checklist to pick dozens of individual features, from radio to power steering to disc brakes and more. The good news is that almost any current PC with a printer and Internet connectivity will handle mainstream requirements. That means that a generic Windows PC is usually adequate—but you should upgrade if you'll do anything challenging or exotic.

Just as when buying a car, the first step in buying a computer is deciding what you'll do with it: e-mail, Web searching/viewing, or word processing? Financial work with Quicken? Digital photography? Simple games? Ultra-demanding tasks like high-end games and digital video editing?

Just as when making any major purchase, a small investment in learning pays off for years. Before buying a PC, learn the basics: — take a class, buy a book, attend local computer user group meetings, consult Web sites, read technology magazines at the library.

As you look at applications' system requirements (processor speed, RAM size, hard drive storage capacity, video card speed and memory, etc.) note differences between minimum and recommended specifications. Vendors are often too optimistic—and that's being charitable—about what's needed for their software to run productively. It's much safer, and not much more expensive, to buy at least the recommended choices. In fact, I usually buy a little

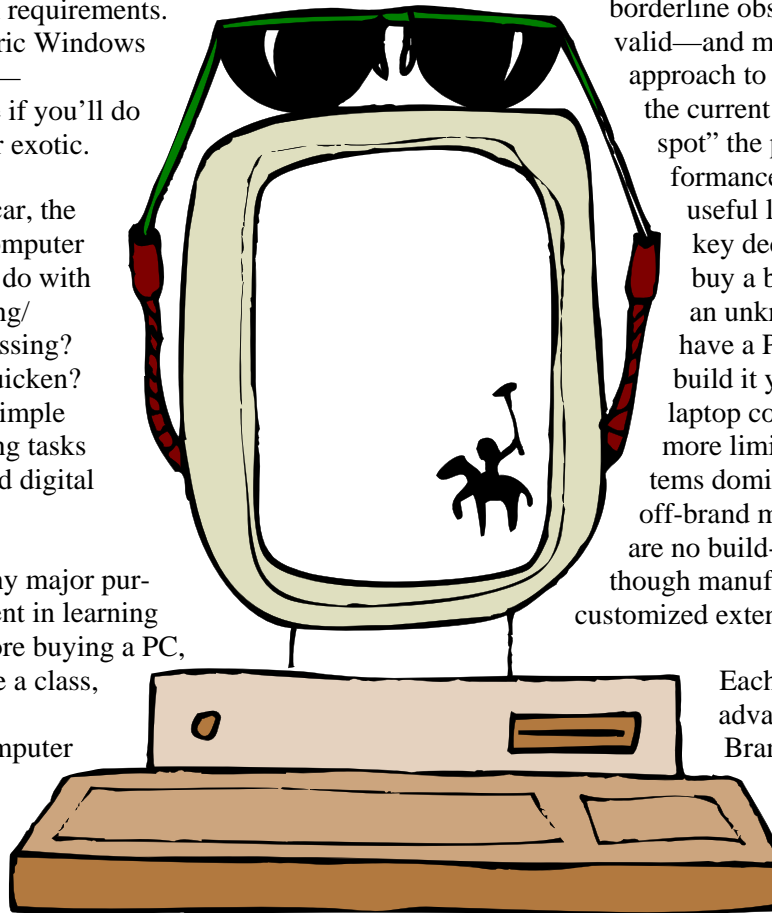
more power than I need. This bumps cost just a little and it avoids future problems and upgrades. Purchasing this way greatly extends a PC's life and makes it more compatible with future innovations, at least for a while.

Remember that as PCs evolve, a range of choices is always available, from bleeding-edge new to borderline obsolete. An equally valid—and more economical—approach to configuring is finding the current technology "sweet spot" the point where cost, performance, compatibility, and useful life are in balance. A key decision is whether to buy a brand-name system or an unknown-brand machine, have a PC built to order, or build it yourself. Choices for laptop computers are much more limited: brand-name systems dominate, trailed by a few off-brand manufacturers. There are no build-it-yourself options, though manufactured systems can be customized extensively.

Each purchasing choice has advantages and advocates. Brand-name systems can be evaluated and compared by consulting references such as Consumer Reports magazine,

are available everywhere via catalog or online shopping, and may have better standard or optional warranties (often worthwhile for quick service and peace of mind). But brand-name systems sometimes suffer from using commodity parts vs. best-quality components.

Unknown-brand machines can be reliable money savers or risky acquisitions. I'd only buy such a system from a trusted store with a flexible return



policy. I favor having PCs built to order by small local shops with established reputations, offering maximum flexibility and consultation during design. And I've enjoyed watching my PCs take shape as they're assembled from a tableful of parts!

Some people build their own PCs, often with training and mentoring from computer user group volunteers. This demystifies system innards, greatly facilitating diagnosing and repairing problems and upgrading components. Build-to-order and build-yourself allow specifying brand-name parts for improved performance and reliability. No matter where you purchase, look carefully at monitor choices. Traditional CRT monitors prices have declined, allowing buying larger devices with better resolution. And newer/thinner/lighter LCD panels offer a powerful—though sometimes less flexible—alternative. Visit stores to compare brands and models and explore settings to match your preferences.

Decide how you'll back up your software and data. Choices include a second—perhaps external or removable—hard drive, writable optical media such as DVD, and tape. The first two are most often used, with each having unique advantages. Follow your backup plan regularly; nothing ruins a day like losing months or years of can't-be-replaced data, not to mention having to reconstruct all your software.

