

The NCTCUG Journal

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Keeping Up

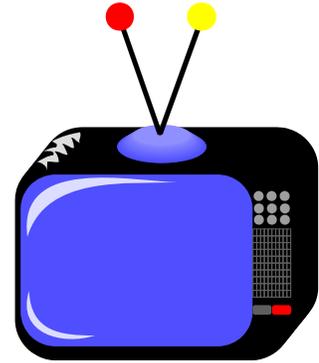
By Paul Howard (NCTCUG)

The Christmas season provided the opportunity for me to experiment with some newer television technology. My mom, who lives in the Hudson Valley of NY State, about 55 miles north of NYC, needed a new television. Her ten year old set had been flakey for a while, and the picture, if it appeared at all, only filled about a third of the screen.

Shopping options in that part of the world tend to be somewhat limited. Last time we looked for a TV set for her we had to do a fifty mile death march on the other side of the river. Other considerations included a need to fit in an existing cabinet, and lack of enthusiasm for flat panel, 16 x 9 displays. Thus, I decided the shopping would be most easily handled here, in the Fairfax County shopper's paradise.

The considerations noted above pointed to a conventional CRT television. Searching the web sites of big box retailers Circuit City and Best Buy revealed that these chains have eliminated or drastically reduced CRT sets

from their inventory. A check of Sears and KMart quickly revealed their common ownership — their web sites share a common design. While each store carried several likely candidates, the best bet appeared to be an RCA Truflat model, number 20F504T, offered by KMart



The specs for this TV show that it has an ATSC/NTSC/QAM tuner — thus being capable of receiving analog television signals (NTSC), which disappear on February 17th, 2009; digital television signals (ATSC), which offer high definition capability; and unscrambled digital signals from cable TV systems, using its Quadrature Amplitude Modulation (QAM) tuner. This is a standard definition TV, but will display digital HD signals.

As it happens, I did a minor death march, striking out at the Chantilly KMart on Thanksgiving Day,

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How To Find Podcasts

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Download the free 7.3 iTunes program from www.apple.com/itunes/ and install. Now, all you need is an mp3 player, and you're all set to download podcasts and listen to them on the go.

When you first open iTunes, click on the "Podcast Directory" at the bottom next to "Report a Concern." That actually takes you to the Apple Store. In the upper left corner is a magnifying glass and a space to search for a word or phrase. Type in "computer." The Apple logo in the top center area changes to a candy cane-striped bar as it searches. The bar will turn solid and display the results: Name, Time, Artist, Album, Price, Popularity and Genre.

Next to the name is a grayed-out circle with an arrow in it. This leads to more information about the podcast. It includes a description, user reviews, a list of the last 20 podcasts and a list of 5 "Listeners also subscribed to."

Headings are sortable by clicking on them, so if you click on Price, all the free ones appear at the top.

Some of the stuff is pretty explicit, that's why they call it the "wild, wild web." Podcasts are labeled "clean," "explicit," or blank which means the rating hasn't been determined.



I look to see how often and consistently the podcast occurs (some really good ones haven't been updated since 2006), check customer comments, and the "Also subscribed to" list.

If you want to subscribe, simply click on the "subscribe" button. To go back where you were, under the Apple logo on the left is a small button with a left pointing twirly. Click on this to get back.

After downloading podcasts, connect your mp3 player to a USB cable and right click on the file. Select "Send to" and click on the drive letter of the mp3 player to transfer podcasts to it from your computer.

Besides the iTunes Podcast Directory, you can find podcasts of Computer America shows at www.businessstalkradio.net/weekday_host/Archives/cc.shtml and National Public Radio at www.npr.org/rss/podcast/podcast_directory.php.

There are even locally-produced user group podcasts. The Los Angeles Computer Society has podcasts of their main meetings at www.lacspc.org/podcast/Archive.html

You don't have to have an mp3 player to listen to podcasts, though. If you left-click on the mp3 title, it plays right in your browser. Or, if you right-click on the title, select "Save Link As," and you can save it to a directory on your computer.

Besides playing podcasts in mp3 players and browsers, mp3 files on your hard drive can be burned to a CD. Then, you can play them in your car. Just burn them as a music CD instead of a data CD.

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The Phenomenon of Facebook — Part II

Facebook And The College Student

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Today's college student is as familiar with Facebook as they are to types of Starbucks coffee, episodes of Grey's Anatomy, and the rising cost of their university tuition.

Students, who comprise the majority of Facebookers, are obsessing over the popular social networking site. In order to gain a clearer understanding of how students are utilizing the site, let's examine the role Facebook plays in the life of the typical college student.

Anson Jablinski, a sophomore of Baylor University, believes Facebook is extremely useful as a "place to keep track of friends as they spread out and attend various colleges." After keeping a tally of how often he logs on to the site, Anson realized he visits it approximately 16 times a day.

Another Baylor sophomore, Elizabeth Lawrence admits that she lives on Facebook. "I check it practically every thirty minutes to every hour that I am on the computer (which is 9 hours a day)," said Elizabeth. She considers Facebook to be part of her daily routine.

Like many students, Anson and Elizabeth check the 'newsfeed' portion of Facebook that provides any updates that occur on their friends' profiles, as well as notifications of new messages. This feature allows users to stay informed in the lives of their Facebook friends.

While visiting the site numerous times a day may seem obsessive, being an active member of Facebook has its benefits.

It's an excellent resource, as it provides the contact information (cell phone, address, personal websites, e-mail, hometown) of the user's Facebook friends.

