

The NCTCUG Journal

www.nctcug.org

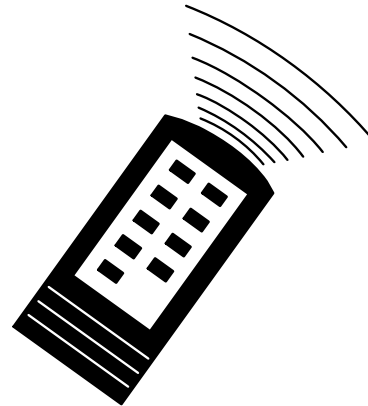
February 2009

Volume 32 Issue 1

Keeping Up

By Paul Howard (NCTCUG)

Happy New Year! By this time, rather than heading for the store for the second or third round of batteries for the new toys that Santa left under your tree, you're probably shopping on the 'net for accessories to go with whatever technological marvel your spouse, kids, or Santa-self, left for you this year. Time may pass, but little really changes!



Interference with X10 Controls

Over the years, many computer users and technology buffs have tried out the various home automation and security products offered by X10 Wireless Technology, Inc. - web site at X10.com. My first units were purchased under a Heathkit label, but I've used units with GE, RCA, and Radio Shack branding. While their on-line marketing has morphed into the realm of a Victoria's Secret catalog, the underlying products are still useful for remote control operation of lights and appliances around the house. At user group meetings, we've seen demonstrations of various remote control products, heard warnings of inherent weaknesses of

their security products, and learned about the use of their wireless cameras to get a "passenger's eye" view of train trips on HO model railroads. How neat is that?

I've used X10 technology for years, to avoid stumbling into a darkened house on returning from work or shopping. Similarly, I've used wireless control to dim lights around the house in the evening, keeping lights at a low level for safe walking without the need for full illumination. I control a fan in my computer work area that helps overcome the heat generated by several computers, monitors, printers and other accessories. The technology is great for security lighting purposes, and I've gone thru several different computer controller programs, as the X10 technology has evolved with various versions of PC operating systems.

(Continued on page 15)

Inside



Moving On To Vista — Part 10	page 2
Windows Vista Performance	page 3
Broadsides	page 7
Power Supply Tips	page 8
When To Turn Off Personal Computers	page 9
Your Next Computer Will Be Green.....	page 10
!Danger: Music Download!.....	page 12
Media Show 4 By Cyberlink.....	page 13
Computhanksgiving	page 14

Moving On To Vista – Part 10

By Neil Stahfest, Librarian, Tacoma Area PC User Group, WA
www.tapcug.org [ncstahfest\(at\)msn.com](mailto:ncstahfest(at)msn.com)

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

Most of us who upgrade to Windows Vista from an older version of Windows encounter compatibility problems. Vista doesn't want to recognize some programs as valid or authorized Windows programs even though they worked with Windows XP. Does this mean that you have to abandon them or upgrade to a new — "Vista" version of your favorite programs?

I wish I could say no but the real answer is maybe not. Microsoft has included something called a Program Compatibility Wizard with Vista. The idea is that, if you have an older program that doesn't work with Vista, you can use this program to automatically make some modifications to make it compatible and make it work.

To access the wizard, go to Start, Control Panel and then click on Programs. Next, under Programs and Features, click on —Use an older program with this version of Windows . This will start the wizard. Now follow the step-by-step, on-screen instructions. When you finish, try to run your program. I'm told that most programs that worked with Windows XP will work after you do this but programs that worked with older versions of Windows may not. You shouldn't try to use the wizard with disk utility programs, system programs and anti-virus programs. They usually won't work and may actually cause damage to your computer's system.

While we're on the subject of compatibility and changes, let's look at the Start button, or jelly bean as some call it, in the lower left corner of your screen. Place your mouse the right hand side of the task bar at the bottom of the screen. The box next to Hide Inactive Icons is checked by default. If you click on the Customize button to the right you will see why. You'll probably see dozens of icons listed here. Most are turned off. If you make changes and don't like the results, click on the Default Settings button and then click on OK. We're almost done with the Notification Area box.

The bottom half of the box shows which system icons will show. This is a personal preference (well, so is all of this). If you are using Vista's Clock gadget you can probably uncheck the Clock function because it is redundant. I like to leave Volume checked. Its a convenient place to turn sound on and off and control the volume. I also leave Network checked. It makes it easy to see if my network connection is working. The Power option is useful if you have a laptop computer, otherwise turn it off.

I think we've covered enough for this month. Are you getting comfortable with Windows Vista? I am. For those of you still using Windows XP, don't be in a hurry to change! Wait for Windows 7 if you can (coming in 2010). <VBG> ■

Happy Valentines Day!

Windows Vista Performance

By Lynn Page, Editor, Crystal River Computer Group, FL www.crug.org [newsletter\(at\)crug.com](mailto:newsletter(at)crug.com)

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

While here in Wyoming for the summer I have only my laptop for all of my computing needs. This means that keeping Windows Vista performing well is important. I have noticed a slowdown at times. So I thought this would be a good topic to discuss. Just how much my laptop is slowing down versus my perception is hard to determine. While in Florida I use my desktop for many of the functions that I am using the laptop now. I did notice that when I got my new DSL connection and associated software there was a distinct change.

So here are some standard ideas to get the best possible performance from your Windows Vista computer. Most can also be said for other versions of Windows but the actual procedures may vary.

Delete Unused Or Never Used Programs

Many new computers come loaded with programs or trial programs you won't use. The trial and limited editions of programs are provided with the hope that you will try them and decide to upgrade to full versions. So hunt through the computer and see what is installed. Try out the programs if you want but when you are done with your look and see uninstall those you will not use or upgrade. Having unused or unwanted software on your computer might slow it down by using memory, disk space, and processing power. This is especially true if the program loads and runs in the background.