Small choices can make large differences in productivity and comfort. For example, mouse technology has advanced far beyond the traditional two-button wired device. Mouse alternatives include trackball and wireless devices, gadgets with many extra programmable buttons, wheel mice allowing horizontal/vertical scrolling, etc. Considering how much time you'll use your pointing device, it's worth spending a little extra money to have the device that suits you best!

Windows offers many choices for easing use—enlarging type, making keyboarding easier, providing special audible and visual cues, etc. Accessibility options are found in different places—usually via Control Panel or the Start menu. It's worth exploring these to tailor your PC to your individual preferences. Similarly, small add-on programs can greatly improve a PC's comfort factor. Remember that Win-

dows is highly configurable: you can change how it looks and operates. As you become familiar with your new PC, explore options/settings/preferences. Just as you wouldn't insist on driving a car with seats and mirrors exactly as they came from the dealer, don't be captive of Microsoft's initial settings!

Name-brand computers usually include software bundles. Vendors shout about how valuable they are and how much money you're saving on them—but that's only true if you'll use the software provided. As soon as you have your machine, examine pre-installed software and remove anything you know you won't use. Then defrag your disk and then install the programs you'll use. These simple steps will make your machine run better by decluttering it.

Finally, if you understand how to do this, use built-in tools such as MSCONFIG to chop out unneeded services started by default when your system boots.

Software bundles often include junior-grade versions or limited-time trial copies of critical tools such as anti-virus and anti-spyware software. For system reliability and security, upgrade these to full versions and subscribe to update services.

Not much else in modern life besides computers keeps getting faster/better/cheaper. And it's not hard to find or build a computer that meets needs for several years, runs reliably, and doesn't break the bank.

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Selling On Ebay

By Dorothy Alexander, Executive Board Member
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The first thing you should do is to look at the eBay site <http://www.ebay.com> (American site) or <http://www.ebay.ca> (Canadian site) and register with them. When you start selling on eBay they credit you with \$10.00 to your eBay account to get you started. You then need to reimburse them using any of the following; credit card, money order, cheque or direct bank withdrawal from your account. You will need to decide on a user name and password with the auction house.

If you are planning to use BidPay.com (Western Union) it is advisable to register with them. If you are going to use PayPal you need to register with them also.

You should look to see what your type of item is selling for and see if there is an interest in it. Make a note of the category that the other items were listed under that were similar to your item you wish to sell. For additional fees you can list in more than one area.

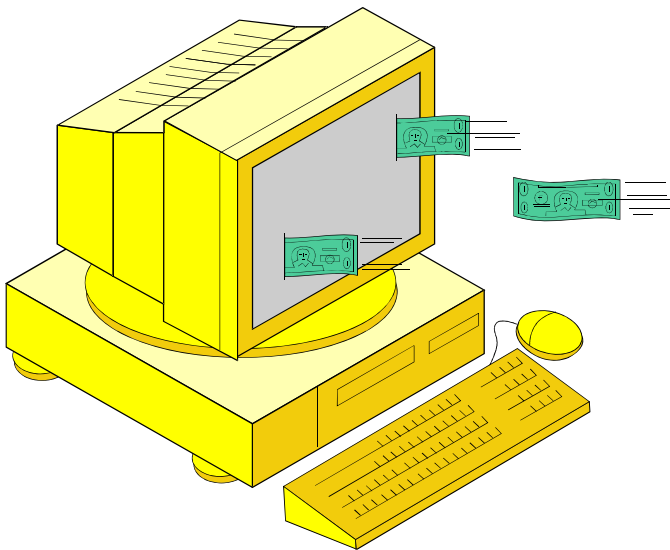
Take a picture of the item. It is a known fact that it sells better with a photo. You are allowed one photo (not be over 250 kb) of each item with Ebay. Each additional photo costs five cents. After you

take your photo you should scan it, remove unwanted backgrounds and size it. Make sure to save the photo. Save to an appropriate folder for easy access. I have a digital photo folder and a sub folder called "Ebay photos".

You are now ready to log onto Ebay. You need both your user name and password to do so. Location prompt is next. You can enter Sarnia or simply say Ontario or name of choice. The next prompt asks if you want it listed regionally. The reply is "DO NOT LIST REGIONALLY". The reason is that this is for U.S.A. not Canada. Then the next thing you type in is Canada in the appropriate box. Now you indicate how many days the sale will be. You can choose 3, 5 or 7 days. There is an extra 0.10 charge for a 10-day advertisement. Mark if you want a RESERVE price on item and enter the amount. There is a charge for this (see below). Sometimes this is a good idea for an expensive item that you definitely have a certain price in mind that you want to get. If there is a reserve price put on it you can start it low to get the bidding going. If you do not want to put on a reserve price start it just around the amount of money you would be willing to sell the item for: e.g. \$49.99 if you wanted at least \$50.00 for item.

