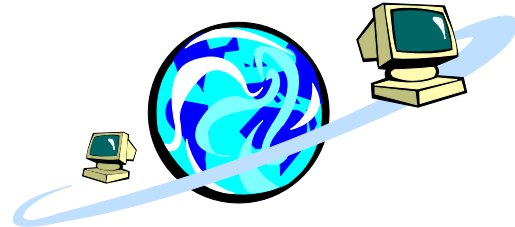# The NCTCUG Journal

Keeping Up

by Paul Howard (NCTCUG)

In case you missed the email, several of our planned meetings have date changes. Barely had editor Blair Jones sent the last issue of the Journal to the printer, and our presenters had to shift their schedules. Bill Walsh will be discussing his assembly of a powerful new desktop system in a very muscular case, equipped with Windows 7. This adventure will be chronicled at our February Internet SIG, Wednesday, 2/24, at 7 PM in Carlin Hall. On April 28th, Gabe Goldberg will present useful add-ons to the Firefox browser and Thunderbird email client. Please join the gang for both of these exciting demonstrations and discussions.

NCTCUG starts *a new Webinar SIG*, meeting on the Internet, on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, from 7-9 PM. Mel Mikosinski is leading this new effort. Meetings of the new SIG will kick off on February 10th, and 2nd Wednesdays thereafter, using Skype. We suggest exchanging Skype "credentials" in advance with Mel, whose Skype address is: melvin.70 His email address is melvin22003@aol.com.

The Webinar SIG will explore various tools for presenting material where the participants are not all located in the same room, but are connected by the Internet. A high speed Internet connection, of at least DSL speed, is essential for participants in these meetings. You will also require a web cam, either a stand-alone unit, or one integrated into your laptop display. A headset, with microphone and headphone(s) seems to provide the best sound quality for the audio portion of these conferences.

Using a web cam mic, and computer speakers will work, but can result in some undesirable characteristics for the conference or webinar arranged with this choice of equipment: feedback and echos are common, and the automatic gain control (AGC) features of some software or equipment can sometimes allow other members of a conference call to unwittingly eavesdrop on conversations or other activities at locations with open microphones. We urge all participants to learn the location of the audio "mute" button on the software employed for webinars. The best results are obtained in rooms with closed doors, and no extraneous sounds, such as radio or TV playing in the background.

Virtual meetings have some unanticipated consequences. NCTCUG's ace troubleshooter, Roger Fujii, has complained about the quality of the "virtual" pizza served at the "virtual restaurant" following several earlier experimental webinar meetings — you may wish to stock your refrigerator / freezer with non-virtual goodies for the "virtual" Pizza & Salad SIG.

Inside

Windows 7 Is Here! Part III

By Robert Nisbet, Asbury Computer Club MD
www.amvresidents.org/computerclub halmarilyn (at) hotmail.com

So far in this series we have covered some general questions about Windows 7 (May) and obtaining and installing Windows 7 (September.) This month I will start to cover some of the new features of Windows 7.

Caveat For Upgrading From Vista

Something I forgot to address in the last issue is for Vista users upgrading to Windows 7. In your upgrade box you will find two DVDs. One is for 32 bit Windows and one is for 64 bit Windows. Choose the 32 bit disc for your upgrade. Don't worry about the difference for basic computing. Now, one of the two choices you have when you start the upgrade disc is the option called Upgrade. This is called an "in place" upgrade where the new operating system replaces the old operating system, but (hopefully) leaves everything else in place – your data files, settings, etc. NEVER, ever, ever start this process without first backing up all your data files to an external medium. Nine hundred ninety eight times out of a thousand everything will go fine, but you don't want to end up among those few where it does not and lose all your data. The Windows 7 DVD contains a Windows Easy Transfer Wizard tool that will backup all your files and settings for you and put them back on the Windows 7 computer. If you are not computer savvy, you may need technical assistance to accomplish all this. Just to reiterate for XP users, Windows 7 ONLY comes on DVD, so if your XP computer only has a CD drive, forget about investing in the upgrade.

What's New in Windows 7?

There is no way in a few short paragraphs to describe in-depth all the new or improved features in Windows 7. For these articles I will just give you a basic overview of several of the most obvious so you better know what to expect when you see your own desktop and start using your new (or upgraded) computer.

While Windows 7 initially looks and acts a lot like Windows Vista from the user standpoint, there are a number of new and improved features designed to make using the computer easier and to improve productivity. I will cover some in this article and more in the next edition. Some are things you will not use every day, but it is good to know they exist – and understanding them will help you use Windows 7 more effectively.

Windows Aero

Aero is the "glassy" transparent look of windows that was introduced in Windows Vista. Things look even glassier in Windows 7. The idea is to deemphasize the windows itself and bring the focus onto the contents of the windows. The Aero effect also is seen on the taskbar and in several neat window management features carry the Aero label.

Windows 7 Taskbar

One of the first things you notice on the Windows 7 desktop is that the taskbar along the bottom of the screen still is there, but looks different. The icons on it are bigger and there are three icons already on it. Normally, the taskbar has only displayed icons for applications, folders, and files you had "opened." Also, just to the right of the Start button (or orb) there was a small area with a few icons on it. This was called the "Quick Launch Toolbar."
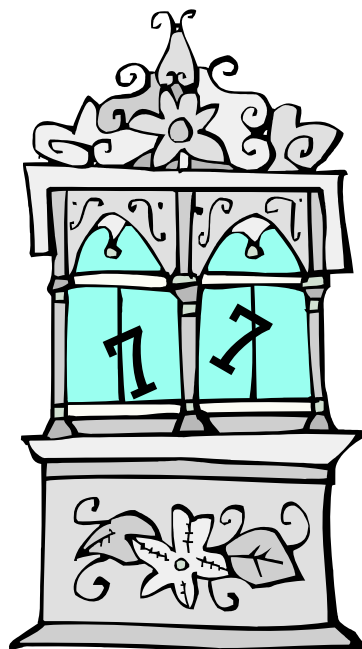
Now, those two areas have been more or less combined. You can have both "shortcuts" to frequently used things on the taskbar (which you can "pin" there) as well as having it reflect the things you have opened. How do you tell one from the other? It can be confusing at first until you note that the "open" items each have a "glassy" box around them whereas the shortcuts do not.