This is also true of software programs that you purchase or download. If you try a program out and don't like it or have one you like better uninstall it. I am familiar with this particular problem because I purchase almost every digital editing application that I see. I really only regularly use three but have several more installed on my home desktop.

So uninstall all the application programs you don't use. Both manufacturer-installed software and those you installed but don't use anymore. It is important to

have good security and/or utility applications. But remember that these virus scanners, spyware detectors, disk cleaners, and backup tools may load automatically at startup and run in the background. So select the applications you need, keep them up to date and uninstall any others.

To uninstall a program click the Start button and then Control Panel. In Control Panel under Programs click Uninstall a program. In the list of installed programs select the one to remove and then click Uninstall/Change and then follow the instruction in the dialog boxes. Some applications come with their own uninstaller that is listed in the All Programs listing. I generally check there first and use the manufacturers uninstaller if it is available before using Windows uninstall.

Control Which Programs Load At Startup

Software manufacturers design many programs to load automatically when Windows starts. These programs open in the background so they're readily available. You want that for your critical security software like virus protection and firewall and it can speed opening of programs you use all of the time, but for programs you seldom or never use, it wastes memory and slows Windows loading. Decide which programs should load at startup and stop others from automatically loading.

To see which programs load automatically start by looking at the icons in the notification area on the taskbar. Click the Show hidden icons button (greater than symbol at the left of the notification area) to see all icons and mouse over each to see the program name. Then look deeper with Windows Defender to be sure you know every program that loads automatically at startup. You view and disable them in Windows Defender.

The Software Explorer screen in Windows Defender shows startup programs which load automatically when you launch Windows. Disable programs that shouldn't open automatically at startup. Restart the

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

computer, check that they don't automatically load, and then open the programs and use them manually. If there is a problem go back and re-enable to start the program/programs automatically.

Defragment The Hard Drive

Fragmentation of files makes the hard disk work to reconstruct them and can slow down the computer. Disk Defragmenter rearranges fragmented data so your hard disk works more efficiently. I have Disk Defragmenter set to run on a weekly schedule, but you can run it manually.

Disk Defragmenter is found in System Tools under accessories on the All Programs listing. Be sure to defragment all disks. It is especially important to defragment data partitions.

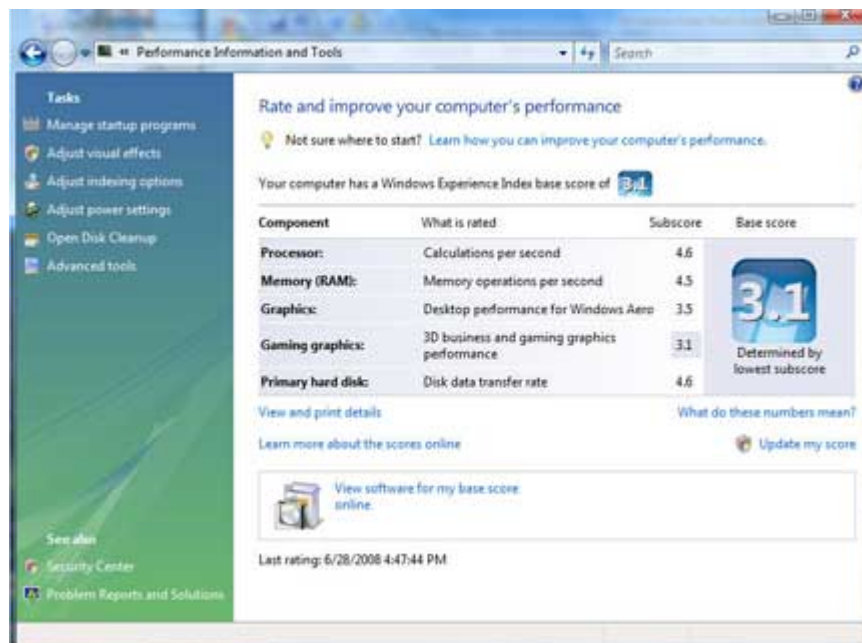
Clean Up The Hard Disk

With the large new hard drives it would seem that freeing up hard disk space would not be very important. But it is. With the ease of digital photography and the increasing size of digital files hard disks can and do fill up. So it is important to reduce the number of unnecessary files on the hard disk. Freeing up disk space can help the computer run faster.

Before worrying about using a cleanup utility take a look at your data files. Review old original digital images, letters and other files. Delete those that are no longer necessary. Develop a filing system to save and store important files off your hard drive. I use external hard drives, CDs, DVDs and Zip disks. After deleting unneeded files and storing others off the hard drive use Disk Cleanup to remove temporary files, empty the Recycle Bin, and remove a variety files no longer needed.

Another idea is to reduce the size of the Recycle Bin. Right click on the icon on the desktop and click properties. Review the settings and set the Recycle Bin size for each drive to an appropriate amount. Remember it should only be an exception when you need to retrieve something that you sent to the Recycle Bin. Don't consider this another storage location.

Disk Clean Up is found in System Tools under Accessories in the All Programs list. In the Disk Cleanup Options dialog box, choose to clean up your files or all of the files on the computer. Select the hard disk drive to clean up, and click OK. On the Disk Cleanup tab select the check boxes for the files to delete, click OK, and then click Delete files to confirm the operation. The More Options tab lets the administrator clean files from all users on the computer.



Don't Run As Many Programs At The Same Time

How you use the computer has a big impact on its performance. If you're like me you keep several programs and browser windows open at once. I almost always have Internet Explorer, Outlook, outlook Express and Word open. Then when I am working with photos add at least Adobe Elements and Corel Paint Shop Pro Photo. Its worse when I am working on the CRUG newsletter because then I add Adobe GoLive to this mix. With all of this going on my poor laptop is truly toiling. Keeping all of these applications going really uses the memory.

So if your computer is slowing down, see if you really need to keep all of the programs and windows open at once. I find it hard to do but when I am working with large applications like GoLive, Elements, Paint Shop Pro Photo and Word I sometimes close my email and browsing applications. Then when finished with the newsletter and web site I can check for new email and browse all I want.