The rates to list on eBay are:

Listing Price	Cost to list
01 to \$0.99	0.30
\$1.00 to \$9.99	0.35
\$10.00 to 24.99	0.60
\$25.00 to \$49.99	1.20
\$50.00 to \$199.99	2.40
\$200.00 to \$499.00	3.60
\$500.00 and up	4.80
Cost to put on Reserve	
\$1.00 to \$49.99	1.00
\$50.00 to \$199.99	2.00
\$200.00 & up	1% of reserve



Commissions are charged on the selling price and are as follows:

\$25.00 or less: 5.25%
 \$25.00 to \$1000.00: 5.25% on 1st \$25.00 then 2.75% on balance
 \$1000.00 plus: 5.25% on 1st \$25.00, 2.75% on balance up to \$1000.00 then 1.5% on balance above \$1000.00

Give your item a title. The aim here is to make it so attractive that everyone will read it! Decide how you want to word your advertisement. Your description should be quite detailed as to what you have to offer. Next choose the category best suited for the item you wish to sell. Make sure to totally describe the item (including flaws, tears, cuts (in other words everything). If it is a garment it is a good idea to measure it, even if you know the size. Give details as to how you want payment for the goods and instructions in regard to shipping and handling. State if you will accept checks or what kind of payment you wish. All items are paid for in U.S.A. dollars unless you go on EBay Canada or specify otherwise. Make this as descriptive as possible to avoid the goods being returned for misrepresentation. You can choose font size, colour, etc. when you are doing this. This is all loaded into your ad with a prompt to see if you wish to check it for spelling or errors BEFORE completing the ad.

These are the additional charges for special services

Home Page featured	\$99.95
Feature Plus in category	19.95
Highlight	5.00
Bold	2.00
Gallery	19.95
Buy It Now	0.05

The next question you need to answer would be if you want a counter on your ad. There is no charge for this and it lets you know how many people have actually looked at your item. Then you will be asked if you will accept escrow. I do not personally. I indicate that I will ship worldwide as I have a lot of my sales go abroad. After you have filled out all the areas necessary you can get a preview of what you

have filed in to confirm that you are happy with it. After all is OK click continue. They will tell you how much money you have left in your account before you click that you do in fact want your ad to be activated.

Now a screen will come up telling you where your ad is located and announcing that the sale has begun. You will get an e-mail, almost immediately, giving you the status of your account and listing cost of the ad that you just placed.

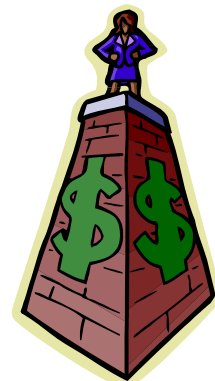
When your sale has been completed the buyer can put in a FEEDBACK for you, either Positive or Negative. You will see a star following your name. The colour changes at different levels and the number shows that there has been that many feedbacks entered for you. Most of the customers do this, but occasionally some do not. Of course you strive to get a positive feedback and not a negative one. New sellers have sunglasses after their name alerting the public that they are new to Ebay.

You can revise your ad but it has to be done prior to anyone making a bid on it. You can add additional information that you may have forgotten, at any time. It will be posted beneath your description in the ad.

If you do not sell an item you can re-list it for the sale again. If it sells the second time you get this listing fee returned to you.

GOOD LUCK! Have fun.

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RSS Feeds

By Greg Lenihan, Editor, Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, CO
<http://ppcompas.apcug.org/>

I believe I am an information junkie. I get more e-mail and subscribe to more newsletters than I can read. And yet I'm still searching for more. A few months ago, around the time of the presidential election, I discovered the world of Blogs (or Weblogs). These are online journals where authors post opinions and commentary and often link to the articles they are discussing. These often track back to more Blogs, and more authors worth reading, and before you know it, you can spend a good deal more time than you can afford searching for obscure opinions and facts.

After collecting a number of these sites as favorites in my browser, it became difficult to keep up with them every day. There are all kinds of subjects to choose from, but my favorites are news sites, political sites, and especially—technology sites. Most of these sites had icons, which I knew had something to do with “feeds,” so I decided to find out how to obtain the reader software necessary to subscribe to these feeds (or “channels”).

RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary. RSS is a text-based format (XML, actually) that contains various tagged items like a title, summary, and a link to a URL. Instead of you having to continually go from site to site to see if there have been updates posted, these sites are able to “feed” their updates to you. All you need is a news reader or what is called an RSS “aggregator.” This is a program that collects and organizes these feeds periodically so you can read them when you want. Then you can subscribe to these sites and automatically get these new postings. It's like creating favorites or bookmarks, except you don't have to continually go there. They come to you.

I started by going to http://reviews.cnet.com/4520-10088_7-5143460.html to read reviews and to gather recommendations. I found more options and more reviews of readers at http://email.about.com/cs/rssfeedreaders/tp/top_rss_windows.htm. There are many different readers; some free, some not, with different goals. Some are standalone, others work with Internet Explorer, and one worked with Out-

look. But the one that caught my eye was free and did not require a software installation. Bloglines (<http://www.bloglines.com>) is Web-based, which means I can access it from any computer with an Internet connection. I could be at home, at work, on the road, and I could still get my info fix.

The signup was quick at the Bloglines.com site. I was just asked for a username (e-mail address), password, time zone, and language. A confirmation message is then sent to your e-mail account. You simply click on a link they provide, and you're confirmed. In addition, the site posts the top Blogs people enjoy, and with the click of a button you can subscribe. Of course, you are not limited to their selections. Any Blog or site with an RSS feed can be added to your aggregator. That is how you can use those XLM icons. If you click on one you'll see a lot of tagged text, much like HTML. But it supplies the link that enables you to subscribe by pasting this link into your aggregator.