You also notice a new button on the far right end of the toolbar. This is the Aero Peek button. Say you have several open windows covering the desktop and want to see your analog clock or weather bug gadget (described below) on the desktop. Just rest your mouse cursor on the Aero Peek button and the open windows become transparent allowing you to see the desktop. Move away and the windows return. Not the greatest advancement since sliced bread, but pretty neat nonetheless.

You also notice that if you open multiple files using the same application – say, Microsoft Word – there is only one Word icon on the taskbar, not one for each document. Hover your mouse over the Word button and you see live thumbnails of each document over the button, similar to what you see in Windows Vista. However, move the cursor up to one of the thumbnails and a full screen live preview appears. Once you find the file you want to work on, click that thumbnail and the document is on the screen.

Desktop Gadgets

What are gadgets anyway? They are handy little utilities that do something (hopefully) useful for you. There are analog clocks, weather bugs, slide shows, stock monitors, and literally hundreds of others to choose from in all types of categories. Gadgets were introduced in Windows Vista and resided in a reserved area along the right side of the screen called the Sidebar. Users complained that the sidebar ate up too much screen, so in Windows 7 gadgets have been moved to the desktop. You can place them anywhere you want or not have any at all. It's up to you. Since they are on the desktop, they often are hidden behind windows, hence Aero Peek described above.

Libraries

I am going to end this edition with another significant change in Windows 7. That is the introduction of the library concept for file management. You will see them, but may never fully use them. Still you need to understand what they are. Since the earliest days of Windows, we have had folders to keep our files in – the Documents folder being a prime example. All these folders resided on our computer. Well, the concept of personal computing has drastically changed over the last few years. Many homes have networks of several computers; some homes have home servers – essentially a basic computer with a huge hard drive to store files you want on it. In business, the file a person may need to use daily could be located on a far distant computer.

This is where libraries come in. Not to get too technical, but libraries do not exist physically. They are just a way to aggregate the folders and files you use and need to access in one handy place. You still have a Documents link on your Start menu just as you did in Vista. Now when you open it you see "Document Library" and the folders and files you have created. You also still have a default folder on your computer where Windows can store the things you create. This is called "My Documents." (Sound familiar? Déjà vu all over again.) However, you also can "store" – and access in your Documents library – files which exist on another computer on your home network or even in another location over a network or the Web.

Many of you may never find the need to take full advantage of the library concept. However, it is a significant step forward in file access and management that does not tie the user to just one computer any more. Good job Microsoft, for a change.

1964 Has Finally Arrived

By Bruce Preston, President, West Mountain Systems, Inc., long-term board member of DACS and conducted the Random Access sessions at the General Meetings as well as chaired the Microsoft Access SIG. www.dacs.or bpreston (at) mags.net

One of the 'Gee-Whiz' attractions at the 1964 New York World's Fair was the AT&T Picturephone http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Videophone#AT.26T_Picturephon which people eagerly awaited for availability. And waited. And waited..

For a while I have been using Microsoft's Live Messenger instant messaging service, and while it supports video, I have never been really happy with it — audio/video quality were marginal. In addition, Windows Live Messenger (and its predecessors, Windows Messenger/MSN Messenger) doesn't support Mac, and our son Scott, who is away at college, prefers a Mac. He suggested that I try Skype instead. I installed it about a month ago and have found it to be easy to use and have much better video and audio quality. The icing on the cake is that for Skype-to-Skype calls, it is 100% free as well.

What you need: To start with, you need a broadband connection — cable or DSL, both work fine. To support voice calling you need a microphone and speakers. If you want video capability, you also need a webcam. For smooth video a USB 2 webcam is recommended. We recently outfitted my wife's notebook and her sister's desktop with webcams from Micro-Center.com — WinBook WB-7144 HD Webcam 2-pack — two USB 2 webcams with integral microphone, as of this writing the two-pack is $39.99 + S/H. http://www.microcenter.com/single_product_results.phtml?product_id=030873

It works fine over WiFi (802.11g) at both ends. Windows XP and Windows Vista both recognized the hardware and did not require an installation CD, although the product comes with a pair of identical CDs with ArcSoft photo editing/cataloging software and drivers for earlier versions of Windows. The base of the camera has three spring-loaded fingers which can grasp the top of a flat screen monitor or notebook.

The Skype software is a straightforward download and install. About the only decision you have to make is whether to install the Google Toolbar (which is installed by default.) I declined — I dislike add-on browser toolbars. You need to create and register a Skype name (not your e-mail address) and pick a password (at least 6 characters having at least one digit.) You need to provide a valid e-mail address for use in recovering forgotten password.

For Windows, Skype installs yet another little icon in the system tray down by the clock — but I have found it to be low-impact upon my machine so I have left it active. The image of the icon changes depending upon your computer's status — available for incoming calls, offline, do-not-disturb, etc. The same icons appear next to entries in your contact list showing their availability.

To populate your contact list, you need to provide either the Skype name or e-mail address of the other party. That's about it. Click on an entry in your contact list, select CALL (for a voice only call) or VIDEO CALL (for voice + video) and within about 5 seconds the other end will ring and your correspondent can elect what type of call to accept.

During a video call you have a large image of your correspondent. On a 1024x768 I am going to guess that it is near 800x600. A smaller picture-in-picture image at the lower left displays what your correspondent sees.

There is a small window within which you may type text a la instant messaging.