Turn Off Visual Effects

If Windows Vista is running slowly, consider disabling some of its visual effects. These neat appearance goodies take resources. They are a large and nice part of Vista but if performance is affected trade the appearance for performance. This is especially important if your computer is just barely powerful enough for Windows Vista.

Control which visual effects to turn off, one by one, or let Windows make a selection. There are 20 visual effects you can control, like the transparent glass look, the way menus open or close, and whether shadows are displayed.

Open Performance Information and Tools by clicking the Start button and then Control Panel. Next click System and Maintenance and then Performance Information and Tools. Click Adjust visual effects in the left pane of the Performance Information and Tools window. Select the Visual Effects tab. I have selected the Let Windows choose what's best for my computer selected but you can make your own choices by selecting Custom. Or select Adjust for best performance, and then click OK.

Restart

This is simple and something I have done a lot on my home Windows XP desktop and even on my Vista laptop. If the computer is really running slowly or freezing up for long periods of time try closing unnecessary or even all the currently running programs. If that doesn't help restart the computer.

Check For Viruses And Spyware

Any time my computer starts running slowly, I worry about the possibility that it might be infected with a virus or spyware. I always run antivirus, firewall and anti spyware programs but I still worry. So if I see an unexpected slowdown I manually run my antivirus and antispyware programs. I don't wait for the next scheduled weekly scans.

So be sure you are using antispyware and antivirus programs. And that they are up to date. I do checks for updates at least daily. Then set a schedule to run each. If you cannot schedule automatic scans set a day and time and regularly start a manual scan.

A virus might make computer performance slower-than-normal. Other things to watch for are unexpected messages popping up, programs starting automatically, or the hard disk constantly working. I sometimes get worried when performance slows and the hard disk is working only to remember that a scheduled scan is running and using computer resources.

Spyware is a program that is installed with or without your knowledge, to watch your activity. Check for spyware with Windows Defender or other anti-spyware programs. I use Windows Defender, Ad-Aware and Spybot. Again remember to keep the programs updated and run regularly scheduled weekly scans.

Add Memory

If your computer is too slow, likely that it doesn't have enough memory for the tasks you are asking it to perform. A hardware option to speed up your computer is to add more memory. I added 1 G of memory to my Windows XP desktop and the change was tremendous.

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

Windows Vista can run on a computer with 512 MB of RAM, but is better with 1 GB and for optimal performance use 2 GB or more. My laptop has 1 GB and could use more.

Adding memory to my desktop was simple. Just be sure to buy compatible memory for your computer and if you're going to open up computer case add all that you might be able to use. For a Vista computer I would go to at least 2 GB probably more.

Another option is to use Windows ReadyBoost to boost the amount of memory to the. This uses storage space on some removable media devices, such as USB flash drives, to speed up your computer. I have a 2 GB flash drive that I have reserved 1840 MG of space to speed up my laptop. It's easy to plug a flash drive into a USB port. So if you don't want to open up the computer case can and plug memory modules into the motherboard get a large ReadyBoost capable USB drive.

Check Your Computer's Speed

Windows Vista can check and rate your computer's speed with the Windows Experience Index. This index rates your computer on five key components and gives a subscore for each, and an overall base score that is only as good as the worst-performing component score.

The Windows Experience Index measures the capability of the computer's hardware and software configuration and expresses this measurement as a number called a base score. A higher base score indicates the computer will perform better and faster than a computer with a lower base score.

The Windows Experience Index is designed to accommodate advances in computer technology so the base scores currently range from 1 to 5.9. As hardware speed and performance improves, higher base scores can be introduced.

To view your computer's base score open Performance Information and Tools from Control Panel. If you have upgraded your hardware click Update my score to see if the scores have changed. If subscores and a base score are not shown, click Score this computer.

My laptop has a mediocre base score of 3.1 due to its limited graphics abilities.

Check For Manufacturer's Updates

Check your computer manufacturer's web site to see if they have released any updates for your specific hardware and software. If users are reporting the same problem, the manufacturer might have issued a fix, or provided information about the problem. ■



(Continued from page 7)

Audio Devices Properties dialog box. Choose the Sounds tab. Select the sound you'd like to change in the Program events box, and then select a new sound from the Sounds drop-down menu. Or select a sound you've saved to the hard drive by using the Browse button to navigate to the sound file. Change as many sounds as you like. Save your changes as a sort of theme from the Sound Scheme drop-down menu above the Program events box. (Select the blank line and click Save As.) You can also choose to disable program event sounds. When you're finished click OK.

Saving E-Mail Messages

To save e-mail messages highlight the message you want to save, then click on File -Save As. Select where you want to save the message and then save it as a txt file. ■

Broadsides

By Ron Broadhurst, a member of the Space Coast PC Users Group, Inc., Florida
www.scpcug.com ringram728 (at) earthlink.

This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

These ideas are compiled from years of accumulations from various magazines, books, on-line sites, and my own personal experience. I claim neither originality nor ownership to any of its contents. My only intent is to share the various "tips, "tricks", & "hints" in hopes of helping & maybe enhancing your computing experiences. They are all intended for anyone who uses a PC. It is for beginners as well as advanced users. Enjoy and use as you will.

How To Get Rid Of "Send Error Report To Microsoft

Right click My Computer on the desktop or in the Start menu.
Click Properties.
Click the Advanced tab.
Click the Error Reporting button at the bottom.
Click Disable error reporting. You can select the checkbox under it if you still want to be notified when errors occur.
Click OK.

Note that you can disable error reporting for the operating system only, or for programs only, by unchecking the appropriate box under the Enable error reporting option.

You can also configure error reporting only for specific programs by clicking the Choose Programs button.