Once you have your aggregator and get it running, all that is left is to find sites or Blogs whose content you are interested in. The site where you obtain your aggregator will probably offer you a number to choose from. To get an idea of what is out there, go to <http://www.blogstreet.com/search.html> and see the number of topics to pick from. I frequently subscribe to something that looks interesting and if it is not what I expected, it only takes a matter of seconds to unsubscribe. But actually right now, I have more feeds than I have time to read.

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First Phishing, Now Pharming

By John Pearce, Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, Colorado Springs, CO

First, there was phishing trying to collect personal information. A newer attack called pharming is trying to do the same thing in a more technologically sophisticated way. You need to be on guard but neither phishing nor pharming should keep you away from the Internet. Let's take a quick overview of both.

Phishing starts with an e-mail, typically from a financial institution, with a message that some dire consequences will happen if you don't immediately verify your account information. A web site link is conveniently provided for you in the e-mail. The provided link is to a web page that looks like the real web site but is actually a web site controlled by the bad guys. The fraudulent web page asks you to enter credit card and billing information or possibly user name and password information. You can imagine what the bad guys are going to do with the information they collect.

Pharming is a way for the bad guys to redirect your web browsing to a site which they control. Pharming is also known as DNS (Domain Name System) cache poisoning. DNS is what converts human friendly names like webboard.apcug.org to numerical addresses like 192.160.122.122. The bad guys want to impact the largest number of Internet users possible so ISP's and large corporations are the most likely targets of pharming attacks. One goal is to download spyware or adware to your PC.

Protecting yourself from phishing attacks is as simple as ignoring the e-mail. All but one of the dozen or so phishing e-mails I have received have been from banks where I don't have an account. In that case, delete the e-mail and go on with your life. If you have an account with the financial institution and are concerned, use the telephone and ask to speak with their Internet security department. If you go to the web site to login, type the web site URL into the browser — do not use the link provided in the e-mail.

Protecting yourself from pharming attacks takes a little effort. Start by keeping your browser updated

with all the security patches. Next, you should be sure the padlock icon is displayed on any page where you enter personal information such as user-name, account number, or password. The padlock icon indicates you are connected to the legitimate owner of the URL and the data you enter is protected by SSL encryption during transmission. The bad guys would have to know the private key of the site in order to make the padlock appear. You can view the security information by double clicking the padlock icon on your browser. You can also use a tool like SpoofStick to confirm the URL of the web page you're viewing.

Two other exploits are worth a quick mention. The first is an instant messaging worm that changes the content of the hosts file on your PC. This is effectively the same as DNS cache poisoning. The other exploit is domain hijacking which is done by manipulating the domain name registrars. Domain hijacking is what happened to Panix, a New York ISP, in January.

Being aware of phishing and pharming along with a little care and caution will keep your web browsing safe from the bad guys.

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Spring Cleaning

Figuring Out How Spammers Get E-Mail Addresses

By Dave Gerber, Dave's Bits & Bytes, A Periodic Newsletter For The Members of the Sarasota PC User Group And The World!! Director, Sarasota PCUG, Florida www.spcug.org

Spammers employ a variety of methods to acquire e-mail addresses. Some methods take advantage of the e-mail addresses readily available on the Internet, whereas others employ different levels of trickery, from harvesting to outright stealing.

Harvesting From The Internet

Spammers (and their assistants) utilize a technique called harvesting to acquire e-mail addresses. While harvesting requires a lot of bandwidth, it is ingeniously simple: Simply download the right pages from select Web sites and extract the e-mail addresses that are there for the picking. Some of the tools and sources employed in harvesting e-mail addresses from the Web include the following:

Web Spiders: Spammers employ Web crawlers and spiders that harvest e-mail addresses from Web sites. It's common for Web sites to include mailto: URLs as well as unlinked user@domain addresses. Put your e-mail address on a Web site, and you're spam bait. These spiders are not unlike the spiders and Web crawlers used by Yahoo, Google, and others that scan the Internet's Web sites in order to keep Web search indexes fresh. Except that e-mail address harvesting spiders are up to no good. And where do these spiders get domain names? With over 90 million .com domains in existence, it's easy enough to just guess domain names in order to come up with quite a few.

Newsgroups: It's a straightforward task to harvest e-mail addresses from Usenet newsgroups: Just pull in a big news feed and extract the e-mail addresses with a simple shell or Perl script. Newsgroup volumes are still increasing exponentially — at a rate of at least several gigabytes per day. This means lots of e-mail addresses are there for the taking. Any spammer with enough bandwidth can slurp up all those bits and just sift out the e-mail addresses.

Groups, Blogs, And Discussion Boards: Yahoo! and Google have their groups and mailing lists, many of which make their members' e-mail addresses

available. There are thousands of blogs and discussion boards out there, too, that contain easily acquired e-mail addresses.

Test Messages: In this method, spammers send test e-mails to recipients whose addresses they simply guess — so-called test e-mail messages sent to addresses like service@, info@, test@, marketing@, security@. Spammers at one time could reliably conclude that, if they receive no “bounce-o-gram” back from the domain, that the e-mail address must be legit.

This is because e-mail servers used to routinely send nondelivery receipts (NDRs) back to the sender of a message sent to a nonexistent address. But that ain't necessarily so any more: More servers are opting to stop sending NDRs.

Unsubscribe Links: Many spam messages include an opt-out or unsubscribe link so that the recipient can request not to receive more spam. However, often the real purpose of unsubscribe links is to confirm a valid, active e-mail address.

