



January 2006

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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

A note from the Pres.

By now we should all be a little heavier and lighter in the pocketbook.

The New Year is here and looking forward to another great Computer Club Season.

The Club membership is pushing 300 and growing, with a lot of new members that are new to Computers. Fortunately the Basic Training and Hands on Training sessions are well underway. Of course we need help with this vital training, so please give us a hand. Remember you don't have to be an expert to help, just the desire to help.

We now have expanded facilities and equipment that allow for many more SIGs, Classes, and Seminars. Now we need Presenters, Coordinators and Teachers so please contact Nancy Baker or a Board member and volunteer your services.

When you share your Computer Knowledge, you'd be surprise how much you learn!!!

Keep that Mouse Tracking!!

Bob

The New, the Best, and the Worst November 2005

Collected by Pim Borman, SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc. swipcug@sigeecom.net

Vista...

“A distant view or prospect, especially one seen through an opening, as between rows of buildings or trees.” (*Dictionary.com*)

It is also the name of the long-awaited next version of Microsoft Windows, not available until at least the second half of 2006 but already widely previewed and discussed in the PC magazines. What do we glimpse in the distance? Should we fight or switch?

The most significant improvement in Vista might well be security, stated to be a primary goal. Only time will tell – we’ll still be facing continuing patches, updates and periodic Service Packs, I expect.

New Internet Explorer 7 will be a major make-over, mostly to catch up with features long since available in Opera and Firefox. It will also be available to current Windows XP users. Windows Media Player gets a boost, but will also be available in Windows XP.

Vista will appear in 32 and 64-bit versions, to accommodate the new 64-bit CPUs now available from AMD and Intel. Visually, the windows will sport new folder icons that show thumbnails of their contents, although I wonder how they handle folders with dozens of subfolders and files. If your graphics card can handle it, the icons will also be semi-transparent, wow!

Originally, Vista was supposed to support a new file system, WINFS. I understand that this file system does away with branching directory trees to store files. Instead, files all get dumped in large containers, maybe such as the current “My Documents” areas. Instead of assigning unique file names you label the files with any number of suitable tags, similar to the labels currently used in Picasa2 (see the minutes in this issue to read about Larry Goss’s presentation in October). The

contents of the files are also indexed on the go to facilitate a search for keywords such as already provided by Google Desktop Search and Yahoo Desktop Search. Vista is expected to include a similar search function even before WINFS eventually is implemented. But WINFS will not initially be part of Vista.

As *PC Magazine* puts it “... it increasingly appears that Vista's differentiating features, aside from the sleek new shell interface, will be the ones that are less visible to typical users: hardened security, better diagnostics, and improved manageability in enterprise environments.”

Vista will require an up-to-date computer system, with plenty of processor speed, memory, and graphics capability. Manufacturers of scanners and printers will surely provide the necessary drivers for newer equipment, but older peripherals may no longer work. Will it be worth the additional cost and aggravation to upgrade?

Dedicated gamers will love it – they need all the speed they can get, at any cost. Also, if you work with demanding graphics programs, large databases or similar CPU-intensive programs you’ll probably want Vista for better support of multi-core, 64-bit CPUs. Media enthusiasts will love the new features, but why use them on a general-purpose computer?

For the rest of us, we’re probably better off waiting until we need to buy a new computer that is almost certain to include Vista, whether we like it or not. At least we’ll get it at a discount. I estimate that MS Windows, Office and Media Player contain at least 50% bells and whistles that are of no interest to 75% of its users.

Last year Microsoft announced a crippled version of Windows, called Windows XP Starter Edition, being made available at low cost in certain devel-

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The New, the Best, and the Worst cont.

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oping countries. According to CNet News.com (<http://snipurl.com/winstart>) the local versions of the program were made available in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, India and Russia. Cost in Thailand was reported to be \$36, not including MS Works. Its intended use is in local schools for the obvious reason: catch 'm young. Read on...

...Or Else?

“The MIT Media Lab has launched a new research initiative to develop a \$100 laptop—a technology that could revolutionize how we educate the world's children. To achieve this goal, a new, non-profit association, One Laptop per Child (OLPC), has been created.”

“The machines, which will run a version of the Linux operating system, will also include other applications, some developed by MIT researchers, as well as country-specific software.