Alphabetize Start Menu Listings

When you install a new program on your system, it will often appear at the end of your Start menu. Reorganizing files alphabetically in the All Programs menu does not affect how they appear in your start menu. In order to alphabetize your start menu, you'll want to

click Start and select All Programs. On any file or folder right-click and then select Sort By Name. Now all of your Start menu programs are in alphabetical order. You can also sort subfolders in your Start menu the same way.

Make Your Quick Launch Icons Bigger

Unlock the Toolbar
Right click the QL toolbar
Select the View tab
Select large icons

Pin An Application To Start Menu

The Windows XP Start menu includes an area where two or more Microsoft applications, usually Internet Explorer and Outlook Express, are permanently positioned for easy access. You can add your favorite application to this same convenient location. Open Windows Explorer and locate the executable file for the application. Right-click the file and select Pin To Start Menu. The application will now appear in the Start menu. To remove an application, locate it, right-click it, and select Unpin From Start Menu.

Alternatively, you can right-click the app in the Start menu and click Unpin From Start Menu.

Change System Sounds

Through the Control Panel you can change your system's program event sounds. Click Start and Control Panel. If you're using Category View, click Sounds, Speech, and Audio Devices; and Sounds and Audio Devices. If you are using the Classic View, click Sounds and Audio Devices. This loads the Sounds and

(Continued on page 6)

Power Supply Tips

By Dan Hanson, the Great Lakes Geek, Computers Assisting People, Ohio
www.capinc.org/ Dan(at)magnuminc.com

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

We have all experienced the computer crashing seemingly for no reason. When it does, we blame Windows or a hardware problem or maybe a power surge or undervoltage. All are possible culprits but one often overlooked possibility is the power supply of the computer.

The power supply is the metal box with a cooling fan next to it. Typically it's in a back corner of the case and you plug your power cord into it. When you plug the power cable into the wall, the power supply converts the AC (alternating current) that runs through your home or office into the DC (direct current) that the computer needs.

If you bought your computer from a superstore or discount retailer it may have low-cost, low-capacity power supply installed which may not be enough to handle all the things you do with your PC.

If you have upgraded your PC with newer or more components (like another CD or DVD player/burner, more RAM or another hard drive) then the power supply that came with your system may not be up to the task.

The physics of power supplies (ambient temperatures, 3.3V vs. 5V vs. 12V, etc) make it so that a power supply rated at certain wattage, say 300W, may not really provide that maximum wattage load. Some experts claim that power supplies are most efficient at 30-70% of their maximum capacity. So if you are nearing that maximum, you can be in for trouble.

Because the power supply gets a rush of AC (alternating current) when the computer is turned on and it heats and cools each time it is used, it is more prone to failure than many other components in your PC. You may notice a slight burning smell before it shuts down. Sometimes the cooling fan stops working and the system overheats.

Newer systems let you monitor the status of the power supply from Windows. Servers and other mission critical computers often have more than one power supply so that when one dies, the other kicks in and the system stays operational.

What Can You Do?

Next time you buy a PC, don't just get a cheapo system with a sub-standard power supply unless you never plan on adding memory, drives or other components to the machine.

Take care of your power supply by keeping the cooling fan away from the wall or anything else that might block the air flow and make the fan work harder (and die sooner).

Keep the PC off the carpet or other surfaces where it may suck in particles and clog the fan. Cooler is always better with electronic components.

Periodically, blow out the fan and case with compressed air to get rid of dust and other particles that may clog up the fan and overheat the system components.

Add up the wattage of the components in your system to see if you are near the maximum of the power supply. E-mail us at dan@greatlakesgeek.com for a list of Estimated Power Requirements of common PC components.

If that is too difficult for you, look to see if most of the slots in the back of your PC are filled and if the drive bays in the front are being used. Those are indications that you may be close to maxing out your power capacity.

If you have a need, you can buy and install (or have someone else install) a new, heavy duty power supply. They come in several standard form factors to fit in most PCs. Warning this may not be a project for beginners though.

Get more tips at www.GreatLakesGeek.com ■

When To Turn Off Personal Computers

**U.S. Department of Energy — Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.
A Consumer's Guide to Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy**

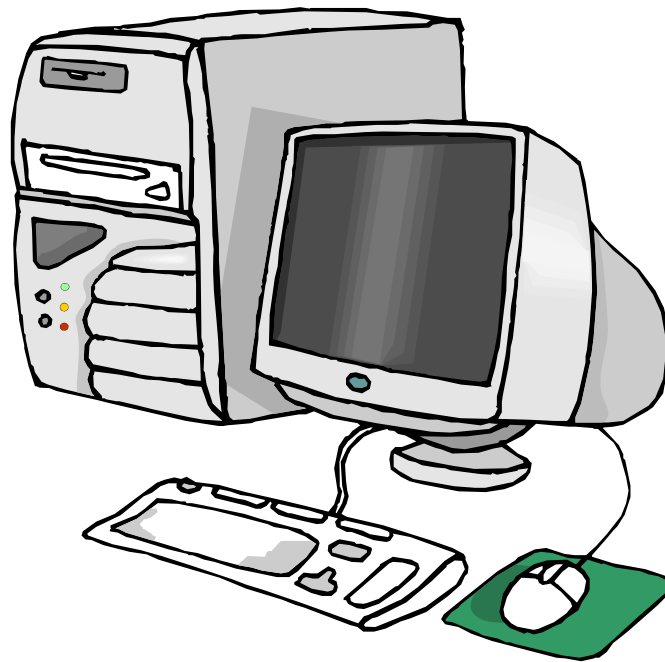
www.energy.gov/forconsumers.htm

If you're wondering when you should turn off your personal computer for energy savings, here are some general guidelines to help you make that decision.

Though there is a small surge in energy when a computer starts up, this small amount of energy is still less than the energy used when a computer is running for long periods of time. For energy savings and convenience, consider turning off the monitor if you aren't going to use your PC for more than 20 minutes both the CPU and monitor if you're not going to use your PC for more than 2 hours.