Recently I was having problems with establishing an account on a service, I couldn't make out the CAPTCHA distorted letters. (As some of you know, I am legally blind.) I called Scott planning on asking

Foxit Reader: A Short Review

By Sharon Walbran, Editor, TCPC Digital Viking, Twin Cities PC User Group, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota www.tcpc.co SQWalbran(at)yahoo.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).

A Worthy Alternative to Adobe Reader

When one of my clients was concerned about hacker threats to Adobe Reader last winter I went in search of alternative software. I found the free version of Foxit Reader at http://www.foxitsoftware.com/pdf/reader

It's well worth a look! Here are just some of the advantages:

Small Size. The file is about one-sixth the size of the latest free version of Adobe Reader and takes seconds to download and install. The small footprint is great for older computers or those short on hard drive space. There is also a U3 version for flash drives.

Speed. It starts up fast and runs fast. No delays while splash screens load. Printing is also speedy.

"No surprises." Foxit Reader will remind you of Adobe Reader—same interface, menus and toolbars so the transition is painless.

Open multiple files in tabbed format. If you like the ability to open several web pages on tabs in Mozilla Firefox you'll like the tabbed format of Foxit Reader as well. View several PDF files at a time and switch between them easily by clicking the tabs.

Mark up and leave comments on PDF documents. You can insert text boxes with comments right in line with text in the PDF document or draw arrows and graphics or highlight text. This is very helpful, especially when you are collaborating on a document with others.

Take it for a test run. You will not be disappointed.

(Continued from page 4)

him to create the account for me. He pointed out that there was a "share my screen" capability in Skype. I did so, he read the characters for me, and I was able to continue. Nice!

As mentioned earlier, Skype-to-Skype calls are free. There is a charge for Skype to other types of telephone service, i.e. landline, cell etc. I haven't needed that. Lastly, some years ago eBay purchased controlling interest in Skype thinking that buyers and sellers would use it during the auction process — questions about items prior to the sale, shipping instructions after, etc. It never took off. Recently eBay sold most of their interest to an investors group led by Mark Andreessen (originator of Netscape) but the founding partners of Skype sued eBay claiming that eBay had violated the contract. That's up in the air, but it is highly improbable that the service will 'go away' It will be interesting to watch the case work its way through the courts.

Networking For Dummies (Part 2 of 2)

By Ron Hirsch, Member and Contributing Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, Florida
www.brcs.org   ronhirsch1439 (at) comcast.net

In part 1, I reviewed the history of my first network installation about 7 years ago, and the difficulties I encountered. Part 2 will cover all the work I did to essentially replace the old network, since the main wireless router had failed. For all practical purposes, the work involved now would have been the same as if this were a new network installation, starting from scratch.

The Purpose Of A Home Network

The main purpose of most home networks is to share an internet connection among several computers. Using a wireless router typically provides 4 plug in ports for hard wired cable connections, and a receiver/transmitter which broadcasts the connection wirelessly, with a typical range of up to 300 feet, depending upon the router, the   surroundings, walls, etc..You can of course share files, printers, et al, should you wish   to do so, but configuring this is done after the initial setup.

What You Will Need

First you will need a wireless router. The two current main varieties of routers are the "G" and "N" series. The "G" series wireless capability can handle up to 54 Mbps (megabits per second), and the "N" series is roughly twice as fast. But for home use, the "G" series hardware is more than fast enough for any high speed cable modem connection. And the "G" series runs at 2.4 Ghz, as opposed to a much higher frequency for the "N" series. Considering all the spec variables between "G" and "N", I would recommend the "G" series, since it is also more readily compatible with earlier hardware types, especially "B". I used a Linksys WRT54GL for this new install. The price range for this is in the $70 region, depending upon your choice of vendors.

This router comes with an installation CD. Just run the CD, and follow the instructions which are plainly and clearly presented. In the areas of security, I would accept the suggestions made along the way. You will have to establish some passwords et al, and connect things up as directed. From what I've seen, most routers today come with a good install CD. Before you

buy your router, check to make sure that is the case for the unit you choose.

There may be one window which comes up along the way, where there are fields to be filled in re IP addresses, gateways, etc.. But the one key item to be selected is the choice of static or dynamic IP addresses. In most instances, such as Comcast, dynamic IP addresses are used, and when that choice is made in the window, all the other fields disappear, making life that much easier. Locate the router as high up as possible.

A computer cable modem is required. But if you already have an Internet service provider, you already have the necessary modem in place and working. For a number of years, I rented the cable modem, for $5 per month on my Comcast cable bill. You are allowed to purchase your own modem, which I did, and save the monthly charge. A suitable Motorola cable modem will cost in the $40-$55 region, and will quickly pay for itself. Of course, if you own it, you are responsible for it. Cable modems seem to have very long life however.

Several lengths of Ethernet Cat-5 cable with RJ-45 connectors You will need one length to connect the cable modem to the wireless router, and then another length to connect the router to your computer. You can of course have all your computers run via a wireless adapter. But it is usually better to have your "main" computer hard wired to the router. However, if your cable modem is in a location which is not convenient for this, all computers can run in the wireless mode. Most routers come with one length of cable. If you need more, CompUSA is as good place as any to go. Even Office Depot may carry the needed cables.

If you find this material useful, you may want to download this article in PDF format, from our web site www.brcs.or. This allows readers to keep the material either as a PDF file, and/or print it out, and place it in a loose-leaf notebook for future reference.

Web Video: Making It Great, Getting It Noticed

By Jennie Bourne & Dave Burstein

Reviewed by Iris Yoffa, Member, Tucson Computer Society, Arizona
May 2009 eJournal www.aztcs.or journal (at) aztcs.org

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 seem to be living during the decade of the rise of video as the media of choice for self-expression. And where better to publish for maximum exposure than the web. In the beginning, just about any online moving picture was considered good and worth the wait, no matter how long it took to load and how poor the quality turned out. It was new, cutting edge and so exciting to be part of. However, the world-wide audience has become more discerning and has come to expect a touch of story, direction, and technical quality in the visual and audio. So, a book with the title of *Web Video: Making It Great, Getting It Noticed* would seem to be the ticket to success.