Students can use the site as a tool to connect with classmates, form study groups, or ask questions concerning coursework. Facebook provides ultimate connectivity, free of charge and available wherever one can find internet connectivity.

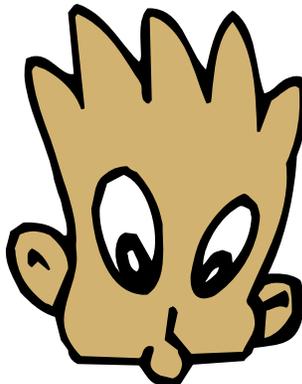
Junior Baylor student, Helena Sung, appreciates the social benefits of being a member of the networking site. "The 'about me' section gives you some insight into what kind of person he/she is," says Helena, "if you want to get to know someone better and have a better relationship with others, Facebook can be the start of connection."

Student artists, writers, and musicians often use the site to showcase their talent. They can easily inform their friends about upcoming events, and ask for feedback on their work.

Users can add extra 'applications' to their profile that are simply for fun and entertainment. For instance, students will send virtual gifts to their friends, or can buy a virtual drink for someone using the Happy Hour application. Petlovers can even create profiles for their animals through the dogbook/catbook applications. With all of the available applications, Facebook offers a great temporary escape from the stress of school.

In college, balancing one's social life with one's academics can be tricky, and certainly, this social networking site has the potential to add further complications. However, if students are able to reasonably limit their usage of Facebook, they can benefit from its advantages without allowing it to distract from their studies.

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Professor Franklin's Instant Photo Artist 2.0

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Can someone create a photo art masterpiece from a snapshot within a matter of minutes without going through a lot of training and reading manuals?

This was my challenge for this month's column of Creative Imaging and the subject of this review of Professor Franklin's Instant Photo Artist 2, developed by Streetwise Software. The company promotes that anyone can create a masterpiece in just minutes even someone who is a beginner.

Unlike some image editing programs that apply filters to create "instant" artistic effects, those using Instant Photo Artist use their mouse to paint over the picture with a cursor that actually looks like a paint brush. The result is a painted look based on the style desired.

Version 2 of this interesting software recently was released and is designed to be compatible with Microsoft Vista as well as all other previous OS releases including Windows 95. I first became interested in this product when it came out a number of years ago. The new version supports high resolution images and sports a redesigned interface that keeps most of the tools readily at hand.

The software was shipped on a CD with a four-page quick start guide. No problems in installing the software. The product is very intuitive to figure out and I was able to start photo painting without needing to access the help section or user guide.

Photo artists have their choice in painting in the artistic styles of Van Gogh, Cezanne, expressionists, pointillists or creating watercolor, acrylic, charcoal, and crackle antique images.

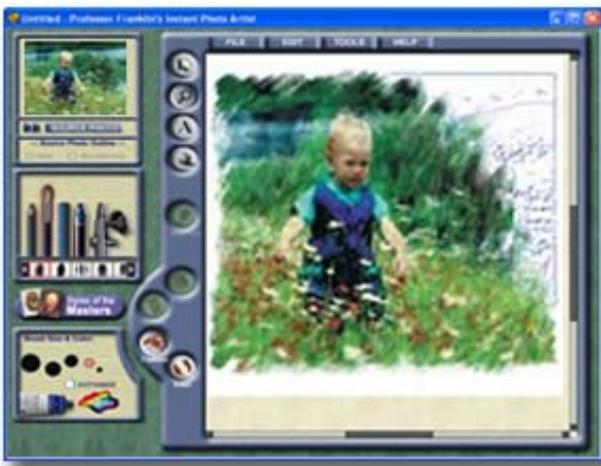
Each style from the "styles of the Masters" browser has its own pre-set brush, color, opacity, and added effects.

You can also select one of the painting tools on the palette, such as the airbrush, paint brush, colored pencil, and tip style associated with the painting tool.

Or if you want to get creative, you can use the free-hand tool and apply color manually.

For me, I prefer using the "styles of the Masters" palette and then selecting the brush size, which is based on a series of five dots graphically representing the size of the brush. No custom controls here to tweak the size settings. The different types of painting styles is also significantly more limited than in high end programs, but give you a decent selection to choose from to create your masterpiece without feeling overwhelmed.

A nice feature of the program is what is referred to as the "realistic" mode which when selected will paint back the actual photo image as it looked before you started the painting activity. This is particularly helpful when you want to feature specific detail without it



looking somewhat abstract. An example of this is facial features. I took a photograph from my wedding, applied oil paint effects and then restored my face with the “realistic” brush. Nice touch. The brush also helps to remove flaws created when painting.

The brushes (also known as the mouse) create strokes based on the direction and speed of each movement. This simulates how an actual artist would create a picture. If you move the mouse in random directions, it may create unwanted effects.

The secret behind creating your new artwork is a blue outline created of the picture selected on the canvas. This provides the basis for selecting brushes and seeing how the image will look as it is being painted, accessing the color of the original painting rather than choosing paints to use and mess up the results. You can, though, select to choose colors and manually paint, which may be a desirable situation when creating a monotone print. Another option is creating paper texture effects, such as canvas.

Once the picture is finished, Streetwise Software offers another exciting product to jazz it up. It’s called Instant Photo Effects, which also has been improved in the present Version 2. Instant Photo Effects creates a wide variety of edge effects, frames, accents, photographic effects such as antiquing, and even artistic images similar to that created by Instant Photo Artist.