Malware: Spammers sometimes use Trojan horses, viruses, and worms to extract e-mail addresses from individual users' computers. If mass-mailing worms can extract the contents of a user's e-mail address book for the purpose of propagating spam, then it's going to be easy to perform the same extraction and simply send the list back to the hacker's lair. This would probably be easier, in fact, because this activity is far less likely to be detected than a mass-mailing worm.

Unsubscribe Requests: A good number of spam messages contain “unsubscribe me” links that a user clicks to opt out. However, many spam operators actually continue to send spam to e-mail addresses submitted to “unsubscribe me” links. When a user submits such a request, the spammer knows that the address being sent is a valid e-mail address. Do you think they'll actually stop sending spam to a known valid address? Not on your life!

Buying And Stealing Addresses

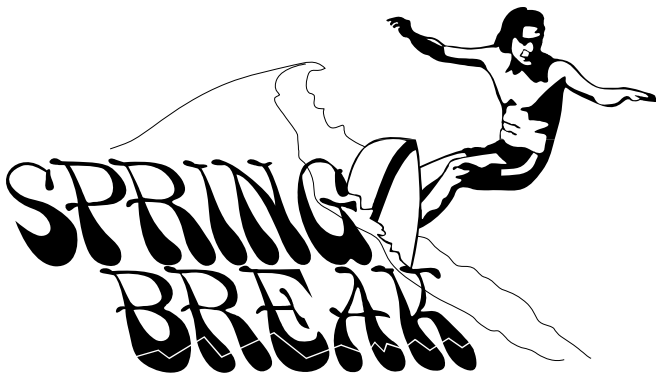
Among spammers and e-mail address brokers, e-mail addresses are a traded and sold commodity. If you know where to look, you can purchase CDs and downloads containing e-mail addresses by the hundreds of thousands or millions.

And of course, everyone has heard the stories of Web sites that collect your e-mail address and promise not to sell it (ha!). But they sell, trade, or give away e-mail addresses anyway, even when their privacy policy says they won't. A few high-profile companies have been prosecuted and/or fined for this practice.

Business and service provider e-mail lists are also stolen and sold to spammers. In mid-2004, a former AOL employee was charged with stealing 90 million screen names and 30 million e-mail addresses from AOL and selling them to a spammer for \$100,000. This is not an isolated case, but it is a noteworthy one because of the size of the heist. So much for privacy, eh?

Listen to Dave's Bits & Bytes radio show archives at www.davebytes.com; subscribe to his newsletter by sending an e-mail to dave_bytes@comcast.net.

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Tech News, January 2006

By Sue Crane, Editor, Vice President & Editor, Big Bear Computer Club,
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Microsoft Previews IE7

Internet Explorer's program manager, Eric Lawrence, recently posted a blog that said IE7 plans to support the Transport Layer Security protocol by default. He also explained how IE7 will behave differently from earlier versions when it encounters potential security problems. From an HTTPS page, users will be forced to access insecure content via the information bar, since only the secure content will be rendered by default. IE7 is also rumored to have tabbed browsing similar to competitor Firefox.

A Computer for Every Kid

A \$100 laptop? A global effort is underway to make it happen by next year. It was a pipe dream only a few months ago but soon will be reality. An ambitious effort from MIT Media Labs to put a \$100 portable in the hands of every child in the world is picking up big corporate partners, top engineering talent, and interest from several countries. One Laptop Per Child (OLPC), a nonprofit venture, is expected to start distributing machines late next year and to produce 100 to 200 million in 2007.

AMD plans 4-core Opterons by 2007

Advanced Micro Devices put a quad-core server processor on its road map and promised to upgrade its software investments, as it outlined its general technology direction for the next couple of years. The new processor will incorporate four cores connected together by a new version of the Hypertransport Interconnect technology, and will support DDR3 (double data rate 3) memory. The 2006 dual-core chips will also introduce AMD's

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Pacifica virtualization technology and its Presidio security technology into AMD-based systems. AMD's goal for 2006 is to improve its standing within the business PC market, both in desktops and notebooks.

Phishers use Phony IRS Tax Refund to Scam Consumers

A spam e-mail message has been sent around the world telling people they are eligible for a \$571.94 tax refund from the IRS. The e-mail offers a link to a fraudulent IRS Web site, but the link actually goes through a legitimate Government Web site. The link in the phishing e-mail goes to a forged IRS Web site that asks for a Social Security number, tax returning filing code and credit card details including security codes and PIN. The government is aware of the issue and is working to fix it.

New TIVO Product Promotes Targeted Ads

After introducing a generation of television viewers to the joys of skipping over ads, TIVO plans to launch a new service to let its subscribers seek out the advertisements they've cut loose from their TV viewing. Digital video recorder (DVR) maker TiVo is positioning the new service, scheduled for a mid-2006 launch, as a way for subscribers to find targeted ads in categories that interest them. The opt-in technology will let TiVo subscribers use keyword searches to look for information on specific products or services. The ad service will be free for subscribers; pricing for advertisers is still being determined.

Microsoft Considers Making Desktop Apps Free – With Advertising

Although no specific plans have been made, executives within Microsoft are examining whether it makes sense to release ad-supported versions of products such as Works, Money, or even the Windows operating system itself. Microsoft officials confirmed the authenticity of the paper, dated winter 2005, but declined to comment on its contents. But

Chief Technology Officer Ray Ozzie and Chairman Bill Gates outlined some of the opportunities and the challenges Microsoft faces in a series of October memos. In the blunter of the two memos, Ozzie said Microsoft had an obligation to act on the shift to ad-supported software. "It's clear that if we fail to do so, our business as we know it is at risk," Ozzie wrote. "We must respond quickly and decisively." The company's exploration of ad-supported software extends even to Windows, it's most important product. An ad-supported version of the operating system could make some sense, Microsoft researchers argue, noting that the product reportedly earns \$9 per year per user.

