



January 2006



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ONE TIME ONLY

We are trying, for this month only, a new look. We have heard that many on dial up have to wait a long time to get the news letter in. So this month we are doing the entire newsletter in black and white and very little photos or fancy gizmos.

We ask in return ,that you let us know how it helped you, or if it did not make any difference.

Your feed back is important to us!

Computer Room

- Room hours are 6:15 am - 9:45 pm. All Resort Club rooms are locked by 10:00 pm
- The new door only locks from the outside...so don't forget to lock up if you are the last one out of the room!

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

The Presidents Corner

Boy what a busy year this is, our membership is already approaching 450.

Our Volunteers are doing a great job keeping everything running smoothly. The addition of two meeting rooms coupled with another projector and screen has freed up the learning center for additional classes.

Just completed in the learning center is a permanent instructor station with a projector and computer that are dedicated to teaching and demonstrations. Another big project near completion is the up-dating and addition of new software on all the computers in the learning center. With this we intend to have the latest versions of particular software available for teaching and demonstrations. This is a never ending project in today's computer world; something new is available before we get things installed.

Another work in progress is to have Wireless available in the Ballroom for Speakers and Demonstrations at our weekly meetings. At this time it's an on and off again system, but the Tech. Committee is working hard and I'm sure will be successful.

Wireless computing is the latest rage, if we can find volunteers to teach and demonstrate more of it we will. Soon we hope to have a small wireless network in the learning center for that purpose.

This season the Monitor system has been exceptional. Were fortunate in having a full complement of monitors to cover the time slots. A monumental task accomplished by Dianne Hill the Coordinator. The Monitors are the club ambassadors and they're doing a good job as the club has nearly 150 new members this season. A big THANKS to Dianne and the Monitor Volunteers.

Hurray!! A "MAC" SIG is finally getting started.

The completion of the ingress and egress of the learning center with a new pushbutton latch system has worked well and eliminates a lot of problems that makes all our jobs easier.

There is still much to be done so consider helping by volunteering your expertise.

Keep that mouse clicking!!

The Pres. Bob Krogh



Absence Makes the E-Mail Grow Fonder

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP Computer & Technology Website, www.aarp.org

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder" is never truer for me than when I'm on the road, away from my wife, four cats, and e-mail. My wife and cats forgive my travels but it's a challenge e-mailing remotely. Fortunately, technology provides many ways to access e-mail. You're on your own, however, explaining to people you're visiting why you need a

break from vacation, sightseeing, or family, to check for in-box nuggets.

Aside from pressure to stay in touch (some people are addicted to e-mail), it's worth thinking about e-mail before traveling, especially for an extended period. Many ISPs (Internet service providers) limit the e-mail they'll store for you. If you exceed this amount your e-mail may "bounce"--that is, be returned to senders. That frustrates people writing to you and causes problems with lists to which you're subscribed.

You can suspend list subscriptions to reduce e-mail volume, but that's a nuisance and won't help if someone sends you huge notes with vacation pictures.

If you have dial access you can't do much other than ask correspondents not to send large notes. Always-on cable or DSL users can leave e-mail software enabled, downloading mail as it arrives. But things can still go wrong--power may fail--leaving e-mail stranded at the ISP.

This article describes using remote computers for e-mail; it doesn't cover traveling with a laptop (which may require reconfiguration for sending e-mail) or using your cell phone or wireless PDA (which should be straightforward).

Facilities for reading e-mail will require your normal e-mail password; if your PC logs in automatically, you may not remember it! It's a nasty surprise--realizing when you're far away--that you've forgotten your password.

The easiest way to read e-mail when away from home is through your ISP's facility. If you normally read e-mail via a Web interface, your life is simple indeed: find an online computer, enter the ISP's e-mail Web address (URL), and you'll have your familiar interface. This also works for Yahoo!, Google's Gmail, and other national e-mail services.

Even if you usually read e-mail using a PC program such as Outlook Express, Eudora, or Thunderbird (which all use an Internet protocol; called "POP3"), your ISP may provide Web access to e-mail, so ask. If it's available, practice using it before leaving so you can learn the process and have ISP tech support handy instead of a long-distance call away. Again, take your ISP information with you so you can log on, get help, etc.

Some ISPs provide an e-mail interface called Telnet. This text-only (not graphical) interface was developed in the Internet's early days. It's fast, efficient, and accessible from most PCs, but isn't intuitive and best suits technically oriented folks. If you'll use this on the road, practice beforehand is essential.