‘Software has gotten too fat and unreliable, so we started with Linux.’” (<http://snipurl.com/mitlap>)

These two quotes from recent MIT press releases point at new directions in the Computer Revolution. First of all, there is the realization that computers are here to stay as a basic necessity in a civilized society. To the three **R**s of basic education we need to add a fourth **R** Requirement, computer lite**R**acy. The cost of general purpose computers has to come down further to make them available to every school child, even in this country, let alone in the developing nations. That clearly includes the need to eliminate the high cost of the MS Windows operating system and commercial productivity programs written for MS Windows. Essentially free Linux is the obvious alternative.

Here is another quote, from desktop.linux.com (<http://snipurl.com/INaccess>): “A number of Indiana high school students returning for the fall semester will find brand-new Linux desktops in their

classrooms. Under the Indiana Access Program, which uses desktop Linux systems and standard hardware configurations to keep costs low, Wintergreen Systems Inc. and Linspire Inc. are providing computers for classrooms. The arrangement could result in as many as 300,000 Linux machines being deployed during coming years, the companies said in a statement.” And Indiana is arguably not a third-world nation.

When a new generation of students gets weaned on Linux, they are likely to continue using that operating system in the future, creating the critical mass that it takes to become generally accepted as an alternate desktop tool. Some of the students will inevitably be interested in hacking the system, resulting in new and improved programs, as well as some new Linux viruses, I fear. Their efforts will be facilitated by the availability of all the underlying code, in contrast with MS Windows programs that jealously hide the source code.

Besides the effort to introduce Linux in school computers, several large cities as well as developing nations, notably China, have made it a priority to deploy Linux-based desktop computers. In the near future most of the growth of Linux will probably take place in developing areas of the world. Acceptance in the USA and other Western countries will be slowed by the difficulty or reluctance to transfer databases from MS Windows-based programs to comparable Linux programs. It may take another generation, but after maturing overseas Linux is likely to return in force to the Western world.

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.

Don't be a loser at the rebate games

by Jim Sanders, Editor, North Orange County Computer Club editor@noccc.org

Most of us have bought something that sounded like a great value — “After Rebate or Rebates.” Everywhere from a great price to FREE! Most are legitimate. Most require a fair amount of work to claim. Most are never claimed. Most say you will have to wait 6 to 10 weeks for a check (for some that turns into 6 to 10 months). Many have tricky fine print. A few are outright scams!

Below are a list of things that you should do, as opposed to just think about, if your going to buy an item with a rebate and have any real intention of claiming the rebate and actually getting it. Following that are three emails that dealt with a denied rebate claim for our new President Elise Edgell.

If you are going to buy an item with a rebate, while you are at the checkout stand, **NOT AFTER YOU GET HOME**, do the following:

- Write down the sales clerk's name then ask him to show you that you have all the items needed to claim the rebate. Ask him to put an X on the correct UPC barcode.
- Make sure you have a copy of the correct rebate form(s). Some are inside the box. You just paid for the item, it is yours, open the box and read the terms.
- If it is an upgrade rebate, it is better to find out if your old product qualifies BEFORE you go to the store. Check the vendor's website, call the store and ask!

READ THE FINE PRINT! THEN READ IT AGAIN!

- Read the “Proof of Purchase” requirement list.
- Does it require the original “Sales Receipt” or is a copy OK. If the original is required, ask the store for a duplicate original that is acceptable for a product exchange if there is a problem with the product. Some stores provide a “Rebate Receipt.” Make sure that matches the requirement list.
- Check the postmark requirement, I have seen one that gave you only three days to get it post-

marked. Don't wait till the last day to mail it.