The authors, Jennie Bourne and Dave Burstein, have done an admirable job of putting together an extensive array of basic to quite-involved information, tips, online resources, explanations of relevant technologies, and production techniques, approached in an entertaining format. There is a lot to be learned here for the individual involved in the bare bones to studio quality video. And, being totally new to the subject, I really enjoyed this unique insight into the world of video production. This is a vey different beast than using a video camera to record home and business inventories where no editing is required.

The book's 321 pages are divided into nine chapters. "Making It Great" is the focus of chapters one through seven. Publishing to the web for a world-wide audience of varying technologies and viewing devices presents many issues to consider that film, TV and home movie enthusiasts and professionals don't have to deal with, in addition to the challenges that they do have to take into consideration.

So to start you need to have a plan and a great idea, target an audience and keep it as simple as possible. Because of the heavy compression used in web video, the varying bandwidths for download, and the variety of hardware your viewers will be using to watch your movie, there is a lot that is out of your control for you to consider. You'll learn about the pros and cons when making choices about equipment such as video camera, tripod, microphone, lighting, cables and connectors, recording media and backup options.

There are also a variety of techniques and approaches to consider for videoing events, interviews, how-to's, and news. Editing is a much overlooked and underutilized part of the process, but is essential for refining your focus and message. There's a lot to consider in addition to which video-editing software to use, such as shaping the story, adding transitions, titles, graphics, and sound, working with compression and selecting an encoding format.

"Getting It Noticed" is discussed in the last two chapters. This is a lot trickier than one might think and there is no sure formula to get you there. Going viral is usually the result of inspired marketing. There are a lot of ideas here and vignettes of success stories to get you going.

However, you must first make it great.

This book is packed with excellent ideas and resources to help you make a success of your production. The chapters end with projects for you to work on, based on what you've absorbed so far. Throughout there is a focus on techniques for improving your video skills and methods and to assist you in this are interviews with accomplished video folks which cover a broad range of topics. The information, interviews, and tips are interspersed with vignettes of web video success stories. This insight into a world unto itself was just fascinating to me.

Web Video: Making It Great, Getting It Noticed
Authors: Jennie Bourne, Dave Burstein
Publisher: Peachpit Press, 2008
http://www.peachpit.com/store/
product.aspx?isbn=0321591585
ISBN-10: 0321552962
ISBN-13: 978-0321552969
Price: $39.99, $26.39 @ Amazon

Google Chrome 3 – Ready for Prime Time!

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; APCUG Representative, Golden Triangle PC Club;
Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, Texas;
Radio Show Host (Mondays, 6-7pm Central Time, klvi.com) iwilsker (at) sbcglobal.net

Websites

http://www.google.com/chrom
http://www.google.com/chrome/intl/en/features.htm
https://tools.google.com/chrome/intl/en/theme

Longtime readers of this column may remember that I wrote about Google's Chrome browser when it first came out. I found that Chrome version 1 was unstable, and incapable of loading many of the websites that I routinely visited. About a year ago, with high hopes, I tested the then new release of Google Chrome version 2, and found many of the same bugs and incompatibilities that I found in version 1; my title of that column said that Chrome 2 was "Not Yet Ready for Prime Time." I am now happy to report to you, my faithful readers, that the newly released Chrome version 3 is indeed "ready for prime time."

Google Chrome is a free download from Google at www.google.com/chrom, and runs on XP and Vista, both 32 and 64 bit systems. The Google setup is a small 557kb executable file that downloaded quickly, and installed smoothly with no problems or conflicts on my Vista Home Premium 64 system. During the very quick install, Chrome identified that Firefox was my default browser, and asked if I would like to import my bookmarks (favorites) and other information from Firefox. A pull down menu was offered which would have also allowed import of items from Internet Explorer as well. Not surprisingly, Chrome had setup as a default home (startup) page Google.com, which I chose to change to my existing personal startup page (My Yahoo). Other than the trivial question about whether I wanted a desktop and quick-start icon for Chrome, the new browser installed in seconds.

Since I was skeptical about Chrome, based on my past problems with the earlier versions, I proceeded to immediately visit those websites that I was unable to load in versions 1 and 2. To my pleasant surprise, all of the sites that failed to load in the earlier versions of Chrome not just loaded flawlessly, but also opened very quickly.

My first impression of Chrome was that it loaded far faster than Internet Explorer or Firefox on my computer, and that it has a very clean look to the browser, in that is it not cluttered by a lot of infrequently used icons and toolbars, as well as other items that take up the precious real estate on the desktop. When I entered the URLs of my frequently visited websites, Chrome already had them filled ahead of my typing them, evidence that Chrome successfully imported them from Firefox. Since this was a clean install of Chrome, such that there could not be any online cache to load, I was amazed as to how quickly web pages loaded. While it was not a scientific experiment, and the evidence would only be anecdotal, I opened Internet Explorer 8 (IE8), Firefox 3.53, and Chrome 3 in adjacent windows. Without the need for a stopwatch, it was glaringly obvious that Chrome loaded the same web pages much faster than IE8 did, and somewhat faster than Firefox. Of these three browsers, all the latest builds running on a quad-core machine, Chrome was clearly the speed demon of the three. Chalk up a performance win for Chrome.

While I appreciated the clean appearance of Chrome when it opened, there are undoubtedly many who would like to change the appearance of Chrome to modify it to meet personal preferences. As I type this, Google has 29 themes available for Chrome at tools.google.com/chrome/intl/en/themes/. The available themes range from "Minimal" that has an almost blank window with only minimal coloring, to several that are complex and brightly colored.