A New Kind of Music Label

40 years ago Jac Holzman changed music distribution with the release of The Doors' album on his independent Elektra music label. He's introducing a similar change with Cordless Recordings – the first all-digital music label operated by a major record company, the Warner Music Group, which is launching on the Web and on digital music services such as iTunes and RealNetworks' Rhapsody. Music from the label's first six bands is being sold only online in 3-song "clusters" instead of albums. The bands will be promoted on blogs and sites like MySpace. Artists get to keep ownership of the master recordings they release under Cordless. If they want to release their music elsewhere after a short contract is up, they are free to do so. The Cordless Recordings labels is an experiment for Warner Music, which has increased its focus on digital distribution, and a bet that inexpensive Internet distribution and marketing may give labels a cost-effective way to nurture new bands. On the label side, it's an attempt to reach out to a music-consuming world that is deserting radio and record stores for iTunes and MySpace.

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Website Accessibility For Disabled Users — No Mouse Allowed?

By Dorothy Cushway, Member of the Web Enthusiasts of Victoria, Canada;
December 2005 Web Edition, Big Blue & Cousins

When creating a website for your business or personal use, do you ensure that the site is accessible to all? Do you know what accessibility involves for website design? Have you used the many tools and evaluation programs available to test your website for accessibility?

In June of 1998 the U.S. passed Section 508 to ensure all US Federal websites are accessible in the U.S. Canada hasn't implemented this drastic policy so far, however, the Federal Government has an initiative called the Common Look and Feel which is aimed at ensuring all Canadian Government websites are accessible by December 2004.

If you are wondering what website accessibility is all about and why this can be an issue, try using only a keyboard to move through a website on different links—No Mouse or Clicking Allowed!

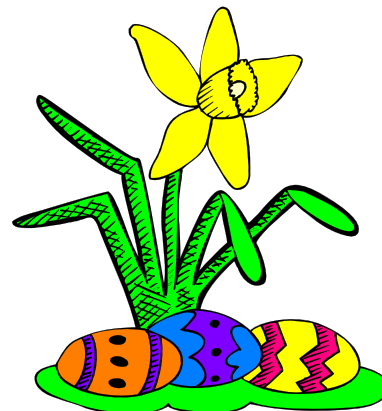
If you can move through the site reasonably well then it may be fairly accessible to most users of adaptive/assistive technology. Many people in the world, who use the internet for research, email, information, banking, or chatting, use Adaptive/Assistive Technology. There can be many different types of hardware and software such as JAWS (Job Access with Speech) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Job_Access_With_Speech) used by visually impaired, Magnification software such as ZoomText (http://www.synapseadaptive.com/aisquared/zoomtext_9/zoomtext_9_home_page.htm) to enlarge the screen data or Dragon Naturally Speaking (<http://www.nuance.com/naturallyspeaking/>) to use hands free. There are many more types of software/hardware that are used to view websites as well.

If a website is not accessible to these users, this can sometimes create problems for them if it is information they require for their job, or wish to have for research, or serve as a learning tool. Website Accessibility is supported by most software companies by

going to the accessible area of the website. For example, if you go to Accessibility on Macromedia.com (<http://www.macromedia.com/help/accessibility.html>), or Adobe Accessibility (<http://www.adobe.com/enterprise/accessibility/main.html>) you will find out the necessary information to move around programs, create accessible documents, and websites, etc. Also, accessibility is about assisting a person to better use a computer and this also affects the aging population as discussed at the Hewlett Packard and IBM web sites.

As you can see, there are vast numbers of companies that are providing adaptive/assistive solutions for users like yourself to learn from. When creating a website, and you are ready to test for accessibility, you should follow the WAI W3 — Web Accessibility Initiative Guidelines by ensuring Priority 1 and 2 indicators are fixed WAI (<http://www.w3.org/WAI/>) and WAI Resources (<http://www.w3.org/WAI/Resources/>). There are also many website checkers that you can use to find out if the website may not be particularly accessible. Here are a few sites you may want to check out: Watchfire (<http://webxact.watchfire.com/>), Hermish (<http://www.hermish.com/>) or, from Toronto, the program called A-Prompt (<http://aprompt.snow.utoronto.ca/>). Also, here are some Section 508 Accessible Tools and Resources (<http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Content&ID=122>) to assist in making your website accessible,

(Continued on page 13)



Selections From The DealsGuy

Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer User Group

Time To Do Your Taxes

Remember that you can find out where the AARP volunteers are working on income taxes and get yours done there absolutely free, except under certain circumstances. It is admirable that those folks work for free on your behalf when they are actually mostly professional people who are taking time off from their normal job to help us. On the other hand, you can go to [<http://www.taxact.com>] and download Second Story Software's free version of Tax Act for doing your own tax return. It will pester you to upgrade to the paid version while you are inputting data, but it will still do yours free and will now also do the e-file for you free. Personally, I use the Deluxe version because I like the price at \$12.95, and it includes other very helpful features, one of which saves time on data input if you used it last year (important to me).