The special effect options are fabulous and easy to apply to create a piece of “fine art” ready to be framed and hung on the wall.

The difference between the two products in creating painted effects is that Instant Photo Artist requires applying brush strokes whereas the Instant Photo Effects “instantly” creates the image with little outside intervention.

You can even apply multiple effects to the same image for some interesting artwork.

Both programs also allow you to add text to the picture with varying levels of effects, controlling size, type style, warp effect, color, and transparency.

I installed both software on an Acer Laptop Aspire 5570Z running Vista Premium OS with Intel Pentium dual-core processor at 1.6 Ghz and 2 gigabytes of

RAM. The products operated without problems, although the RAM quickly gets consumed as more effects are added to the image.

Each product sells for \$59.99 and is available from the software manufacturer through their website at www.swsoftware.com. A special deal for both products is available for \$99.99. I have talked to the company and they are willing to give APCUG member groups a 10% discount through August by entering the word “PCUG” in the promotion code on the purchase order form. Trial copies can also be downloaded from the site so that you can check it out first. *[NCTCUG Ed. note: the coupon has been renewed. Jan2008]*

Here's how to use the coupon...

Go to www.swsoftware.com, choose the software you want and add it to your shopping cart. On the CHECK-OUT PAGE, under SALES AND DISCOUNTS, please enter the code: PCUG and hit APPLY. You need to hit APPLY, then proceed.

The discount only applies to the two products.

Trial copies can also be downloaded from the site so that you can check it out first.

The verdict. Both products are great for those who want to create “painted” photo art with little effort and training. However, just remember that the selection of styles and brushes is limited, which in some cases may be an asset.

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Apple's New Safari Browser For WINDOWS

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX; radio and TV show host lwilsker(at)apcug.net

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Websites: <http://www.apple.com/safari>

<http://www.apple.com/safari/download/plugins.html>

Apple recently released a free version of its Safari 3 browser for Windows. While this is the first public release of an Apple produced browser for Windows, many of us already have some Apple software on our computers. Many of us have viewed QuickTime videos on our computers, and QuickTime is a long standing Apple product.

One may ask why Apple would produce a browser for Windows, when there are other, well established Windows browsers available. Microsoft's Internet Explorer still has the vast majority of Windows browser market, followed in distant second by Firefox, and then Opera and Netscape. According to published reports, Apple sees Safari 3 for Windows as a marketing tool to better acquaint Windows users with Apple products, in the hopes that they would buy more Apple offerings, such as the new iPhone. The default startup page for Safari, which is easy to change, is an Apple marketing and support website.

I already have four browsers installed on my main computer, with Firefox being my primary browser, followed by Internet Explorer with occasional use, and Opera and Netscape which I only rarely use. There is no conflict or problem having more than one browser installed, as they do not interfere with each other. Despite what I already have installed, curiosity dictated that I download and install Safari 3. Clicking on the download link at www.apple.com/safari offered the choice of two Windows downloads, a 28 meg download of Safari with QuickTime for XP or Vista, or a smaller 8 meg download of just the Safari for XP and Vista. As may be already obvious, Safari for Windows will only run on computers with XP or Vista.

Apple has done a good job trying to create demand for Safari for Windows, by proximately posting relative performance information on the main Safari website. According to Apple, Safari can load web pages

about twice as fast as Internet Explorer version 7, and 1.6 times faster than Firefox. Java scripts execute 2.8 times faster in Safari 3 than they do in Internet Explorer 7, and 1.6 times faster than Firefox. Application load time of Safari 3 is also faster than Internet Explorer or Firefox, while the much smaller Opera loads in about the same time as Safari 3. If Apple's claimed performance advantage survives scrutiny of the trade media, then it may indeed have an edge in the highly competitive market.

I downloaded the full version of Safari 3 with QuickTime. And it installed smoothly with minimal effort. Upon loading Safari 3 the first time, it was immediately apparent that the look and feel of Safari is definitely Apple-esque. While the interface was clean and intuitive, it lacked some of the flair and color of Internet Explorer and Firefox, with a flat gray toolbar and border, which Apple calls "elegant". The commands and structure of the toolbar are similar to other browsers, and required a "zero" learning curve. As is now universal in other recent browser releases, Safari 3 offers tabbed browsing, where multiple browser windows can be sequentially opened in a single application. Safari 3 is a full featured browser, with easy to use bookmarks, an integral pop-up blocker, integrated search function, auto-completion of forms, a built in RSS reader, and other features. One somewhat unique feature is "SnapBack", which allows the user to quickly return to previously viewed web pages more efficiently than using the "back" button. An interesting privacy feature is the "Private Browsing" feature (found in the "Edit" menu), which turns off any saving or record of websites visited (history), searches made, cookies received, forms filled, and other current information. In terms of security, Safari 3 supports all of the major internet encryption standards, and proxy configurations. One feature I liked is that Safari 3 automatically imported the bookmarks from my other browsers, allowing me immediate access to the websites I typically visit using those other browsers.

Safari 3 allows the use of plug-ins, much like Firefox. Unlike the well established Firefox, with thousands of open source plug-ins available, the recently released

Safari 3 only lists six plug-ins at its site at www.apple.com/safari/download/plugins.html. These six plug-ins offer features that may already be integrated into other browsers, such as an Acrobat PDF viewer, Java, Flash viewer, Real Player, QuickTime, and Windows Media Player. As Safari 3 gains popularity among Windows users, it is conceivable that more plug-ins may appear.