Make sure your monitors, printers, and other accessories are on a power strip/surge protector. When this equipment is not in use for extended periods, turn off the switch on the power strip to prevent them from drawing power even when shut off. If you don't use a power strip, unplug extra equipment when it's not in use.

Most PCs reach the end of their "useful" life due to advances in technology long before the effects of being switched on and off multiple times have a negative impact on their service life. The less time a PC is on, the longer it will "last." PCs also produce heat, so turning them off reduces building cooling loads. For cost effectiveness, you also need to consider how much your time is worth. If it takes a long time to shut down the computer and then restart it later, the value of your time will probably be much greater than the value of the amount of electricity you will save by turning off the computer.



Power-Down or Sleep Mode Features

Many PCs available today come with a power-down or sleep mode feature for the CPU and monitor. ENERGY STAR® computers power down to a sleep mode that consume 15 Watts or less power, which is around 70% less electricity than a computer without power management features. ENERGY STAR monitors have the capability to power down into two successive "sleep" modes. In the first, the monitor energy consumption is less than or equal to 15 Watts, and in the second, power consumption reduces to 8 Watts, which is less than 10% of its operating power consumption.

Make sure you have the power-down feature set up on your PC through your operating system software. This has to be done by you, otherwise the PC will not power down. If your PC and monitor do not have power-down features, and even if they do, follow the guidelines below about when to turn the CPU and monitor off.

Note: Screen savers are not energy savers. Using a screen saver may in fact use more energy than not using one and the power-down feature

may not work if you have a screen saver activated. In fact, modern LCD color monitors do not need screen savers at all. ■

[NCTCUG Ed. note: Obtained from APCUG . See *Going Green* in the October 2008 issue for a companion piece.]

Your Next Computer Will Be Green

By Marjie Tucker, Editor, Mountain Computer User Group, GA

www.mcug.org [mcug\(at\)dnnet.net](mailto:mcug@dnnet.net)

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

With Europe leading the way, the computer industry is decidedly becoming "green." The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and the Restriction of Hazardous Substances (ROHS) directives went into effect earlier this year. These two directives state that certain electrical and electronic equipment must cut down on hazardous materials such as lead, mercury, and cadmium. They also give customers the right to return their equipment free of charge. Companies have several years to fully implement these directives, but the leaders have already started to make changes.

Dell, for example, is advertising Energy Smart workstations and notebooks that can reduce power consumption by as much as 78%. The Energy Smart configuration uses a default power setting that is designed to reduce consumption and energy costs right out of the box. In addition, the power supply, fan, and motherboard use significantly less energy to maintain cool internal temperatures.

HP is using 80 Plus power supplies to lower energy bills and AMD technology that reduces heat output and PC power consumption. In addition, they have already introduced an HP recycling program where you can trade-in or donate the products.

Government Initiatives Many U.S. government agencies have implemented standards and regulations to encourage green computing. The Environmental Protection Agency launched an Energy Star program in 1992 and strengthened its requirements in 2006. In 2003 the California State Senate enacted the Electronic Waste Recycling Act and in 2007 President Bush issued Executive Order 13423 requiring all federal agencies to use the Electronic Products Environmental Assessment Tool when purchasing computer systems. In addition, a global consortium called The Green Grid was founded in 2007 by AMD, APC, Dell, HP, IBM, Intel, Microsoft, Rackable Systems, SprayCool, Sun and VMware.

Another initiative formed by a group of Global-minded IT executives, the Green Computing Impact Organization (GCIO), was created to be an active participant in transforming the IT community from an environmental liability to an Earth conscious example of responsibility. GCIO is a nonprofit organization that is based on environmental audit programs for consumers and small business homes with respect to general energy-efficiency programs (including lighting, heating, insulation, etc.). GCIO's mission is to educate and assist enterprise technology users in the design of environmentally aware and responsible information system operations. They help consumers become more environmentally responsible by reducing energy consumption and electronic waste in an effort to protect the Earth.

GCIO is sponsoring educational programs across the country and participating in a Green Computing Summit that will be held in Washington, DC on May 20th. The summit will address how public sector IT managers, procurement officials, and program managers public sector professionals can transform their IT and data center operations into more environmentally conscious yet efficient solutions. This conference will attract senior government IT professionals and their industry partners tasked with helping agencies become greener in the coming years. Attendees will represent federal, state and local governments, public policy organizations and suppliers to government. You can read more about this event at www.e-gov.com/EventOverview.aspx?Event=SGCS08.

Features of Green Computing

Power management is the most popular method. The operating system of the computer can be set to directly control the power saving aspects of the hardware. It can automatically turn off the monitor or hard drive after a period of inactivity. Or, the entire system may hibernate, turning off most of the components such as even allow the user to manually adjust the voltages supplied to the CPU to reduce the elec-

tricity consumption and the amount of heat that is produced. As of July of 2007, all new Energy Star certified desktops must have a power supply that is at least 80% efficient.

Other features include using motherboard video output instead of a video card, hard disks that consume less power, flash based solid state drives that require fewer write cycles, and lower energy monitors. And, manufacturers of networking equipment are developing switches and routers that reduce energy costs.

Recycling Materials

Obsolete computers can be reused for charities, non-profit organizations, and developing countries. Parts from really old systems can be recycled through some recycling centers. Some recycling charges can be passed back to the manufacturers.

Recycling this equipment keeps the lead, mercury, and chromium out of our landfills. In addition, computer supplies such as cartridges, paper, and batteries can be easily recycled.