While Chrome is written in tight code, and loads very quickly, it is still very feature rich. It is amazingly intuitive and easy to use. One of my favorite features is clicking on a "+" in the tabs on the top of the page to open another browser window, and being greeted with interactive thumbnails of both open and recently closed websites; clicking on one would open that page in an instant. Chrome remembers the most frequently viewed pages, and displays thumbnails of those when a "New Tab" is selected. This makes it very easy to

select a page, or the user can always type an address in the address bar or click on a bookmark. Another useful feature is the ability to search directly from the address bar. By simply typing a search term in the address space, the default search engine will be queried, and the results displayed. While Google was obviously the initial default search engine, it was a simple process to change the default to my personal favorite, AllTheWeb. To test the search function from the address bar, I typed my name in the space where I would normally type a web address (URL), hit enter, and the AllTheWeb page instantly opened with the web pages with my name. It was also actually fun to drag and drop tabs, watching the contents being moved around the browser page; this way open tabs can be organized to satisfy the whims of the user. Tabs can also be dragged and dropped on the Windows desktop, where they appear as a complete new window, and can be dragged back to the original browser where the tab will be integrated back with the other tabs. Each tab is independent, and a problem or crash in one tab will not likely crash the entire browser and other open tabs.

Many would wonder why Google would create and promote Chrome as another free browser in the now crowded field of browsers. The developers of Chrome identified needs and problems with the existing browsers, and addressed those issues on the web page "A fresh take on the browser" (www.google.com/chrome/intl/en/why.htm). "Under the hood, we were able to build the foundation of a browser that runs today's complex web applications much better. By keeping each tab in an isolated "sandbox", we were able to prevent one tab from crashing another and provide improved protection from rogue sites. We improved speed and responsiveness across the board. We also built V8, a more powerful JavaScript engine, to power the next generation of web applications that aren't even possible in today's browsers." By design, Chrome is intended to be more secure than its competitors, more stable with the "sandbox" concept, and faster. While I have not significantly tested the security capabilities of Chrome, and I am fully cognizant that security is a continuing effort, my initial impression is that Chrome is reasonably secure, although Google has recently released some security and features patches to harden the browser. As stated above, the Chrome developers were very successful in creating a very fast browser.

Chrome is an open source product, meaning that anyone can get the code and write applications for it. In writing Chrome, the developers acknowledged that they used open source code from other sources, including code and components from Firefox and Apple's WebKit.

Google has done an excellent job with Chrome 3, and in its first few days of release has captured a small but rapidly growing share of the browser market. As more users download and install Chrome and find that it does indeed offer substantial performance and safety improvements over Internet Explorer. Other than not being compatible with some of my favorite Firefox add-ons, I found Chrome to be a most capable browser. Since Chrome is open source, I can foresee comparable add-ons being developed for Chrome just as they had been for Firefox.

I can now give Chrome my highest recommendation, and suggest that Windows users download Chrome and give it a try. It is perfectly OK to have multiple browsers installed on a computer, and select which one to run at any time. Since Chrome will import favorites, bookmarks, and other information from IE and Firefox, it would be fully ready to use after being installed. Download Chrome from Google (www.google.com/chrom) and try it. Since it is free, you really have nothing to lose, and will likely gain dramatically improved browsing performance, security, and satisfaction. After all, is that not why we surf the internet anyway?

Windows Control Panel Basics

By Phil Sorrentino, President, Sarasota PCUG, Florida July 2009 Monitor
www.spcug.or president (at) spcug.org

The Windows Control Panel is the component of the Windows User Interface that allows users to modify and personalize the way Windows (XP and Vista) to operate. All of the User Interface Settings and controls that are under user control can be manipulated by the small applications (called applets) that are part of the Windows Control Panel. (Control Panel applet files have .cpl as the file extension, so if you come across a file that has a .cpl suffix, don't move or delete it, it's probably a control panel applet.) For the names of each of the Control Panel applets, visit the Microsoft site at http://support.microsoft.com/kb/31380. In XP, Vista (and probably Windows 7), the Windows Control Panel has two views, the "Classic View," and the "Category View." For convenience, the user can switch between these two views.

- The Classic view consists of shortcuts directly to the various Control Panel applets. Each applet does a specific job. [Figure 1]

- The Category view consists of categories which, when clicked, display the Control Panel applets related to that category. The Category View divides the Control Panel applets into logical categories. [Figure 2]
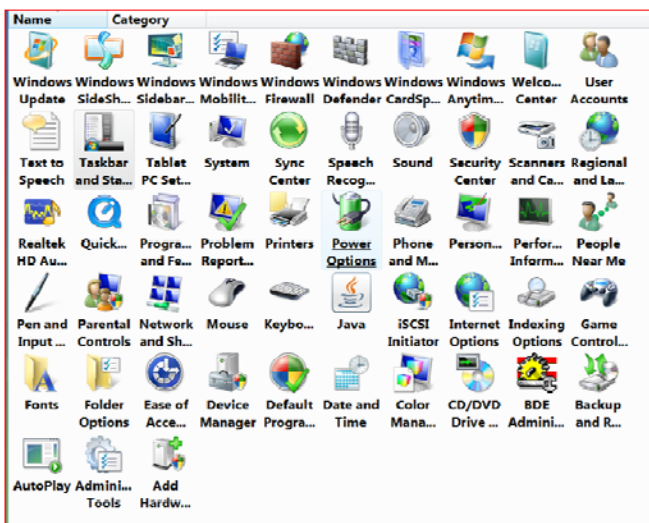
After you choose a category, you may be taken directly to the appropriate applet, or you may be given a list of tasks that can be accomplished, such as the following for the Appearance and Personalization category. [Figure 3]

If you are offered a list of tasks, choose a task and you will be taken directly into the correct screen and tab of the applet that will do the job. If you are familiar with the applets and you know just what you want to accomplish, the Classic view is probably the view to use. If you aren't quite sure what the applet does, then the Category view may be the best choice. Either way, the idea is to get into the applet that controls the function that you want to modify or personalize. Once you are in the desired applet, you will have available all the screens, tabs and buttons that the User Interface provides.