There is a potentially interesting feature built into Safari 3 that I personally do not yet feel comfortable with, but others may find very useful; this feature is "Bonjour for Windows". Bonjour (www.apple.com/bonjour) allows the user to network computers, printers, and other smart devices through the Safari 3 browser. Bonjour uses the open standard IP protocol, and can connect items hard wired through an Ethernet cable, or wirelessly through an 802.11 system. One example that Apple lists is using Bonjour to automatically configure a printer by going to an appropriate Bonjour compatible website which provides the information to configure the printer. Apple lists printers from Brother, Canon, Epson, HP, Lexmark, and Xerox that are compatible with the Bonjour feature.

In using Safari 3 for Windows for a few days, I noticed some interesting usability features. One I especially liked was the feature that allows the size of the screen fonts to be instantly changed, which may improve readability of a web page. The feature in Safari 3 is identical to the same feature in Firefox, and uses the same command (CTRL +) to make the fonts larger,

and "CTRL -" to make them smaller. This feature in Safari 3 is superior and more flexible than the method used in Internet Explorer to change font sizes. In terms of readability, most web sites were easier to read in Safari 3 than in Internet Explorer 7. I did notice some minor negative difference between Safari and the others, and that was in terms of page formatting. One minor annoyance was displayed when viewing my weather page (www.beaumontweather.com) which is written in fairly pure HTML, the basic web page language. On Safari 3 some items that used the HTML "center" command did not appear centered, while the same items looked fine in Firefox or Internet Explorer. On some other pages, such as the starting page for a local TV station, some graphics do not appear to load at first, but this is usually rectified by reloading the page. Except for these anomalies, almost all other web pages I visited appeared correctly, and were very readable.

I found Safari 3 to be an attractive alternative to Internet Explorer, and may be of interest to those who might want to try something different in terms of a browser. It is clean and full featured, as is typical for Apple products. As another free browser, users may want to download it and try it.

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AVG anti-spyware program. Supplement the AVG spyware program with both Spybot (www.safer-networking.org/) and Ad-aware (www.lavasoftusa.com/). No one anti-spyware program catches everything, so you need to use multiple products to be really sure.

Don't use Internet Explorer, but use Firefox or Opera instead. Internet Explorer's bad track record plus being actively targeted make it an unsafe choice. While neither Firefox nor Opera are perfect, their track records are far better than Internet Explorer.

McAfee offers a neat, and free, plug-in for both Firefox and Internet Explorer called Siteadvisor (www.siteadvisor.com). McAfee has tested a huge number of websites for bad stuff. This plug-in shows you the results of those tests in a little bar at the bot-

tom of the browser window. A green site was safe when last tested, while a red site has serious problems (stay away!), and a yellow site has some issues, but not bad enough to warrant a red rating. A few sites are gray, which means they haven't been tested. As Siteadvisor integrates with your browser, it will even add a color-coded rating symbol next to your search results if you use Google, Yahoo, or MSN. This helps you avoid problems, and malware, in the first place.

Stay up-to-date with your patches, and consider some sort of firewall software, even if it's an external device. Finally, never use a computer you don't trust for online shopping or banking, especially a public computer. You never know how well it's taken care of, and, being public, even the best care won't catch everything.

To Be Continued...

Info, Info Everywhere, And Not A Thought To Think

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Many people think that the internet is the greatest thing since sliced whatchamacallit or the worst abomination that's ever been inflicted upon the human race. As usual the truth lies somewhere in-between. There is no doubt that the internet is a great source of seemingly limitless information, and the information found there tends to fall into three general categories:

Information which is totally useless. Did you know that the average cloud weighs 300,000 pounds? Neither did I, but that's the sort of thing you are most likely to get on the internet unless you are careful.

Information which is useful, but not at the moment. I invariably discover a great tax deduction I didn't know about on April 16th. It's too late for this year, and I will probably either forget about it next year or misfile the thing where I can't find it.

Information which is useful now. This is extraordinarily rare, comparable to finding eyebrows on eggs, but we all get lucky occasionally.

The data you find in the first category is not only safe to ignore, it's essential to your sanity to ignore it. The third category usually takes care of itself. Simply use it for whatever purpose you have in mind and you're done. The second category is the one that requires a good degree of sound management to avoid wasting time, and that is the problem.

World wide productivity could double overnight if the internet would only send us the information we need at the right time. We spend too much time refining our Google searches, investigating blogs, experimenting with RSS feeds or mucking around our own data bases. One piece of missing information has the potential to make the best presentation look like the product of a misinformed dolt.

Is having the information you need when you need it nothing more than a World Wide Web fantasy? Per-

haps not. Did you know that you can set a reminder email for future delivery in Outlook? Here's how to do it:

- Open Outlook (obviously).
- Select the email to forward.
- Click on the **Forward** button.
- Click on the **Options...** button.
- Put a check in the **Do not deliver before** box.
- Select the date of delivery.
- Click **Close**.

Don't set a delivery date to a point where you are unlikely to have your present computer unless you are in a corporate network where the systems administrator can make the proper adjustments. Even then, be realistic.

Send yourself notes about meetings shortly before you need them. Include information not only about the subject of the meeting, but about the people attending with you. Your colleagues will think you're a certified genius.

All kinds of things can be done with Outlook and its future delivery capabilities. The usual subjects such as birthdays, anniversaries, and recurring meetings suggest themselves. Investors can send themselves reminders that an option they own is about to expire or to watch for that important dividend payment. Almost any kind of regular to-do item lends itself to this task. Get that tax form in the mail by April 15th. Do you really need a reminder for that?