A very simple tool for accessing many ISP's e-mail is Mail2Web [www.mail2web.com]. Enter your e-mail address and password; the Web site fetches and displays your e-mail. Notes you send will ap-

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Care and Feeding of CD's

By Lynn L. Kauer, Editor Saginaw Valley Computer Association lkauer@chartermi.net

I read an interesting article in the September 2005 issue of Popular Photography written by David D. Busch titled, "The Truth About Disc Rot." It paralleled some other magazine and news articles I have read on the same subject. The following is what we should know and understand about CD (and DVD) discs as storage devices. For the purposes of this article, CD's and DVD's are considered the same as far as backup media is concerned. The only difference is that DVD's can hold more data.

We save things that are important to us. Those of us who take digital photos know that simply storing them on the hard drive of our computer is not a wise or safe thing to do as the disc may crash and we will lose everything. Thus, we copy the photos to a CD or DVD disc so that they will be always available for a long period of twenty or more years. However, will they really be there when we look for them?

The media of choice for backup and storage purposes less than ten years ago was tape backup. Some commercial enterprises continue to use digital tape for backup purposes. Tape is rarely used, if at all, for home use anymore. Actually, the backup media of choice for commercial use is moving toward external hard drives. Where does the CD fall into all of this?

There are hosts of backup utilities that utilize the CD for backup purposes. Most CD manufacturers advertise that CD media is good for 20 to 100 years depending on the depth of marketing they are trying to offer. The National Institute of Standards Technology (NIST) tests products for longevity. The catch is that longevity is available if the user adheres to very strict rules and standards. Let us look at some interesting facts.

Handling

When a CD is burned, a laser shoots through the

bottom of the disc into the dye layer located under the top protective plastic covering on at the top of the CD. This is the layer where the laser burns pits into the dye layer to allow the computer to interpret what is being written by the computer. When the bottom side of the disc becomes scratched or soiled, the laser is diffused and the data is not clearly written.

Secondly, if the top layer becomes damaged, moisture can penetrate the surface and cause the layer to slowly disintegrate and is the beginning of what is called "Disc Rot."

How often have you watched someone open a CD case and directly pull on the edges of a CD until it is released from the case? Notice how the CD is bent while it is being removed? This bending is causing tiny cracks to develop in the reflective (protective) layer of the CD. To properly remove a CD from the case, press down on the inside of the retaining plastic that holds the CD in place. This causes the retaining ring to become slightly smaller so that the CD slides off easily without bending forces.

When handling, always pick up or carry the CD by the outer edge. Avoid placing your fingers on the read (bottom) side of the disc as this will cause acid penetration of both protective layers to begin.

Reliability

CD-R is a disc that can be written to once while CD-RW are discs that can be written to many times reportedly 1000 times. CD's that the least reliable for archival purposes are the CD-RW's. These discs include a layer that is altered by the CD burner each time it is rewritten. Experience has shown that when these discs are used with another computer, it is a common for the

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Care and Feeding of CD's cont.

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second computer to be unable to read it.

I burn a new music CD monthly for each show that I do. (I entertain at nursing and retirement homes.) I burned and placed the CD-RW into my karaoke player, it would not recognize it. In addition, my second computer would not recognize it either. Only the computer that originally burned the CD was able to read it! Imagine if I had saved all of my music and photo images on a CD-RW. When the computer would eventually be replaced, the disc would likely be unreadable. It is better to save data on CD-R discs, as they are readable with any computer with a CD player.

CD-R's aren't permanent either. The organic dyes layer that the burner works with are similar to dyes in film. When exposed to sunlight, heat, cold and humidity and UV exposure the dye layer changes over time. How often have you watched someone place a CD on the dashboard of a car or keep it in a glove box? Proper storage of CD's is critical to their useful longevity.

Dyes

There are many types of dyes used for the production of a CD. To quote the above mentioned author, "Under the NIST's accelerated "stress test," which includes exposure to very bright light, high temperature and humidity, recorded CD discs using phthalocyanine dye combined with a gold/silver allow reflective layer proved to be considerably more stable than all other types of CD-R media. Discs using azo dye as the data layer had less stability under light, temperature and humidity testing. Media using cyanine dye performed well when exposed to light, but had longevity problems under temperature and humidity stress.

DVD's, which generally use a modified form of a stabilized cyanine dye for the recording layer, are less predictable in terms of longevity. NIST data

suggest that, despite lower data capacity, you might be better off in the long run using premium CD-R's instead of DVD+/-R discs."

The author went on to say that it's not always possible to tell what kind of dye was used for the manufacture of the disc because the dyes can be tinted. Cyanine based CD's (most common) have a light green or blue tint on the data side. Phthalocyanine dyes are often light green while the azo dye tends to have a blue color.