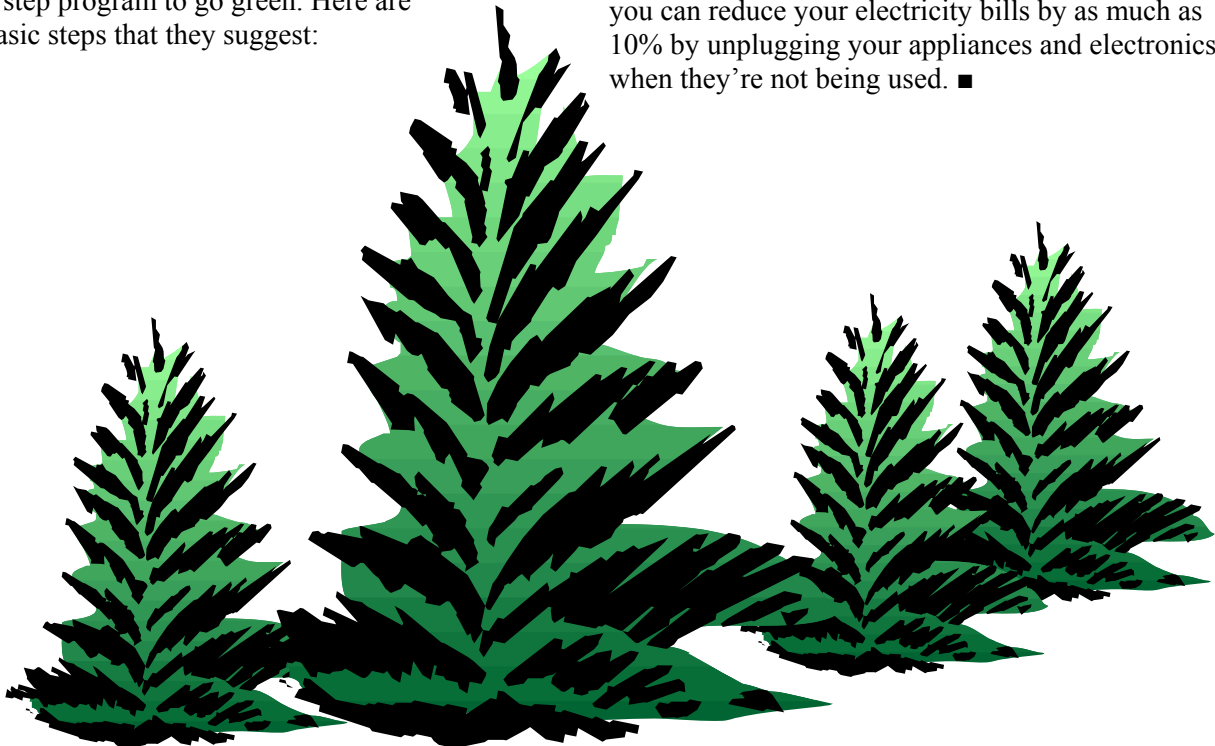
How Can We Work Greener?

Visit the website for Climate Savers Smart Computing at www.climatesaverscomputing.org to view a three step program to go green. Here are the basic steps that they suggest:

Step One — Turn on Power Management. Since the average desktop PC wastes nearly 50% of the energy it consumes as heat, it makes sense to use the power management features that are built into Windows XP and Vista. The benefits? You will reduce your electricity bills and your energy footprint will be lowered as you reduce your greenhouse gas emissions. The Climate Savers organization predicts that the power management features on your computer can save nearly have a ton of CO₂ and more than \$60 a year in energy costs.

Step Two — Buy an energy efficient computer. Energy Star, the program designed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, specifies the standards that equipment and appliances must meet to wear the Energy Star badge. You can visit their website at www.energystar.org for specifics. Basically an Energy Star compliant PC uses 15 to 25 percent less energy. This program is expected to save U.S. consumers and businesses more than \$1.8 billion in energy costs over the next five years and prevent greenhouse gas emission equal to 2.7 million vehicles.

Step Three — Unplug from phantom power. As long as your computer is plugged in it still uses electricity, even while it is turned off or in standby mode. A computer that is turned off, but still plugged in, can use up to 10 watts. The Climate Savers estimate that you can reduce your electricity bills by as much as 10% by unplugging your appliances and electronics when they're not being used. ■



!Danger: Music Download!

By Mike Morris, Editor-in-Charge, Front Range PC Users Group, Colorado
<http://www.frpcug.org> twriterext (at) gmail.com

This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (e-mail above).

"On September 8, 2003, the recording industry sued 261 American music fans for sharing songs...."

That partial quote is from an Electronic Frontier Foundation article (<http://www.eff.org/wp/riaa-v-people-years-later>) that provides an in-depth description of RIAA (Recording Industry of America) activities, with many references. Lawsuits filed by the RIAA over the past five years have resulted in severe financial hardship to individuals that were targets of RIAA legal action—and some of those defendants claimed that they were not aware that they had violated the law.

Legal consequences for anyone caught in a violation of copyright infringement laws have now increased.

On October 13th, 2008, a new law, the Prioritizing Resources and Organization for Intellectual Property Act was signed that provides new federal enforcement powers and higher penalties for copyright infringement.

For details, see this CNET news story: http://news.cnet.com/8301-13578_3-10064527-38.html.

Briefly, (from the CNET story[©]—used with permission from CBS Interactive, Inc., © 2008, all rights reserved)

"...the law consolidates federal efforts to combat copyright infringement under a new White House cabinet position, the intellectual property enforcement coordinator, who will be appointed by the president. ... The law also steepens penalties for intellectual-property infringement, and increases resources for the Department of Justice to coordinate for federal and state efforts against counterfeiting and piracy. The so-called Pro-IP Act passed unanimously in the Senate last month and received strong bipartisan support in the House."

We often forget that under our legal system, ignorance of the law is no defense. For those readers with family members, friends and acquaintances that are casual computer users, now may be the time for a reminder that, however tempting, free music downloads may result in serious legal problems. And, for any member of those same groups that use the internet as their primary source of music, that reminder may be an absolute necessity.