What do you do if you don't have Outlook? Neither Yahoo, Hotmail nor Outlook Express offers this feature, but there is a web site that can help. Go to www.futureme.org and create your email for future delivery. This site is well suited for information you won't need for months if not years. Of course, delivery depends on the web site still being in existence when you need it, and it doesn't handle attachments. If you can live with those limitations, go for it.

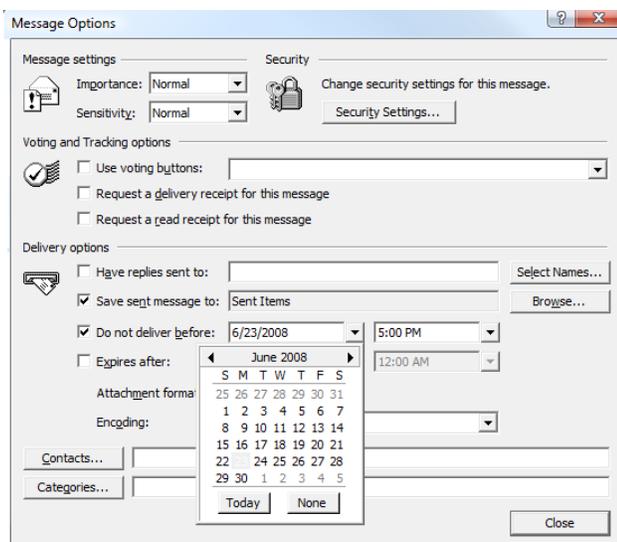
People talk a lot about traffic congestion, but unlike the weather, you can do something about it. If you commute regularly to work take a peek at www.traffic.com. The site will send you real-time traffic maps, road condition alerts and jam alerts. This site is great for road warriors or anyone who drives over regular routes.

Do you suffer from springtime allergies? Then take a trip to www.weather.com to have pollen, weather, and other alerts delivered directly to your desktop. Not everything has to be delivered by email.

Cutting down on information overload is the best reason for using these tools. Avoiding data until you need it will free you from the drudgery of sifting through piles of irrelevant information to find the one item you need, and best of all, you won't worry about being unprepared when an unexpected deadline suddenly looms up before you.

Use information efficiently and you will become respected, admired, and the opposite sex will seek you out. When people inevitably accuse you of having a perfect memory, tell them you have a photogenic mind.

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LapLink Migration Kit



For a more comprehensive solution to move your stuff from your old computer to your new Vista computer, look at LapLink's version 11.5 or 12 which use an optional USB2 for transfers. This device uses a TCP/IP connection, which, for us non-guru's, means an internet connection procedure. This Kit is very efficient and effective, but it does require some time to set up AND you've got to read the few pages of instructions. They are non-technical, but you have to follow them explicitly.

Newer versions include a Windows Vista transfer wizard that attempts to bring over some of your settings from one to the other (it helps if you buy a special cable). Simply select the files or programs you wish to transfer and press the button. To assist you in correctly moving files, LapLink has included a "sync" program – easy to use and oh, so handy.

I have used the Vista wizard on a handful of PCs and none were adequately transferred in my opinion. The data files were moved okay for the most part but the process was cumbersome and crashed on some computers when using the network options. There were timeouts and snags. Transfer security is very tight from lockout protection to folder level security.

Warning: It is important to install the USB cable correctly. Do not attach the cable to the computer until directed. Incorrectly installing the cable can result in problems in the Device Manager, and can prevent Laplink from connecting properly. If it is currently attached, please unplug it before proceeding. For more info and software updates go to www.laplink.com.

Not sure either of the above will do what you want? That's understandable. Hang loose for the January '08 review of an excellent file/program mover.

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Read Before Opening!

By Bruce Jacobs, Editor, Phoenix PCUG, Arizona
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So you just bought a brand new computer. Before you get all settled in there are a few steps you should take to help make your new computer safer and more fun.

Note: I am assuming that you bought a computer from a major manufacturer and that the computer has a Windows operating system installed.

If you are eligible for any rebates, make sure you collect all of the information needed to submit the rebate and place the paperwork in a place where you will not forget to send it in.

Check for the Windows COA (Certificate Of Authenticity) sticker. It is very unlikely that this will be missing unless the computer was purchased from a disreputable company. If it is missing, take the computer back at once! This is what allows you to run Windows, If your machine does not have this it is not legal. While you are looking at the back of the case, write down the computer's serial number for insurance purposes.

If the computer is visibly damaged or missing parts either return it or ask for a free extended warranty and a discount.

Before assembling the computer make sure you have read the manual. (OK. I know you will not read all of it) Find the section that talks about how to do a full restore of the computer. One of four strategies will be in use by the manufacturer to allow the operating system and drivers to be restored.

- ☆ Media Supplied. All the CD/DVD materials are in the box with the computer.
- ☆ Hard Disk based. A program is on the computer which will create the CD/DVDs needed to do a restore. The files are probably on a hidden partition
- ☆ A combination of the above where you boot a CD and it gets some of the files off a hidden partition

- ☆ A request based system. Where you ask for the media from the company.

Method 1 above is the best but rarely used. In my opinion, anything else is rudeness to a customer. Unfortunately, it is also slightly more expensive, so most manufacturers don't do this anymore.