Each Control Panel applet focuses on a specific functional area. Some applets control the way the User Interface looks such as "Display" and "Keyboard," some control the way the User Interface acts such as "Automatic Updates" and "Folder Options," and some control specific functional areas such as "Network Connections," and "Sounds and Audio Devices." Many applets control both the looks and actions in a specific functional area. For example, the Mouse applet controls the way the mouse cursor looks, and it
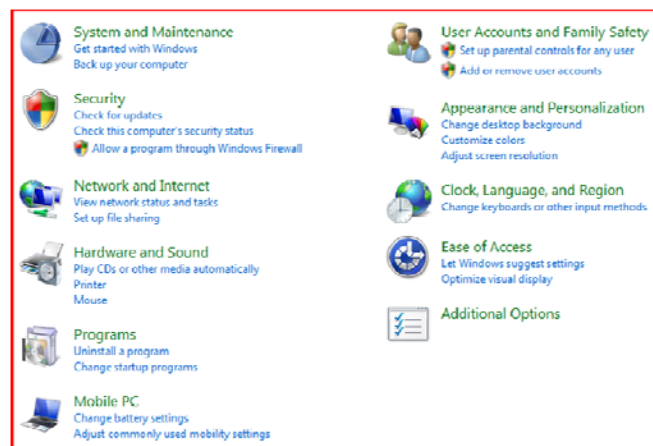

Figure 1

Figure 2

also controls the way it acts when the mouse is clicked or double-clicked. On the other hand, Network Connections is used to set up a network and, once setup, you hardly know it is doing its job (but you'll very quickly know when it's not doing its job).

As an example of a Control Panel applet, let's look at "Folder Options." Understanding this applet is very helpful in explaining how certain things in Windows operate. (The following discussion applies directly to Windows XP. Vista is similar, but with small differences and instead of finding "File Types" in the "Folder Options" applet, it is found in the "Default Programs" applet.) In XP, when you double-click on the "Folder Options" applet, you are presented with a window with four tabs at the top. The first three tabs determine some very basic operations of the Operating System. The "General" tab has three controls: one for Tasks, one for Brose Folders and the third for the action that opens windows. A recommended setting for Tasks is "Show common tasks in folders." A recommended setting for Browse Folders is "Open each folder in its own windows." And the recommendation for "Click items as follows:" is "Double-click to open an item (single-click to select)." Using this last recommendation will force items to be selected with one click and opened (or acted upon with a double-click). The other item "Single-click to open an item (point to select)" will usually confuse a user, especially a new user. The View tab presents a list of "Advanced settings" for "Files and Folders." Each of these is selected by checking the check box next to the setting description. For general use, a recommendation would be to check the first six settings, and then check "Remember each folder's view settings," and finally check the last four settings. Also, choose the "Show hidden files and folders" and "Show and manage the pair as a single file" radio buttons.

Finally, the "File Types" tab controls the association for files types used on this particular computer. (Some common File Types are .doc, jpg, .mp3, .xls, .wmv, .avi.) When you select this tab, Windows will create a list of File Types, in alphabetical order, with their associated programs, that are used on this specific computer. The association is shown in the "Details for '.xyz' extensions (extension is used interchangeably with file type). This association list determines which program on this computer will be used to open, display and work with a specific file type. The "Opens with" item shows the program that will be used. (For example, .jpg may be associated with Windows Picture and Fax Viewer, or Adobe Photoshop Elements, or Paint, depending on which program or person last set up the associations.) The "Change" button next to the associated program name provides an opportunity to change the association. Pressing the "Change" button will produce a list of programs that could possibly be used in association with this file type. The list starts with "Recommended Programs," and "Other Programs" are also listed. If you want to change the association, only choose one of the Recommended programs. These programs are known to work with these [without] unexpected and possibly harmful results. Click on the Recommended program of your choice, and the association will be changed to your new selection. Press "Apply." When you are finished making any additional association changes, press "OK."

Knowledge of the "Folders options" Control Panel applet is very helpful in explaining how and why certain actions are taken by Windows and Application programs on your computer. Other Control Program applets are equally important and will be discussed in future Monitor articles.
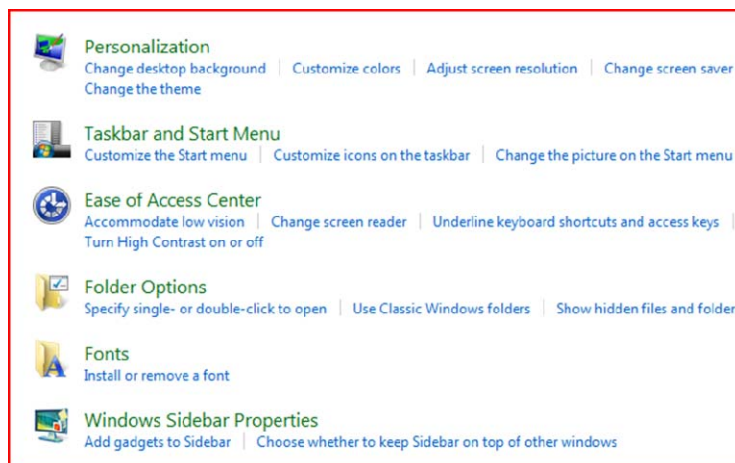

Figure 3

Stealth Spyware: The New Spyware Threat

By Kristofer Simon, a member of the Fox Valley PC Association, Illinois Fox Tales, Volume 22, Issue 6, June 2009 www.fvpca.or krisdream (at) earthlink.net

For most of us, the word spyware is not an unfamiliar term anymore. It can mean cookies that track your movements on web pages or other little programs that put garbage applications on your machine. While spyware intentions have not changed much over the past few years, their infection practices appear to be doing so. The newest kind of spyware, which I personally came in contact with a few months ago, should be referred to as "stealth" spyware. What I mean by that is that this spyware installs on your machine without you even knowing about it. You do not become aware of the spyware infection on your machine generally until the next time you reboot and the spyware program activates. In this short article, I will describe my experience with a piece of this spyware and what I had to do to get rid of it so that, hopefully, none of you have the same experience that I did.