Judy Taylour from APCUG notified most member user groups that Second Story Software will offer user group members a discount for purchasing Tax Act products. I can't include the procedure here because they don't want it posted on the Web, but I

believe the Deluxe version would be just \$9.95. Simply contact your group's APCUG rep for the procedure for downloading Tax Act to the discounted shopping cart. Double check the prices including the Ultimate Bundle, depending on whether you need the state version or not.

Build Your Own Web Site For Free!

A friend, who said he had not tried it himself, but that it was well recommended, referred this Web Site freebie for me to try. I have not downloaded it yet, but hope to check it out one of these days. I was a bit skeptical when I was told that one professional Webmaster chose it over the high end product he was already using, but what's to lose when it's free? Check out [<http://www.nvu.com/>] and see if it is anything you might like. They have versions for Windows, Mac and Linux, making it pretty versatile. They say they are supported by Linspire and encourage you to support Linspire products.

Rebates: *Read The Fine Print*

Have you seen the latest scam in rebates? It was on the news recently that some people had applied for certain rebates and when they did not arrive in a couple of months they found that in the fine print the rebate could take up to four years to be processed. The TV station was working to help those folks.

Interested In A Jukebox?

(Edited Announcement, December 26, 2005)

WinJukebox Software announces the release of WinJukebox v2.0. The core functionality of an on-demand music player has been extended with play list management and music updates. The program also features automatic volume balancing and a smart track overlap. If you want your tune played, punch its track number and wait your turn. The jukebox window also shows the tracks popularity chart. When the on-demand queue is empty, the auto playback mode switches to a list of new downloads or a top popularity list. Also added is track repeat control, so that most ardent guests don't inflict their tastes on others.



Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC) Meetings

WACUG Meetings will be held on March 25th, 2006 (note: **4th Saturday**), [Topic: Photoshop Elements Version 4 Demo] and April 15th [Topic: Cybercorder (Skyhawk Technologies) Demo; FSecure Security Suite] 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM. at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA.

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/>

The Jukebox window has an attractive texture skin. It shows the play list queue and the popularity chart. The Manager window shows various available play lists and allows controlling Jukebox playback and changing its settings. The program's settings help customize the interface and manage the music menu and playback. On entering a tune number, for example, the Jukebox window can show original messages in your native language. The settings allow automatic downloading of new tracks from bookmarked sites with optional traffic limits. As for playback, the program offers the repeat control, volume level normalization, and custom track overlap.

WinJukebox v2.0 runs under Windows 98/2000/2003/ME/XP, and costs \$24.95 USD for a personal user license, and \$49.95 USD for a family license. The company also offers different types of business licensing (commercial \$59.95, noncommercial \$49.95, and educational \$39.95). We will offer all user group members a 10% discount on the latest version of WinJukebox v2.0 until 8/31/06 as a "special discount from DealsGuy." When ordering, enter the code CPN7798973196 in the coupon field on the shopping cart and checkout page. If necessary, contact [PRContacts@WinJukebox.com]. All registered users are entitled to free lifetime support and minor updates. WinJukebox v2.0 is available at [<http://winjukebox.com/download/winjukebox.exe>].

Product page link: [<http://winjukebox.com>].
 Contact: Oleg Filimonov
 Company: WinJukebox Software
 E-mail: [support@WinJukebox.com]

Be aware that I have not tried either of these products announced.

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>].



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As you may have figured out, I have a passion for Adaptive/Assistive Technology and like to educate and inform as many people as I can. All of my knowledge and learning has been gained through the support of my office, as well as many courses I have taken online from Dr. Norman Coombs (<http://www.rit.edu/~easi/index.htm>).

I feel that if everyone becomes aware of what website accessibility is, it will only make the internet more user friendly for everyone. The wealth of information that is available will make everyone's life easier if they have access to it.

JAWS (Job Access with Speech) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Job_Access_With_Speech

ZoomText http://www.synapseadaptive.com/aisquared/zoomtext_9/zoomtext_9_home_page.htm

Dragon Naturally Speaking
<http://www.nuance.com/naturallspeaking/>

Macromedia.com
<http://www.macromedia.com/help/accessibility.html>

Adobe Accessibility <http://www.adobe.com/enterprise/accessibility/main.html>

WAI <http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

WAI Resources <http://www.w3.org/WAI/Resources/>

Watchfire <http://webxact.watchfire.com/>

Hermish <http://www.hermish.com/>

A-Prompt <http://aprompt.snow.utoronto.ca/>

Section 508 Accessible Tools and Resources
<http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=Content&ID=122>

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plifier. Bingo — no more halos around people on channel 9, and I can watch “24” on channel 5 without looking through a snowy fog. FIOS TV, wherefore art thou?

Speeding

Sitting at the breakfast table on Sunday, January 15th, Linda and I noticed what appeared to be a hole in a neighbor’s house. Plastic vent louvers for their garage attic had shattered during the high winds of the night before. With rain forecast for the next day, I looked up their phone number on Verizon’s web site, and let them know so they wouldn’t have a flood in their attic. With the Verizon DSL ad staring me in the face, I decided once again to put in my number in the eligibility block to see if my line qualified for DSL — previous entries over the last five years have been in vain.

Over the years, I tried to get DSL service in some of the early employee-based field trials, but I’m slightly more than 18,000 cable feet from the central office, which is the normal limit for DSL, and I was rejected. What a surprise — really — my line now qualified for DSL ! I completed the order process on line Sunday morning, with a “service ready” date of Monday, 1/23. The price was certainly right — \$14.95 a month for a year of 768K download / 132K upload speed DSL service. Also included was an \$20 order processing fee, and a \$15 charge for the wireless modem I selected. I decided to get the Westell unit Verizon offered, rather than use the Belkin modem I already had, to insure the install process went smoothly.