Method 2 is quite common. They save 2 dollars(or so) and you spend lots of time making disks when you could be using your new computer. I strongly urge you take the time to create these disks before you connect your computer to the internet or install any software. If the disk is corrupted, before you get to creating them, it can cost you some money to recover from the problem.

Method 3 is also common. If you cannot find a way of creating backup media when this method has been used, contact the manufacturer. Tell them you might upgrade the disk drive and need to do a clean install.

Method 4 is the nastiest of the four. Many people never ask for the media until after the

support has expired. Then, when you eventually need to reinstall, you have to pay extra costs. (Note: if you are currently in this situation, and you are legally licensed for Windows, a group member can probably help without having to pay for another copy of the media)

(optional) I will scratch build any computer after this point for a couple of reasons. I can test the restore media to make sure it works (it does not always work). It is helpful to do this before the warranty expires. Usually I can repartition the disks as I see fit without paying extra for other software. It may also give me a chance to remove any unwanted software that was installed at the factory. I don't like to be prompted to sign up with other ISPs for example. If you purchased a demo/floor model computer, always scratch build as you can never know what teenagers may have installed on it.

(Continued on page 11)

10 Commandments for Online Shopping

By Robert Spotswood, a Member of HAL-PC, Texas
www.hal-pc.org [robert\(at\)spotswood-computer.net](mailto:robert(at)spotswood-computer.net)

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Navigating the Minefield

Just as flies are attracted to a fresh pile of manure, so are criminals attracted to large amounts of money. With online shopping sales at an estimated \$132 billion in 2006, the number of online crooks trying to steal from you has grown, too.

Body text: But just because there are crooks out there doesn't mean you have to give up online shopping. While there is no such thing as perfect security, and anyone who tells you differently is either lying or deluded, there are things you can do to stack the odds in

Robert Spotswood, a HAL-PC member, is active in the Linux SIG and a freelance computer professional. He can be reached at [robert\(at\)spotswood-computer.net](mailto:robert(at)spotswood-computer.net).

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It may be best to install your long term antivirus solution at this time. If you like McAfee and the computer comes bundled with a 30 day trial of Norton Antivirus, consider installing the McAfee right away. This way, you do not need to worry about any files of the Norton Antivirus not being completely cleaned up when it is removed.

If you are eligible, now is a good time to go to the company's website and apply for the free Vista upgrade. When it arrives you may not want to install it unless you have set up an extra partition. But there will probably be a time when you will want to have a copy.

Finally, figure out how you will be doing backups. If you are like me, it is very easy to put this off until you have a problem.

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your favor. The following 10 online shopping commandments will help you enjoy the benefits while minimizing the risks of online shopping.

I. Understand the Risks

If you get most of your information from the mass media, you will likely be sadly misinformed. While major data breaches make headlines, most identity theft sails under the media's radar. By definition, "news" means that it hardly ever happens. Despite the widespread belief that seems to be promoted by the mass media that identity theft occurs primary online, in truth, most occurs offline.

According to a 2004 study by Javelin Strategy & Research, 72% of the identity theft cases studied occurred offline, while only 12% started online, with the rest undetermined (www.identitytheft911.org/articles/article.ext?sp=29). Further, the study found that those who used the Internet to keep tabs on their bank accounts and credit cards lost only \$551 on average, while those that stuck to more traditional paper statements averaged losses of \$4,543.

As you can see, using the Internet to shop and for banking isn't automatically dangerous, and offline usage isn't automatically safe. While you should exercise care, don't let unfounded fears stop you from enjoying all the benefits of online shopping (and banking).

II. Keep your computer clean

Viruses, spyware, and trojans, oh my! If the bad guys have their software planted on the computer you use to go shopping (or banking), you lose. No matter how careful you are with your financial and credit card info on the Internet, if the bad guys can see your every move, every keystroke, then the bad guys win.

Start protecting yourself by having and regularly updating a virus scanner. Grisoft (free.grisoft.com/) offers both free AVG anti-virus software and an

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Old To New Computer Files Transfer: Careful!

By Charles W. Evans, Reviews Editor, Hal-PC, Texas www.hal-pc.org [reviews\(at\)hal-pc.org](mailto:reviews(at)hal-pc.org)

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It's that time of year when many of you will buy a new computer. And one of the biggest chores of getting a new computer is moving all of your stuff from one to the other. This review and the one in January '08 should be helpful in transferring or moving your "stuff".

I have the advantage of visiting numerous SIGs each month and listening to individual problems. Moving files or "migrating" programs can be a real head ache, but it doesn't have to be.

A Few Comments First

1. When you install a program under Windows, that program not only places most of its files in its own folder (subdirectory). It also places files in various Windows folders. You must move the files in the Windows folders as well.
2. To remove a program, you cannot simply delete the folder. That's only the first step, although not the best. You must uninstall the whole program. Most programs now include an "uninstall" feature. Please use it.
3. Transferring a file or folder from old to new computer just does that – it simply moves files from one place to another. If you have the original installation media, that may be all that you need. Install the program on the new computer then move data files from the old computer.
4. If you don't have the original install media, what then? In January, I'll review a program that will actually move the entire program, including files in the Windows folders, to your new computer.

CAUTION: The trick is know what to move. If you're moving from XP to Vista, keep in mind that some of your programs may no longer work with Vista. And you have to be careful when you're moving full versions of a program from XP on top of demo versions on your new Vista machine. So spend some time up front doing some housecleaning on both machines before you start the process.

What won't move easily? Some programs with security features may need to have the user key put back in or the entire program reinstalled. Anti-Virus software won't move successfully because it is so coupled with the operating system.