To paraphrase a different warning, "free music downloads may be injurious to your financial health." You, your family, friends and acquaintances all need to be informed consumers before downloading "free" music or sharing music files. ■

Washington Area Computer User Group

WACUG Meeting will be held on February 21, 2009 from 12:30 to 3:30 pm. Starting with the January 17th, 2009 meeting, WACUG will hold joint meetings with OPCUG [www.olligmu.org/~opcug/] It is anticipated that all meetings, except June, July, and August, will be held at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute [www.oli.gmu.edu/] at George Mason University, 4210 Roberts Road, Fairfax, VA, known as the Tallwood Campus.

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/>



**Washington Area User Group Partners
 Working Together For Our Members
 NCTCUG.ORG WACUG.ORG
 CPCUG.ORG**

For more information see:

<http://www.nctcug.org/waugp.html>

Media Show 4 By Cyberlink

Review By Terry Oden, President, Macon Computer User Group, Georgia
www.mcug.org terryo (at) brmemc.net

This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (e-mail above).

There may be hundreds of ways to gather, store, view, edit and show off your pictures and videos. This is one of the best and easiest I have found so far. Your own operating system will do a fairly good job of getting your pictures and videos into your computer for you. On the net you also have programs that are free like Picassa, Flickr and You Tube which all do a very good job of storing and displaying your own work to family and friends.

One of the things that I liked best about Media Show was ease of operation. There are only 5 buttons to control the whole program. Below you'll find a screen shot of the second screen you'll see select the Pictures button.

Starting with the # 1 button, or the Home button here you can see all of your different folders and how many pictures or videos you have in each folder.

For the # 2 button you have Create. Here you can do things like make your own Screen Saver, compose a movie or DVD. You can print your own pictures or order prints on line.

Next you have the # 3 button or the Share button. Here you can share your pictures with friends and family or up-load them to Flickr. Also, you could up-load them to U-tube with a single click of your mouse, if desired.

The next button # 4 is the View button, here you can adjust the size of your thumbnails or add any captions to your pictures. You can also change the color of the skin of the program (appearance).

The last button or # 5 is the Folder Tools button. Here you edit, sort, locate, delete or hide some pictures if you like.

This Media Show 4 is one of the top programs when it comes to ease of operation, not to mention what the finished product will look like. To create a movie or slideshow with sound and motion, fading or cell you only have to make about three clicks of the mouse. First you have to decide if you want background music or not, next select what format you want to use,

and where to save your work in your computer. Yes, you do have to tell it what pictures or videos to use! At last, all you do is click the Burn button and that's it. Zap you're done!

Yes, you do have to tell it what pictures or videos to use! At last, all you do is click the Burn button and that's it. Zap you're done!

To create a DVD it's very easy. First decide a name for your DVD. Then pick out a menu style for your DVD. Now comes the hard part. You must decide which videos you want to use and if you want any still pictures in it or not. Yes, once again you have to tell the program which videos or pictures you want to use.

Next, click on the preview button to see what your work looks like. If you like it, click on the burn button and you're done.

System Requirements

1. Operating System — Windows Vista / XP (with Direct X 9 or above)
2. Screen Resolution — 800 x 600
3. Printers — All
4. CPU — Intel Pentium D 3.0 GHz, AMD Athlon 64 3500+ or above
5. Sound Card — PCI sound card or on-board audio
6. Memory — 512 MB RAM minimum, 1GB recommended
7. Hard Disk Space — 1 GB required, 20 GB recommended for DVD production
8. Graphics Card — Intel 945GM or above— 64 MBVRAM or above
9. Optical Drive — A DVD burner (DVD+R/RW or DVD-R/RW) is required to burn content onto DVD's
10. Import Devices — Cameras via removable disk interface—Cameras support Windows Portable devices interface—Camcorder DV devices via IEEE 1394 (Firewire)

(Continued on page 14)

Computhanksgiving

By **Berry F. Phillips**, a member of the **Computer Club of Oklahoma City**
www.ccokc.org [bfpdata \(at\) Taccess.net](mailto:bfpdata@taccess.net)

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (e-mail above).

The Computer Club of Oklahoma City recently celebrated "Thanksgiving in August" at our monthly General Meeting when we celebrated all the members past and present who have given of their time and talents in the evolution of our computer club. As I was preparing for the General Meeting, I thought how far we have come from our humble beginnings in a small house where a few people attended to try to master DOS. Today, the Computer Club of Oklahoma City enjoys a high tech facility complete with a computer lab and is partnered with Senior Net.

The first computer club was the Homebrew Computer Club which had its humble beginnings in a garage in the Silicon Valley in California in March 1975. The club was an informal group of electronic enthusiasts and technically-minded hobbyists who gathered to trade parts, circuits, and information pertaining to computer devices. The club evolved rapidly to a large auditorium. The 1999 made-for-television movie "Pirates of the Silicon Valley" (and the book on which it was based, "Fire in the Valley: The making of the Personal Computer," describes the role of the Homebrew Computer Club in creating the personal computer. Engineers working on very expensive main frame computers in those days dreamed of developing a personal computer that would be so affordable that almost everyone could have one in their home. The rest of course is technological history.



(Media Show ... Continued from page 13)

11. Internet Connection — An Internet connection is required for some upload/download features.

As for the overall way the program works, I've not found a program this large at this cost that operates so easily and simply. I have found no shortcomings with this program yet. This is the best program for the money that can be found, under \$50.00. ■

SeniorNet was founded in 1986 by Doctor Mary Furlong in San Francisco, California and was later moved to Santa Clara, California. Dr. Furlong believed that telecommunications could enhance the lives of older adults. She faced considerable opposition in getting the project funded. The Merkle Foundation realized the potential of the project and funded it based at the University of San Francisco. Five learning centers were opened with twenty seniors, and computers were furnished by Apple Computers. Today SeniorNet has won numerous national awards and has 200 learning centers both nationally and internationally with a membership of approximately 20,000. SeniorNet is the leading technological educator of older adults and has benefited millions of seniors since its inception.