While it's possible to tell the dye type by reading the specs from the manufacturer, a better indicator might be the reflective layer. If a gold reflective layer was used then the likelihood of using a good quality dye is increased. Be aware, some cheap discs appearing to have a gold layer may be simply paint. Buyer beware!

Recommended brand discs are Fujifilm, Imation, Kodak, Maxell, TDK, Verbatim and Mitsui/MAM-A.

Protection and Care of CD's

Manufacturers recommend storing CD's vertically in a cool, dry area instead of horizontally. The reason is to prevent warping and damage from humidity.

Also, never use solvent based pens to write on them similar to permanent felt tipped pens. The solvent can penetrate the protective layer and damage the reflective layer below. The only safe place to write on the top of a CD is in the clear center portion of the hub when using a felt tipped pen.

It is better to apply a label to the top of the disc for identification purposes. Never write on the label with a ballpoint pen when it is applied to the disc. The tip of the pen can cause stress cracks in the protective layer.

When using CD-RW discs, I use removable la-

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Care and Feeding of CD's cont.

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bels — www.digitalinnovations.com. They can be written on many times and then removed and replaced as necessary.

For discs that I intend to keep for archival purposes I print the contents on the label with an ink jet printer — www.fellowes.com.

When cleaning to remove fingerprints or smudges on the read side on the read side of the disc, always use a CD or lens cloth wiping radially out from the center. Never clean using small circular motions on small portions of the disc as it can cause diffusion of the laser beam. Isopropyl alcohol or clear or soapy water can be used to clean a grimy disc. Never use acetone, anti-static agents or wood based products such as toilet paper or facial tissue to clean a disc.

When applying labels, be sure to center the label on the disc to avoid “off balance” condition when the disc is being used. When the disc is rotated at high speeds, the “off balance” condition can unbalance the disc and cause problems with high speed readers. For this reason I purchased a la-

bel applicator that perfectly centers the label each time versus putting the label on the disc “by eye.”

The Future

Like the 1.4 MB floppy drive, tape drives, Zip discs and LS 120 disks that are no longer being used, the CD as we know it will likely bite the dust in about ten years. I predict the media of choice for backup and archival purposes will be that of external drive media similar to USB jump drives and flash card burners or other external drive sources. Personally, I use a 160 GB external hard drive to backup my computer data including music and photo files. Because of transportability, I also backup my music and photos on CD's and store them at an offsite location in a safety deposit box.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Back To The Future

Document Your Family History For Future Generations, Kylee Dickey

Reviews *January 2006 Vol.17 Issue 1 Page(s) 17 in print issue*

Most of us have at least one relative we wish we had known better. Although many details of our relatives' lives may be lost, we can do our part to ensure that future generations know who we are and where we came from. I recently used two programs that can help you record your history. The first is RootsMagic 3, which helps you research, document, and present your family history. The second is Personal Historian, which helps you write your own personal history.

Time Traveling

RootsMagic has been one of my favorite genealogy

programs because of its excellent features that help you maintain organized genealogical records. Version 3 provides even more features to help you record a family story that spans many generations.

You can import GEDCOM (GEnealogical Data COMMunications) files, the standard file format for genealogy software, into RootsMagic. The new version also supports files from PAF (Personal Ancestral File) 2.x and later and Family Origins 4 and later. It also supports backup files from Family Origins 5 or later.

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Back To The Future cont.

Document Your Family History For Future Generations, Kylee Dickey

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RootsMagic 3's most intriguing addition is shareable-CD creation. These CDs include a view-only copy of RootsMagic, as well as your family file so that you can easily share your genealogical research with others.

RootsMagic 3 also has a new feature which can omit events and notes of your choosing from printed reports and exported files. You can use this feature to record your own thoughts, even if they have no place in a published family history. I also used this option to record facts about family skeletons while respecting relatives' wishes that I not make these stories public.

Get Personal

RootsMagic provides a way for you to record your ancestral history. However, you may also wish to document your own personal story either for your own benefit or the good of future generations. Personal Historian can help you write your life story, even if you have no writing experience and don't have large blocks of free time to pursue such an endeavor.

Personal Historian is a very convenient writing aid because it prompts you to write about individual events so that you can use a few spare minutes to write just one anecdote at a time. The program organizes all of the events you write about in a timeline format. Some people know they have important stories to tell. However, some of us have writer's block when it comes to our own lives. It is difficult to think of stories to write about our own experiences. Personal Historian includes LifeCapsules to help jog your memory.