PS: You can also use these two reviewed devices to copy files between your laptop and desktop computer. In addition, you don't have to deal with firewalls or Ethernet — some transfer programs use an internet type connection.

File Transfer Or Migration

Belkin USB Cable Transfer

For a basic utility and simplest way to transfer files from one place to another, use this Belkin Easy Transfer Cable for Windows Vista. Load the special drivers from the included CD. Plug in the USB2 cable into each computer and open Explore.



You should see your old computer as another device or hard drive. Then move the files from the old to the new computer as you would move any other file. Suggestion: I would Copy rather than Move. That way you have a backup on your old computer... just in case.

The Windows Easy Transfer Wizard automatically appears and lets you select the files to copy. With a couple of clicks, your photos, music, settings, and more transfer, without requiring time-consuming CD burning or a network.

Belkin includes free file-synchronization software. With "One-Click," PCsync software automatically synchronizes files, folders, music, photos, video, etc. between your PCs. It works on Win98SE through Vista.

What can you expect in your box? An Easy Transfer Cable for Windows Vista, a brief Quick Start Guide (a more complete Guide is on the CD) and a CD with Windows Easy Transfer and PCsync® software. For more info and updates, go to www.belkin.com.

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NCTCUG Annual Financial Report, Fiscal Year 2007

By Paul Howard, Treasurer

NCTCUG concluded its fiscal year on September 30 in great financial shape. Our cash flow was positive: \$387.56. This kind of financial performance allows us to have money for future requirements, such as additional computer and presentation hardware and software.

We had 46 members as of 09/17/07. Many years ago a "rainy day fund" was established in a CD account for future needs. Sound planning, and continued fiscal restraint has kept NCTCUG viable, even though our membership has shrunk by about two-thirds since 1993.

Member generosity accounts for thirty-five percent of our income. These donations, either directly as contributions made with dues payments, or through the Pizza SIG are vital to the group. We received donations of computer equipment, which we passed on to a deserving cause, a halogen desk lamp for use during presentations, and a Wifi range extender and associated antenna.

Member donations were received this year from: Fred Cook, Bob Colder, Sy Fishbein, Paul Howard, Maralee Johnson, John Keys, Richard Leggett, John Muller, Mike Pafford, Ron Schmidt, Charlie Treadway, Chuck Throneburg, and Nick Wenri.

Pizza SIGs were sponsored by Jim Brueggeman, Paul Howard, and Blair Jones. Several members have been very generous at Pizza SIGs, including Jim Brueggeman, Mel Mikosinski, and Bill Walsh.

In October, 2007, additional funds will be transferred from checking to the CD accounts, allowing the group to harvest more interest from our cash assets.

A restricted reserve fund is established within one of our CD accounts for the eventual replacement of the jointly owned computer projector.

Our account balances at the close of the fiscal year (September 30th) were: Checking Account \$2864.64 CD accounts: Restricted - \$801.36; Unrestricted - \$3428.06. NCTCUG must maintain a checking balance of at least \$1000.00 to avoid bank service charges for our account.

This Annual Treasurer's Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2007 has been approved by the Board of Directors of NCTCUG. The account balances noted above, and the Cash Flow Report below are hereby certified as correct.

Paul Howard, Treasurer
James Rhodes, President

The "organizational documents" area of our web site contains additional information about the user group's financial operations, including last year's Financial Report for comparison purposes.

Cash Flow Report FY '07: 10/1/06 - 9/30/07	
Revenues	
Pizza SIG	384.00
Donations	320.00
Total Donations	704.00
Dues	1,180.00
Interest Income	93.68
Insurance Reimbursement from WACUG	22.45
Total Revenues	\$2000.13
Expenses	
Insurance - Liability & Personal Prop.	200.00
Legal - VA Corporation fees	25.00
APCUG Membership dues	50.00
Post Office Box Rental	236.00
Total Administrative	511.00
Computer – troubleshooting tools	76.65
Membership & Pub Relations Printing	16.38
Newsletter	
Newsletter Assembly Supplies	25.38
Newsletter Postage	279.80
Newsletter Printing	703.36
Total Newsletter	1008.54
Total Expenses	\$1612.57
Results from Operations	\$387.56

(Continued from page 1)

after a commercial during a football game alerted me to KMart being open. (It turned out not to be a total loss - I picked up a “boom box” for Mom, so she’d have something to play the many cassette tapes she loves. Boom box tape players seem to last 200 plays, or four years, whichever occurs first.)

I found the TV the next day in Herndon, and wrestled it home to my basement — after all, I had to check it out and make sure it was going to work before hauling it on a 300+ mile trip to NY. At 46 pounds, this was an awkward beast, especially since it works better to turn the box upside down, and slide the TV out on its top — but done on a concrete basement floor, that’s a delicate process. Then, turn it over, plug into power, insert batteries in the remote, and hook up the antenna cable — literally, since as long time readers of this column know — I still rely on over-the-air signals, captured by two antennas in the attic of my garage. (I’m anxiously awaiting FIOS TV — but that’s another story.)

Going through the set-up menus, I started the analog channel scan, which completed in a couple of minutes, and found 26 stations. Now the big test — I didn’t know what would happen when I ran the digital channel scan. The digital channels are all in the UHF TV band, with newly assigned channel frequencies for both the local VHF and UHF TV stations’ digital broadcasts. Like waiting for an elevator, the digital channel

scan seemed to take forever — I’d estimate three or four times as long as the analog scan, probably 6-8 minutes. On completion, the scan had found 25 channels!