The piece of spyware that infected my machine was called "XP Police Antivirus." I became infected, I believe, after visiting a third party website that provided updated information and screen shots for Nintendo Wii games that were about to hit the market and that were in development. As I said earlier, this program was a piece of "stealth" spyware and installed on my machine without my knowledge. It did not slow down the performance of my machine at all (at least not that I was able to notice), nor did any installation screens pop up during the install. The next time I booted up my machine, an icon appeared on the lower right hand part of my screen that looked like the XP Security Center shield. When I put my cursor over it to see what it was, it said "XP Police Antivirus." For just a split second, I wondered if maybe Microsoft had tried to install a new version of an antivirus program they created on my machine, but I quickly realized that this was a piece of spyware that had infected my machine without my knowledge.

The program tried to fool me into thinking that anonymous users from the Internet (it would put public IP addresses in the warning dialog boxes) were attempting to access my computer maliciously and it recom-

mended that I install the full program to prevent these attacks. I wasn't going to do this because I had the full and up-to-date version of McAfee Security Center so I knew this was bogus. When I tried to remove the program through the Add/Remove Programs option in the Control Panel, I was able to wipe out the program temporarily but the next time I rebooted my machine, the application icon was in my system tray again and I was getting the same bogus dialog boxes about people trying to access my computer. This spyware also put another program on my machine called Security Center 2009 that also was made to look as realistic as possible.

Finally, I went on my Motorola Q Smart Phone and searched on the XP Police Antivirus program. Immediately, I got a link to a page that told me that this was a piece of stealth spyware and told me how to get rid of it. I actually had to go into the computer's registry (kind of like the computer's brain) and delete the entry that the spyware had made there, as well as delete a number of files the program had put on my machine. Once I did that, the spyware programs (both XP Police Antivirus and Security Center 2009) were finally gone but I still had one more hurdle to overcome from this program.

The spyware also installed a software program known as a "browser hijacker."

For those of you who don't know what this is, let me explain. Let's say you launch a web browser and you want to go to www.cnn.com to see the latest news. You type www.cnn.com into the address bar of your browser and either hit "go" or hit return. The browser initially begins to go to that page, but suddenly the browser gets "redirected" to another page. This happens every time you try to access a web page. These programs are EXTREMELY hard to get rid of but I was able to get rid of the one on my machine using a third party program that found the program and removed it.

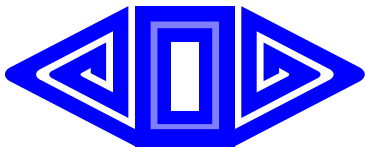# The Egg & You: These "Eggs" Are Subversive And Fun!

By Charles W. Evans, Reviews Editor, HAL-PC Magazine, July 2009 www.hal-pc.or reviews (at) hal-pc.org

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).

Crack One Open

Did you ever marvel at the engineering of an egg? What else makes an egg so fascinating, you ask? Enjoy these web sites, from real eggs to man-made eggs, including the "care and feeding" of eggs!

1) I hope you don't think computer programmers are dry as bones and boring as cactus. The fact is, sometimes they will just outright surprise you. Buried within many software applications are delightful, little, hidden, amusing tidbits called "Easter Eggs". Some are ordinary and others will amaze you. Several seasons of "Lost" have eggs. Learn where to find them at: www.eeggs.com.

2) Next time you crack a farm fresh egg, think about the road it traveled from the hen pen to your plate and all the stuff along the way, plus egg safety. Surf to: www.aeb.org

3) 3)   OK, before you read #5 and for those who are chronically egg-chef challenged, the eternal question is now answered here, plus egg selection, separating, poaching (eggs, not deer), etc. Yah, yah, I know, real men don't "separate" eggs, but this site will show you how, for those times when you are alone! Surf to: www.fabulousfoods.com/school/csingred/eggs.html or www.joyofbaking.com/eggs.html

4) And now for something completely different. Magnificent manmade eggs, courtesy of Mr. Faberge of Russia. Surf to: www.pbs.org/treasuresoftheworld/faberge/fmain.html

5) The flames of your passion, or whimsy, will explode because there is an egg recipe for all occasions, all tastes and all people. Surf to: www.recipelink.com/rcpeggs.html

I know, I know, enough is enough, but I thought this brief foray would be eggsactly perfect to break the doldrums of working at your computer...and the tedium of thinking about your CY200[9] taxes.

While this may sound like a dire situation, the most important thing you can do as an end user in these situations is to remain calm and scrutinize every program that you see on your machine, that you haven't specifically downloaded (ex. a game, a patch from Microsoft, etc.). If you do get infected by stealth spyware and can't seem to get rid of it, go to a non-infected PC or web enabled cell phone and do a search on the program's name. You will almost always get a link telling you how to get rid of the program. Also, never send personal information over the Internet to any site that you cannot confirm is a legitimate site that you use (ex. Amazon.com, Paypal, etc.). Using these steps you can help eliminate most of the problems caused by spyware, but you should always remain vigilant. You can get infected with a stealth spyware program from just about any website, so be careful out there!

2009 Come and Gone

By Elizabeth B. Wright, Computer Club of Oklahoma City, OK www.ccokc.or
wright599new@sbcglobal.ne.

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).

Yes, another year is coming to a close. And what do we have to show for it? Another Microsoft OS for those who are not already confused, limited software and a world gone wild on the internet. Is that what we had hoped for as 2010 looms on the horizon? While all of the above were probably inevitable, how can we make the most and best of it?