LifeCapsules is a library of historical events, cultural fads, and other events to help you remember events in your own life. By placing your experiences in a historical context, you can add considerable depth to your personal history.

Although I've focused on using Personal Historian to write your own history, there is no reason you couldn't use this software to guide your biography of a favorite relative. In fact, you can import a genealogy file into Personal Historian. The events in your genealogy file will automatically appear in Personal Historian's Timeline.

Preserve History

There are other genealogy programs you can use to assemble your family history. I focused on RootsMagic because it's one of the most advanced programs that is still easy to use. Also, RootsMagic recently acquired Personal Historian from Blue Scroll Software. At press time you could save \$10 if you ordered both programs together. I'm not an especially organized person, and I find it difficult to set aside time for large projects, such as recording my family and personal history. Both RootsMagic and Personal Historian helped me start recording this information for myself and for future generations. *Send your comments tokylee@smartcomputing.com*

HYPERLINK "<mailto:kylee@smartcomputing.com>"

"Reprinted with permission from Smart Computing. Visit <http://www.smartcomputing.com/groups> to see what Smart Computing can do for you and your user group."

RootsMagic 3.0

\$29.95

RootsMagic

(800) 766-8762

(801) 489-3102

www.rootsmagic.com

Personal Historian

\$29.95

RootsMagic

(800) 766-8762

(801) 479-4943

www.personalhistorian.com

What Your Computer Really Does When It's Idle

by Vinny La Bash, vlabash@home.com

Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

You're sitting at your machine, thinking about what to do next, when your disk drive starts whirring and the light flashes, indicating that something is going on. What is your machine doing? Your hands are nowhere near the keyboard or the mouse, and you can be relatively certain that neither telepathy nor telekinesis is at work.

One possibility is that your system is loading automatic updates from Microsoft.com because you set your system to download updates automatically. The same could be true for anti-virus programs, firewalls or any application software that offers this type of automated service.

The Task Scheduler may be running a background utility. Your automatic backup may be kicking in, or an online subscription service is delivering requested information as part of a service it provides. Any number of similar operations could be going on. There is a dark side to this. You may be infected by a spyware program reporting back to its master over the internet. Most spyware blabs about your web surfing habits to a commercial entity so that it can tailor ads to your individual tastes. Many people consider this annoying or intrusive. Nevertheless, the designers of these programs have no desire to hurt you. They want only to sell you something.

However, something far less benign could be going on. A program could be attempting to steal your banking information, PIN numbers, credit card records, social security information, and other financial data with the intention of draining your bank account.

A Trojan horse program may be downloading spam to retransmit from your machine, making it look to recipients that you are the spammer. Other programs make your machine a "zombie" or a node in an array of machines designed to

launch a Denial of Service (DOS) attack on a web site.

Worst of all, there have been instances reported of stealth programs downloading child pornography and retransmitting it to another machine. These programs make it look like you are the culprit, making you subject to arrest and incarceration. This kind of frighteningly malicious activity has been rare, but the danger is real.

If you are concerned about this, and you should be, Windows XP offers a solution:

Click Start.

Click Run.

In the text portion of the Run dialog box, type `cmd` and click OK.

This brings you to the Command Interpreter, which starts out by displaying the Version of XP that's running on your machine and some copyright information. Now enter the command `netstat -o`, which displays network statistics about your current active connections.

There are five columns of information displayed. The Proto column tells you what communication protocol is being used for a particular process. In most instances this will be TCP (Telecommunications Protocol). This is irrelevant for our purposes. Local Address is your machine.

Foreign Address is the IP address and port number of the machine the process is communicating with.

State informs you if the communication session is sending or receiving, waiting, acknowledging or finished.

PID (Process Identifier) is the piece we need, because it identifies the process (program) that is

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What Your Computer Really Does When It's Idle Cont.

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controlling the communications session from your computer.

4. Perform the Ctrl+Alt+Del keystroke sequence to bring up the Windows Security window.

5. Click Task Manager.

6. Click the Processes tab.

7. Click the PID column. This sorts the information, making it easier to find the program you're looking for.

Note: If the PID column is not displayed, you can activate it from the View menu.

Examine the PID list until you find the PID number(s) you found with the netstat command. If it's msnmgr.exe or iexplorer.exe, there is nothing to worry about. These are normal Windows XP processes and no cause for concern. There are many other legitimate Windows XP processes that are likely to be listed in the Task Manager.

How do you tell the good from the bad? Unfortunately, Windows itself isn't much help in showing

what any given process is doing and you can't shoot them all and "let God sort them out". A search of Microsoft's web site won't yield useful information.