The birth of the personal computer was due to the development of the microprocessor, a single chip with all the circuitry that formerly occupied large cabinets. The early personal computers were called microcomputers and were sold as electronic kits with programming done by toggle switches and output was provided by front panel indicators such as neon bulbs. One remembers the Altair which you couldn't do much with but was of interests to hobbyists and technicians. Today due to the considerable evolution of the personal computer in 2008, one billion were sold worldwide and a projected two billion by 2014.

I am reminded of the Virginia Slim commercial, "You have come a long way, baby!" I wonder how often do we think of the thousands of our fellow citizens who have been involved with the development as well as the teaching of how to use these amazing technological devices that have so transformed our lives and indeed become a necessity and our very windows to the world? Perhaps, it is time to celebrate together a well deserved "Computhanksgiving."

Happy Thanksgiving from the Computer Club of Oklahoma City. ■

(Continued from page 1)

Recently, I've noticed some interactions with other technology devices that can impair X10 control operations. I often use my laptop while sitting in our living room. I have a lamp illuminating the couch, under X10 control, and discovered I couldn't turn it on, off, or dim it, when using the laptop - apparently the "power brick" puts too much RF hash on power line (the lamp's plugged into the same outlet) to allow the control signal to get through.

For a long time, I noticed that the lamp in our bedroom controlled by an X10 unit would fail to work intermittently, and I thought it was because of distance between the remote control transmitter and receiver. But one evening, I was really perplexed, because it had worked earlier in the evening, and apparently stopped working - what was different? I finally realized that my wife had turned the hall light on before going into her office, where she often works on her computer in subdued light from the hall. The hallway is illuminated by a compact fluo-

rescent lightbulb in an overhead fixture - and again, the RF hash from the compact fluorescent electronic drive circuitry was overpowering the X10 control signal. If I turned out the overhead light, the X10 controllers worked flawlessly.

Recently, our fourteen year old bedroom TV displayed evidence of burning remote control relay contacts, so we replaced it with a new flat panel model. The bedroom lamp, previously controlled via X10, now wasn't - and the overhead hall light was off! I was able to remedy this source of interference by plugging the TV into a Tripp-Lite Isobar premium surge protector. The Isobar product line contains special filters for each bank of outlets that prevent power line noise from reaching the device, device generated noise from reaching the power line, or other equipment plugged into a different outlet bank. However, the Isobar also filters out the X10 signals, so an X10 control device can't be placed behind the Isobar surge protector. Isobar units also provide greater protection from electrical surges than most similar products on the market. I've found Tripp-Lite products difficult to acquire locally,

(Continued on page 16)



NCTCUG Information

NCTCUG, Inc. 201 S. Kensington St. Arlington VA 22204-1141

Club Information call: 301-577-7899

Web Site: www.nctcug.org

Officers and Directors

All officer terms expire 2009

President	Jim Rhodes	703-931-7854
1st VP	Ron Schmidt	301-577-7899
2nd VP	Roger Fujii	703-426-5917
Treasurer	Paul Howard	703-860-9246
Secretary	Bill Walsh	703-241-8141

Director: term expires

Mel Mikosinski	2010	703-978-9158
John Keys	2010	703-451-0896
Nick Wenri	2010	703-759-3938
Lorin Garson	2009	703-938-7907
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. Articles may be submitted in MS Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf) or plain unformatted text (C/R only at end of paragraphs, no indents preferred) via email to the editor nctcugbj@verizon.net

Membership Policy

The National Capital Technology and 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.

Reprint Policy

Permission to reprint articles from the NCTCUG Journal is given to school, personal computer club, and nonprofit organization publications, provided that: (a) NCTCUG Inc. receives a copy of the publication; (b) credit is given to the NCTCUG Journal as the source; (c) the original author is given full credit; and (d) the article author has not expressly copyrighted the article. Recognition is one means of compensating our valued contributors

Newsletter Staff

Editor
Blair Jones 202-362-7344
nctcugbj@verizon.net
Exchange Newsletter Editor
Ron Schmidt 301-577-7899

COMPUCENTER BBS

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

**If you are moving
Please send your change of
address to the club ad-
dress as soon as possible to
avoid missing issues.**

Thank You!

(Continued from page 15)

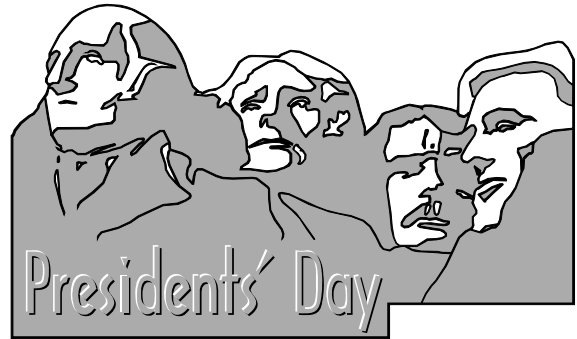
but web sources such as Provantage (<http://www.provantage.com/tripp-lite~880TRPL.htm>) carry a broad selection of Iso-bar units.

Mystery of the Self-Installing Program Guide

My Vista desktop system has a Hauppauge TV card, and includes Windows Media Center software. TV signal is provided by Verizon FiOS service, connected to a “digital adapter” set-top box. This outputs a signal only on channel 3. Several weeks ago, I noted that the Media Center software was taking a long, long time updating the built in TV program guide. It is apparently updating the guide with the hundreds of channel options available from FiOS TV, even though, when there was a setup option, I selected off-the-air antenna, since that’s what the computer was connected to at the time. Somehow, the computer has figured out it’s connected to FiOS — cue the spooky music! ■



February 2009	
1st Wed. (2/4)	7 p.m. General Meeting
4th Wed (2/25)	7 p.m. Internet SIG
3rd Monday (2/16)	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.	



NCTCUG, Inc.
 201 S. Kensington St.
 Arlington VA 22204-1141

First Class