First: the new MS OS, fondly known as Windows7. It's really not too bad, considering the fact that all Windows based computers work under the original handicap of the hardware created by IBM for its personal computers. I have seen my friends and loved ones switching to Apple based computers and loving every minute of it, even though Apple creates new operating systems about as often as does Microsoft. But then, most people switch for the graphics and possibly the word processing capability of Apple (Mac) machines, and perhaps are not as compelled to upgrade to a new OS like Windows customers are. Yes, our photographs are very important to us and Apple made that kind of computing a good experience many years ago.

But what about those of us who like to work with both graphics and number-crunching software? Best to stick to the unending procession of Microsoft operating systems. With powerful enough hardware, including RAM memory and a good graphics card, even Windows can do a passable job with graphics. It has always done exceptionally well with the numbers stuff. And if we can get version 7 and whatever comes next to work with our older software, then maybe we can carry on business as usual. I for one plan to give it a try. But to utilize additional RAM, we are faced with using the 64bit version of Windows 7 with a 64bit processor.

So we might not actually get as much good out of the new OS and newer photo editing software if our hardware can't meet those standards.

Second: limited software. By now most average users have all the programs they will ever use. About the only thing new many people buy is the latest, greatest antivirus program. Businesses use number crunching, word processing and data manipulation software;

Washington Area Computer User Group

WACUG Meetings will be held on March 20 & April 17 from 12:30 to 3:30 pm. WACUG will hold joint meetings with **OPCUG** [www.olligmu.org/~opcug/] All meetings will be held at the **Osher Lifelong Learning Institute** [www.olli.gmu.edu/] at George Mason University, 4210 Roberts Road, Fairfax, VA, known as the Tallwood Campus.

Topics

3/20 — Useful utilities & handy programs;
4/17 — About Those Electronic Book Readers;
5/22 — VHS to Digital Video/DVD — Kurt DeSoto

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 OPCUG.ORG

individuals tend to use graphics, word processing and the internet. Microsoft and Apple, and to some extent Sun Microsystems, have both categories firmly in hand, and we likely will see no new software for average users. But the old MS and Adobe stuff will continue to be "improved" in order to keep those companies in business. No need to beat that dead horse. Programs for Linux based computers are more of the same. As for huge corporations, they depend on specialists to continually fine-tune their programs in order to keep up with the competition. The industry that has developed for just that purpose is something of which most of us are not likely to have much knowledge or interest.

Third: The World Gone Wild. That is the one that worries most thinking people more than anything else. Again, it doesn't need explaining since most of the people reading this are well aware of the idiocy available on the internet. Yes, there is still some really good stuff out there, but so few people are taking advantage of it. The bad stuff, and everyone knows just how bad it is, may be the ultimate downfall of civilization as we now know it. From selling iffy goods to selling sex and extreme violence, the internet is a place where legitimate learning and business is losing the battle. Even the so-called online universities are

often nothing but sham corporations. They tie people up with debt as soon as they enroll, knowing full well that many of their "students" will never finish even the first course, much less graduate. And what are those degrees worth? I guess I can expect a lot of dissent on that subject, but first hand experience with relatives has shown me that my theory is on target.

But of course, the upside is that the internet system will probably implode in perhaps the not-too-distant future. Either governments will hijack it or it will just crumble from its own weight and greed. Do you remember the world before the internet? What you may not remember, or possibly don't know about, was the existence of computers connected via phone lines and other cabling systems which were military and scientific in nature. Then the rest of us got into the act.

Outlook for 2010: For computer users who want something more than email and surfing, there continue to be ways to improve skills. And many of those choices are still available free on the internet. Check out your favorite program to see what and where you can find training programs, then DO IT!! Make the effort to at least make Microsoft, Apple and all others work for you instead of the other way around.

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 2010

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

Directors — all terms expire 2011

Mel Mikosinski	703-978-9158
John Keys	703-451-0896
Nick Wenri	703-759-3938
Sy Fishbein	703-536-5894
Roger Fujii	
Lorrin Garson	
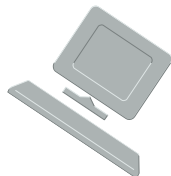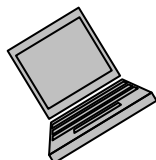
Article Submissions

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 address as soon as possible to avoid missing issues.

Thank You!

Special Member Drawing —
Six Chances To Win !!

Every member of NCTCUG whose membership is paid through March 2010, will be entered in a drawing for a chance to win one of three subscriptions, to be held at the group's general meeting on March 3rd. You **do not** have to be present to win. New members since January, 2010, and members who renew their membership to run beyond March of 2011, will be entered in a second drawing on March 3rd, for a chance to win one of an additional three subscriptions.

NCTCUG has received three free subscriptions, in addition to three already earned, to *Smart Computing* Magazine, which we'll be distributing to our members by a series of random drawings. *Smart Computing* is ending their program where user group members earned points towards free subscriptions for their group when they subscribed to any of three magazines from the same publisher.

All memberships and renewals submitted for entry in these six drawings must be received by the Internet SIG meeting on February 24th. Eligibility for drawings will be determined by the keeper of the NCTCUG membership database. If you win, and already subscribe to *Smart Computing,* your subscription will be extended for an additional year. Winners will be ineligible for subsequent drawings in this series of six, selected at random by computer.

March/April 2010

1st Wed. (3/3, 4/7)
7 p.m. General Meeting

2nd Wed. (3/10, 4/14)
Online-Only Webinar using Skype *New!*
See page 1 for information

4th Wed (3/24, 4/28)
7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (4/19; none in March)
7 p.m. Board of Directors

Meetings are at **Carlin Hall**, 5711 S. 4th St., Arlington VA: East off of Carlin Springs Rd, just south of Arlington Blvd/Route 50. See website for directions to post-meeting pizza gathering.

Memberships and renewals ($25 per year) should be sent to NCTCUG, Inc., 201 S. Kensington St., Arlington, VA 22204-1141, and should be accompanied by a copy of the group's membership form, available here: http://www.nctcug.org/#joi

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

First Class

Spring