A great place to find valuable information about common Windows processes is:

<http://www.liutilities.com/products/wintaskspro/processlibrary/>

This site contains information about all common Windows processes, and the site administrators do an excellent job of keeping posted information current.

Knowing what's going on in your system is good, but the best protection against intruders is to keep your anti-virus, firewall, and other specialized protection programs up-to-date. :

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Etiquette in the room

Wear your name badge

Sign the log book

Pay for print outs

Clean up when done

Push in chairs

Lock door if no monitor

Online "My Family Health Portrait"

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; radio & TV show host

WEBSITES:

<http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory>

<https://familyhistory.hhs.gov>

<http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/download.htm>

|

Recently, a relative in another state was hospitalized via an emergency room admission. His new wife of just a year did not have much information on the family health history, so urgently needed by the physicians in order to diagnose and treat my relative. Urgent phone calls followed, gathering the requisite family medical history to enable the appropriate diagnosis and treatment. Philosophically, what if a comprehensive family medical history could have been immediately available? This circumstance is not unique, but a reasonable solution has been available for free for over a year at www.hhs.gov/familyhistory, courtesy of the U. S. Surgeon General's Office

This site explains the necessity of such data with the statement, "Health care professionals have known for a long time that common diseases - heart disease, cancer, and diabetes - and even rare diseases - like hemophilia, cystic fibrosis, and sickle cell anemia - can run in families. If one generation of a family has high blood pressure, it is not unusual for the next generation to have similarly high blood pressure. Tracing the illnesses suffered by your parents, grandparents, and other blood relatives can help your doctor predict the disorders to which you may be at risk and take action to keep you and your family healthy." In order to accomplish this task, the Surgeon general offers two simple options; one an online web maintained version hosted on a secure server (that is what the "https" means in the internet address) at

<https://familyhistory.hhs.gov>, the other a 1.6mb

downloadable "Zip" file which may be stored on a home computer, and utilized in the privacy of the home. The files created in either version can easily be exchanged among family members via email or disc.

In the online version, a family history can be newly created, or an existing version can be uploaded from the home computer to the secure Surgeon General website where the data can be managed, and then saved back on the home computer; no personal information is saved or captured by the government computer, protecting the privacy of the user. It should be noted that much effort has gone into the creation of this web based service, in that it explicitly works equally well with almost all known browsers, including Internet Explorer, Firefox, Mac Safari, Netscape, and many other browsers.

The first step in using the online version is to "Create a Family History", or to "Load a Saved Family History" if a file had been previously created. The preliminary step is to create a personal profile, where basic information such as name, gender, height, and weight are entered. The personal profile continues with a simple checklist of major common diseases (such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes), and age of onset, followed by a fill in the blank chart of other diseases. After the personal health history is created, there is then an opportunity to create a family profile. The family profile states "Only add family members that are biological (blood) relatives (not adopted or step-relatives)." Similar fill in charts are presented to complete the information for the other family members. Data can be modified, added, or deleted at any time. Once the user has completed entering the basic family information, a button "Go to My Family" takes the user to the basic "Family Health Portrait" where a family

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Online "My Family Health Portrait" Cont.

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health tree can be displayed or printed; this family tree contains symbols and abbreviations immediately recognizable by a health care practitioner as a basic family health history. Other family members, such as aunts, uncles, and other blood relatives can be added to the list as well. Other family members listed on the family tree can have their own personalized family tree created at this point, and the entire file can be downloaded to the user's computer, leaving no personal data on the HHS computer.

If for privacy or other reasons, the user does not wish to enter personal family health data to the secured website, the downloadable version is a self-contained version of what is available on the website. Once uncompressed with any zip utility (built in to Windows XP), the file is easily and quickly installed. The software does require the Microsoft ".Net" utility, version 1.1 or later, available for free at windowsupdate.microsoft.com. Once installed, the entire process is completed in the privacy of the home, with no personal data

leaving the computer, unless the user desires to send the data files to other family members to complete or use as a basis for their own family health history.

With this information readily available both within a family unit, and shared with other blood relatives as appropriate, family health histories can be easily maintained, and distributed or printed as needed.