I got several emails confirming receipt of the order, following up on what to expect of the installation process, and announcing shipment of the modem with a tracking number. The installation package arrived via UPS Wednesday afternoon. I received a recorded telephone message confirming the order on Monday, and another on Friday morning advising that the service was ready for use. I had received an email message on Thursday evening, 1/19 shortly after 7 PM, that the service was ready, and I should complete the installation process.

I spent much of Thursday rearranging my telephone wiring at the main junction point inside my house. I

have two phone lines serving my home, and I wanted to minimize the need for lo-pass filters on all phones and devices on the same line as the DSL service. (For an understandable discussion of DSL, see: <http://computer.howstuffworks.com/dsl.htm>) I mounted a 66 block, a telecommunications connector that allows the termination of telephone or data wiring in an arrangement of two 25 pair x 2 connectors. This allowed me to establish a connection point area for the incoming lines, DSL connections and input to the filter; area for the output of the filter and cross connection to a termination area for all the existing telephone wiring.

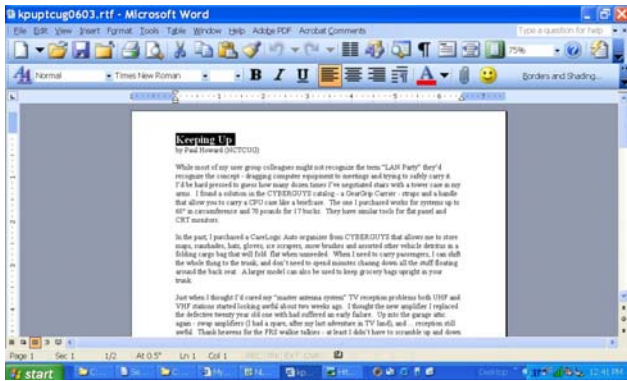
On Friday, I spent the morning working on my TV system (noted above.) After lunch, I mounted a connecting block / RJ11 jack , drilled a hole through the floor at the baseboard, and ran a new piece of telephone wire from my computer area to the junction point 66 block, connecting it to the input / DSL section of the 66 block for the appropriate line. The toughest part of the whole job was moving things stored in the basement to get my ladder where I could staple the new wiring to the floor joists. At about 3:30, after getting some of the chaos restored in the basement, I started the installation of DSL, with the supplied CD, which provided on-screen Flash demos of all the necessary steps: hooking up the phone line from the new jack to the DSL modem, running a network cable from my computer to the modem. I loaded the software on my computer, and the DSL modem went through various tests. At one point a message was displayed that “This will take several minutes.” After half an hour, I left it to take a shower, and on my return, the message was still being displayed.

I called Verizon DSL Tech Support, and was talking to a support tech after a forty second journey up the voice-response tree. I was directed to terminate the installation application, and issue an IPCONFIG command. After reading out the results to the tech, and issuing an IPRELEASE command, I was quickly up on the Internet, able to surf and get mail within about four minutes. Verizon DSL offers a choice of MSN or Yahoo for front end interfaces to the Net, and mail clients. I chose Yahoo, but haven’t installed it yet. I had to call Tech Support again later, as I was setting up the security features of the Westell wireless modem. The default user ID and password of the modem are changed during the setup process to your Verizon ISP account ID and PW. Three minutes to get the info, try

(Continued from page 14)

the UID and password, verify I was reaching the secured screens of the modem, and off the phone.

I'm a happy camper — snappy loading of web sites, fast email downloads, fast and easy downloads of software upgrades and patches. Measured speed, via dsreports.com test tools is 689K down, 130k up. It's not 5M cable or 15M FIOS, but it's a world above the old 48K dialup connection !! Next week I try the tweaking tools and see if I can push the envelope.



Screen Shots

By David Garcia, President,
Little Blue PC Club, Northglenn, Colorado
petitbleu@comcast.net

Have you ever wanted to print out what you see on your monitor screen? This is called a “Screenshot,” and there are several software packages on the market that allow you to do just that with various degrees of sophistication. If you don't need that sophistication, you can easily use Windows to get a screenshot. Just follow these instructions:

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Dean Mires	2007	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 C/R only at end of paragraphs; no indents for paragraphs should be used. Preferred format for diskettes is MS-DOS 3 1/2 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 1978 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 8 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/>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/compucenter/>

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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- 1) Press the Print Screen Key (PrtScr) on the keyboard.
- 2) Click Start, then click Run.
- 3) Type "mspaint" (without the quotes) in the Run box and click OK.
- 4) In Paint, click Paste in the Edit menu
- 5) Click Print Preview in the File menu. If the screenshot is cut off, you may want to change the printer setting to print in Landscape mode.
- 6) Click Print and close Paint. You're done!

You can also save the file if you like:

- 1) Click "Save" in the File menu
- 2) Browse to the folder you want to save the file in so that the folder name is in the "Save In" box.
- 3) Type a file name for the screenshot; use JPG in the "Save as Type" box and click Save.

NCTCUG, Inc.
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March/April 2006

1st Wed. (3/1, 4/5)

7 p.m. General Meeting

4th Wed (3/22, 4/26)

7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (4/17; none in March)

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.



First Class