What I was going to see was a real mystery, ’cause I’d been having lots of trouble with UHF band TV since the stations started converting to digital, with new transmitting antenna systems. Over the last couple of years, for us Channel 32 has gone from excellent to terrible to blue screen to weak. MPT on 22 went from a very usable PBS alternative to WETA on 26, to rarely watchable. Channel 56, MHZ - the non PBS public station, that we loved for the International Mystery series of subtitled crime/mysteries was totally unpredictable, and usually bad.

Amazingly, only one of the digital channels, 14-1 proved to be in blue screen (no or very weak signal) mode — no loss, since my Spanish is limited to “fajitas” or “ranchaladas.” Also surprising, generally, regardless of what UHF channel/frequency the digital station is actually broadcasting on, the identification shown is that of its original assignment, i.e. — WRC is identified as 4-1, NBC4 HD. As we know them, channels 4, 7, and 9 each have a “-2” standard definition broadcast of weather information. WJLA (7) also has a 7-3 “Local Point” standard def broadcast of area club acts. WETA is broadcasting three standard def channels in addition to its high def regular content. MHZ is broadcasting five programs simultaneously, and was the only station identifying its

Washington Area Computer User Group

WACUG Meeting will be held on February 23 , 2008 from 12:30 to 3:30 pm . at the Fairfax County Government Center, 2000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA *NOTE: 4th Saturday!*

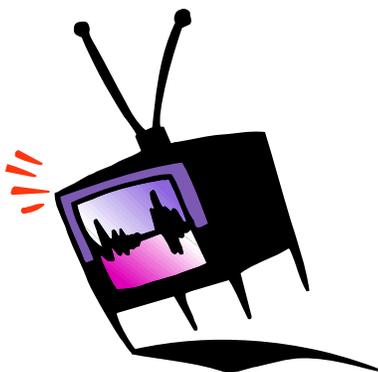
You do not need to be a member to attend. For more information on WAC meetings and events, call the WAC AnswerLine (voice) at (703) 370-7649. Also see WAC’s Web Site at

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

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CPCUG.ORG**

**For more information see:
<http://www.nctcug.org/waugp.html>**

broadcasts as 30-1, 30-2, etc., — the newly assigned frequency being UHF channel 30. Old channel 66 is broadcasting four programs at a time. Other digital channels I was able to receive include WTTG 5-1; WDCA 20-1; WHUT 32-1; WDCW 50-1. (These comments on content are based on only about two hours viewing time.)



When I connected the TV to the Time Warner cable system at my mother's house, I found out what waiting for the digital channel setup scan could really be like — in short, pack a lunch!

My recollection was the process took twenty minutes.

I found this TV purchase to be an interesting learning experience — clearly, the reception of off the air, digital signals is possible, with evidence of the possibility of additional programming without the monthly expense of satellite, cable, or FIOS services. Sources of “off the air” antennas and associated equipment, such as www.solidsignal.com, offer hope to those who are “no cable” holdouts, or want to receive TV signals on secondary televisions after the shutdown of analog broadcasting. One can only be optimistic that the digital conversion boxes, to be available “real soon now,” to allow the reception of off the air digital broadcasts for use by analog tv receivers, will provide a quality viewing experience for those who don't wish to make the investment in new HD digital TV receivers.

NCTCUG Information

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Web Site: www.nctcug.org

Officers and Directors

All officer terms expire 2008

President	Jim Rhodes	703-931-7854
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2nd VP	Roger Fujii	703-426-5917
Treasurer	Paul Howard	703-860-9246
Secretary	Bill Walsh	703-241-8141

Director: term expires

Mel Mikosinski	2008	703-978-9158
John Keys	2008	703-451-0896
Nick Wenri	2008	703-759-3938
Lorin Garson	2009	703-379-9222
Sy Fishbein	2009	703-536-5894
Dean Mires	2009	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 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 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 \$40 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 address as soon as possible to avoid missing issues.

Thank You!

Meeting News

From a Paul Howard e-mail notice...

At our last meeting for 2007, we saw a variety of tech goodies. Jim Rhodes demo'd a minispeaker that can be plugged into laptop or MP3 player, and provides an amazing level of sound for such a tiny speaker. (Computerguys) Jim also showed an emergency charger for cell phones, operating from a single AA battery; cables available for various brands of cell phones. (<http://turbocellcharge.com/>)

Roger Fujii demo'd an electronic microscope from the Sharper Image Digital 130X USB Microscope Camera—details at http://www.sharperimage.com/us/en/catalog/product/sku_CN311—that plugs into a USB port, and provides up to 120X magnification. The gang spent considerable time searching for the micro printing and other security features on various denominations of US currency.

Paul showed Black and Decker's rechargeable electric scissors—
<http://www.blackanddecker.com/productguide/product-details.aspx?productid=10973&toolview=5#details>
 —an ideal tool for safely opening the human-resistant plastic packaging so many products are sealed in today. It also performs well with paper, cloth, and window screening.

NCTCUG, Inc.
 201 S. Kensington St.
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February	
1st Wed. (2/6)	
7 p.m. General Meeting	
4th Wed (2/27)	
7 p.m. Internet SIG	
3rd Monday (2/18)	
7 p.m. Board of Directors	
All meetings are at Carlin Hall , 5711 S. 4th St., Arlington VA: East off of Carlin Springs Rd, just south of Arlington Blvd/Route 50.	



First Class