Many times we cannot recall family health problems that family members may have had which may give us a predisposition, or otherwise genetically affect us. With this free service and software from the Surgeon General, we may all be better able to provide our health care professionals with the information that may prove so vital to our health care and treatment.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

March 23 will be the Annual Recognition Party

**J
O
K
E** A man and his wife were having an argument about who should brew the coffee each morning. The wife said, "You should do it, because you get up first, and then we don't have to wait as long to get our coffee." The husband said, " You are in charge of cooking around here and you should do it, because that is your job, and I can just wait for my coffee." The wife replied, "No, you should do it, and besides, it is in the Bible that the man should make the coffee." The husband replied, "I can't believe that; show me!" So she fetched the Bible, and opened the New Testament and showed him at the top of several pages, that it indeed says..... "HEBREWS

Kathy's Page

I think it cannot be stressed enough about backing up data on computers. I guess the thought is it will never happen to me. Like everything else, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. This means we all should learn to do back ups regularly to avoid heart ache!! See the following web site to further understand this.

<http://www.microsoft.com/athome/moredone/backupfiles.msp>

Also if you want to know WHY you need to do back ups, see this site:

<http://www.pcnineoneone.com/howto/backup1.html>

Be sure to click on page two at the bottom of this web page.

.....
About internet fraud from the federal government, securing your personal information on your computer:

<http://onguardonline.gov/index.html>

Kathy

APPLE SIG

Computer Room, Learning Center

Tues. 9:00

Feb. 7th

Come in and see who else is using the worlds best computers. If you have ever want to ask about them, now is the time. Join the group and get all your questions answered.

ABOUT ONE OF NEXT MONTH'S SPEAKER

February 16 - User Group Relations with Gene Barlow

We are excited to have Gene Barlow present to our user group next month. He is one of the most interesting and informative presenters around.

Gene Barlow has over 45 years of computer experience. He worked in various technical and management positions for IBM. The last 14 years, he managed IBM's user group support organization and because of this he is often called the Father of User Groups. After leaving IBM, he formed his own consulting firm to represent various computer vendors to the user group community. He has done this for the past 10 years and is very well known in the user group community for his excellent presentations, understandable technical papers, and willingness to help users with their problems. You will come away from his presentations with a better understanding of your computer.

Gene and his wife, Linda, present to about 100 user groups each year around the country. He has been working with user groups for many years and they have thousands of friends in the user group community. Don't miss this event.

Is your printer spying on you?

Color laser printers sure are nifty, but they might be a little more nifty than you bargained for because certain printers made by manufactures such as Cannon, Epson, HP, Lexmark, Xerox, and others place tracking dots on every document you print. Why are they there? Ask the U.S. Secret Service.

Manufacturers place the dots on printed documents as part of a deal with the Secret Service, which the EFF (Electronic Frontier Foundation) says is ostensibly to catch counterfeiters. Although this practice hasn't always been a secret, the information that's placed on the documents was unknown until the EFF recently conducted research to break the code that's used in at least one of the printers.

"We've found that the dots from at least one line of printers encode the date and time your document was printed, as well as the serial number of the printer," says EFF Staff Technologist Seth David Schoen.

According to the EFF, you won't even notice the dots unless you look at a printed page with a blue light and a magnifying glass or microscope. The yellow dots are less than 1 millimeter in diameter and usually repeat over each page of a document.

"It shows how government and private industry make backroom deals to weaken our privacy by compromising everyday equipment like printers," says EFF Senior Staff Attorney Lee Tien.

This article came from "Smart Computing , Jan. 2006, Vol. 17, Issue 1, Tech News, Digital Miscellanea, Page 11

"Reprinted with permission from Smart Computing. Visit <http://www.smartcomputing.com/groups> to see what Smart Computing can do for you and your user group."

Ravages Of E-Waste This Year, Resolve To Fight Unnecessary Pollution

BY Nathan Chandler: Send insights and insults to Nathan at Nathan@smartcomputing.com

The incredible pace of digital innovation means that products have even shorter lifecycles. Thus, we consume products and their related accessories and components at a startling rate that often strains our budgets, harms our health, and endangers the environment, too.

Sad Statistics

It's a vicious cycle-manufacturers use more and more resources to create new products, and slightly slower or less advanced products often meet an early end in landfills. In the same vein, when a complex device malfunctions, it's often not cost-effective to hire someone to make even minor repairs, so instead, we just toss it and start over again. That's one reason electronics-related waste constitutes as much as 5% of garbage across the country.

These products don't disappear after they're thrown into a landfill. They slowly begin to disintegrate, exposing their contents to the landfill and sometimes, to the area's soil, air, and groundwater, too. Consider that manufacturers may need up to 3 quarts of oil to make a single inkjet cartridge and that the cartridge itself needs millennia to decompose. And the contents of electronics aren't benign, either. A single PC, for example, might be made up of 1,000 different materials.

Computer monitors and televisions contain several pounds of lead apiece, as well as smaller amounts of other heavy metals and chemicals that some states categorize as hazardous materials, meaning that landfills can't accept them. The Computer Tack Back Campaign (www.computertakeback.com), a program dedicated to responsible electronics production and disposal, estimates that this year, more than 160,000 PC's and televisions will become obsolete every day, and many of them are destined for

landfills across the country. And it's not just monitors that contain hazardous materials. Cell phones, printers, keyboards and other devices contain mercury, flame retardants, arsenic, cadmium, barium, silver, selenium, chromium, and lead.

As if that's not bad enough, The *Christian Science Monitor* and Greenpeace report that many old computers consumers drop off for recycling are actually exported to poorer countries, where workers, including children, are paid almost nothing to pull apart these products to salvage various components. Chemical sampling of these work areas reveals carcinogen levels thousands of times higher than in normal indoor spaces. Why are electronics exported for recycling? Because they're difficult (read: expensive) to disassemble, and they contain so many of those aforementioned hazardous materials.

E-wasted Opportunities

There is some good news about e-waste. Most old products are still simply gathering dust in storage spaces and warehouses, meaning that it's not too late to recycle those products. Check out Earth 911 (www.earth911.org) for a database that will point you to organizations that reuse or recycle products. Be sure to research your recycle options before you drop off your goods to make sure the recycler isn't exporting your machine to another country and ultimately contributing to environmental woes. Checkout the E-Stewards list (www.ban.org/pledge/locations.html), which posts names of reputable recycling organizations.

You can also donate many older products. Send old PC's to the Salvation Army (www.salvationarmyusa.org), Computers for kids

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Ravages Of E-Waste Cont.

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(www.c4k.org) , or Computer For Schools (www.pcforschools.org). If you're getting rid of a PC that's more than five years old, it's best to skip donation and have it recycled. You can also donate used inkjet and laser printer cartridges to school fundraisers and send old cell phones to social programs.

And remember, buying recycled products and recycling them again when you're done isn't just good for the environment— in many cases it

will save you money, too. For more information about the many issues regarding electronics waste and pollution, check out the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition site (www.svtc.org).

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Absence Makes the E-Mail Grow Fonder Cont.

(Continued from page 3)

pear to be from your normal e-mail address. Yahoo! provides a similar facility for reading POP3 e-mail.

AOL members can visit AOL's Web site [www.aol.com], click the Mail link, and access e-mail.

If you use an always-on Windows XP PC, you can--with technical setup beforehand and assuming no ISP-imposed blockage--use its built-in Remote Desktop feature to operate your home PC remotely as if you were sitting in front of it.

Two final issues: First, keep security in mind when using strange computers. Don't allow passwords to be saved; when finished, clear the browser cache and close applications you've used. Second, be careful setting an "away" message for everyone who e-mails you. Some less-than-clever notification systems annoy people and interfere with mailing lists.

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With Wireless, Who Can You Trust? No One

By [Linda LeBlanc](#) December 6, 2004

Recently, I attended a conference on computer security in another city. While there, I discovered a coffee shop that could loosely be termed an Internet cafe. They had big comfy overstuffed chairs and couches, free wireless Internet access and the kind of table you used to do your second-grade homework on in your parents' kitchen.

I spent quite a bit of time at this cafe, working on notes from the conference and taking care of responsibilities at the office. I also spent a great deal of time scrutinizing the clientele there and thinking about the likelihood of someone examining packets as they crossed the wireless network.

Examining packets -- more commonly called sniffing traffic -- is an exercise in simplicity. Download the appropriate software off the Internet, turn it on, configure it to see everything that goes by, and then save it in a file or look at it in real time. It would be possible for anyone within signal strength range to see everything I was doing over the Internet.

Since signal strength there at the cafe might have been strong enough to carry as far as a city block, the people in the restaurant aren't the only threats. Anyone within that range might be listening in.

If you were to meet me on the street, you'd see a well-dressed woman -- clean-cut, respectable, mid-thirties to forties. It would probably never occur to you that I am capable of sniffing your traffic. After all, I use a Mac, and aren't those for people who can't handle the complexities of the Windows operating system? No one would think twice about the solitary woman editing photos.

But it's a mistake to dismiss me, or anyone who doesn't match that 'hacker' profile, as a non-threat. It is trivial for me to start up my virtual PC, and use whatever tool I like to capture all the

packets floating around above our heads.

Know what's the best part?

I can start it up, and let it run while I edit photos, and then go back to my hotel room and reconstruct packet data to look for interesting tidbits like user/password pairs, credit card numbers, or other financial data. Web, AIM, email -- as long as it's not encrypted, I'm going to be able to read it. And if it's encrypted with something lame like ROT13, I'll be able to read it anyway.

OK, you say, but you don't use any public wireless networks. You check your email every once in a while over at your friend's house, but that's it. And besides, you only check your junk email account on Hotmail. You don't do anything that could remotely endanger your personal data.

Fine. Let's look at that for a second.

This friend of yours... is she paying for her Internet access? Is she running wireless? Or maybe, she doesn't really know that much about computers and networks. Is she shrewd enough to keep her computer patches up-to-date, and does she have her firewall turned on? Does she get all sorts of junk mail that she clicks on, along with little programs that she installs, infesting her computer with spyware and adware and any number of little malicious tidbits? If she's running wireless, does she have her data encrypted? Is her wireless password protected, or is she naively beaming access to the entire apartment building?

Now let's think about something else.

Let's think about this junk email account of yours on Hotmail. Let me guess: You only use this for eBay, uBid, and onsale.com. This is the account you use for stuff you don't want coming to your work email address. Maybe you even use it for

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With Wireless, Who Can You Trust? No One Cont.

(Continued from page 16)

your PayPal account. And you're thinking that even if your spamjunkbin@hotmail.com address is compromised, no harm will come to you.

But don't forget that, most likely, all of your transactions are on that server, allowing any intruder to reconstruct your account numbers, or possibly even get your passwords, or at the very least your password hint question. It's always a possibility.

Now, Microsoft suggests you use a firewall. This doesn't protect your data after it leaves the machine. The company also suggests "hiding your files". I won't even dignify that with a comment. Finally, Microsoft suggests you not send credit card numbers or passwords over a public network. Certainly, the most effective protection against an untrusted public network is to *not use it*.

The Virtual Private Network (VPN) is probably the best answer easily available. A VPN works by building an encrypted tunnel back to your home network (either your office or your ISP), and then forwards all your traffic from there, as if it were originating on your trusted network. The idea is that the path from the VPN to mail server or web server is on a trusted path and not likely to be sniffed.

If you don't know whether you have access to a VPN, you should go speak to your most trusted

IT guru. He will either get you hooked up with a VPN or let you know that it's unavailable. If it's unavailable, contact your ISP and ask them about availability.

The moral of the story is that you might never guess who is capable of digital snooping, of sniffing your wireless traffic.

Who can you trust to not sniff your traffic? Can you trust that guy hunched over his computer in the corner? How about the chick playing with her PDA? (Yes, they make sniffer packages for PDAs.) What about the person in the back room who fires up his laptop, sets it to full promiscuous mode to save-to-file everything that goes by, before he puts on his cheerful uniform and comes out to make your latte?

Face it, you can't trust any of them.

Sometimes when I meet people for the first time and I try to explain to them what I do, just saying I'm a network security analyst isn't sufficient. I try to explain that I look at the world in a way that allows me to see the hazards that might be used against my customers. Many think I'm paranoid, including my parents, who don't really understand exactly what I do. But I'm not paranoid. I'm simply very pragmatic, and I'm very aware of the wolf in sheep's clothing.

I believe if I can think it up, someone else has already thought it up and implemented



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A lot of people can't understand how we came to have an oil shortage here in our country. Well, there's a very simple answer. Nobody bothered to check the oil. We just didn't know we were getting low. The reason for that is purely geographical. Our OIL is located in Alaska -California- Coastal Florida - Coastal Louisiana -Kansas - Oklahoma - Pennsylvania - and - Texas.
Our DIPSTICKS are located in Washington DC

Join us Thursdays at 9:30am in the Ballroom

February 2 - Business meeting

February 9 - Kathy Mead

How to look for the best/cheapest air fares, automobiles

On the internet

February 16 - User Group Relations with Gene Barlow

February 23 - *Tennatively!* - Michael Scarbrough

discussing on-line banking security

and security when buying/selling on the internet

March 23 will be the Annual Recognition Party

Make plans to attend!

Details will be announced later.

Tidbits: Business Meeting (9:30am-11:00in the Ballroom

Class and Special Interest Group Schedule is posted on the website and is updated frequently! Check the CALENDAR page.

Articles for the next issue of Tales from the Mouse are due on March 1, for publication March 10, 2006. Tales from the Mouse is produced monthly from November thru March/April and a summer issue in July.

Sunflower Resort Computer Club is a member of the Arizona Alliance of Computer Clubs (www.AZacc.org), the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (www.APCUG.org) and registered with Microsoft Mind-share.

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