- Make sure a website address and/or telephone number is included that you can use to contact the rebate center about your rebate. Most of the upscale rebate centers include an 800 number.
- Make two copies of ALL documentation submitted. If a cheesy rebate center decides to tell you they never received your request, without copies, you're up the proverbial creek. I am working on an article about using your scanner for this purpose.
- I think it is a good idea to include one of the documentation photocopies with the submission to make the point that you have copies. Mark it “CC: Vendor, My Files.” On the larger rebates, buying the \$0.95 proof of delivery service at the post office is cheap insurance. Having a witness to the mailing doesn't hurt. Error on your side of the game. If it says 6 to 8 weeks, check at 6 weeks, don't wait three months. Be reasonable with phone calls but check the website as often as you like. Mark your calendar to remind yourself to check on the rebate. Keep a folder for all of your rebates. Move completed ones to another folder. Once you get your rebate check, read how long it is good for. Some are good for 6 months. Most are void after 60 days. A few are void after 30 days. I got one that was expired when it was delivered. When you think you have been shafted, don't just grimace and bear it, complain. Complain to the retailer. Complain to the vendor. If all else fails, file a complaint with the FTC at www.ftc.gov. You can also file a complaint with the Better Business Bureau at www.bbb.org. Taking the retailer to Small Claims Court is an option.

The email exchange with BFG Technologies, Inc.

Dear Sir, My name is Jim Sanders, and I am the editor of the North Orange County Computer Club's newsletter, the Orange Bytes. PDF copies of the publication are available at

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Don't be a loser at the rebate games Cont.

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<http://www.noccc.org>. For several weeks I have been gathering material for an article on the rebate games. Our members should see it in the next issue of the newsletter. This is a hot issue with our members as a number have been burned by various rebate offers. In a lot of cases it was due to not reading the fine print, not crossing all T's or dotting all I's, a claim that the request was never received or not received in time. In some instances the rebate was a pure scam. A few refused rebates may be caused by human error on the part of the highly trained, intelligent, well paid staff of the rebate center. A common reason given for a rebate denial is that a required piece of documentation was not included.

All too often, that claim cannot be refuted as the original was sent in and the suggestion to photocopy all submitted documentation was not followed because of the hassle involved. In an interesting coincidence of timing, our club President, Elise Edgell, showed me the rebate denial post card that she received on 7/16/2005. The reason given for the refusal: "We did not receive a sales receipt with your request." She purchased a BFG GeForce FX 5500 OC at a special Fry's Electronics' one day sale where a \$50 rebate was offered on your product. In this case, Elise did scan all the documentation sent in with the rebate and kept it as a JPG file. In addition, the original documentation was stapled to a printout of that file and a notation was hand printed on that sheet, in bold marker pen: "CC: Vendor, My Files." That file is attached to this email. As both of us bought the product and requested the rebate in the same way, it will be interesting to see if I get the same post card.

I understand that you contract the rebate function to other companies, but the typical club member that has a problem thinks the problem is with the company that made the product and offered the rebate. It is your reputation that suffers, not the rebate center.

Would you express your opinion on which of the above reasons might be the cause of this rebate being denied?

Sincerely,

Jim Sanders, Editor, NOCCC Orange Bytes

Hi Jim,

Thanks for contacting BFG Technologies, and thanks for giving us the opportunity to clarify this particular rebate situation.

Looking at the picture in your attachment of Elise's submission, it appears there is not a copy of her "Sales Receipt" included along with the other required items.

In addition to the "Rebate Form/Receipt" and the "Proof of Purchase" cut from the box, a copy of the "Sales Receipt" is required. With Fry's it can sometimes be confusing because they label the Rebate Form as a "Rebate Receipt". This could lead a customer into thinking that the form was both the rebate form AND the sales receipt, although they are actually two separate items.

Some additional information that may be of interest; this is one of two rebates that have the highest redemption rates we have ever run. This indicates to us that majority of customers are including all the correct documentation and getting the rebate for this particular program.

In this particular case, the rebate house did refuse the rebate on proper grounds. However, we will contact the rebate house and approve Elise's rebate, and yours as well. We often do that for customers who contact us and believe that that they were denied incorrectly. We look into individual cases and make approvals where the facts support it.

Thanks again for giving us the opportunity to respond. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact us.

Kind regards, John @ BFG

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Don't be a loser at the rebate games Cont.

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Hi John,

Thank you for your quick response and also for fixing the problem.

In an effort to resolve why it became a problem in the first place, I made a trip to the Anaheim Fry's Electronics store. I asked to speak to the person in charge of dealing with rebates. The woman that responded to that request was pleasant enough, but not very helpful. I asked why Fry's was having their checkout clerks tell customers that the "Rebate Receipt" is the same as the full sales receipt for rebate purposes. Her response was:

"Well, sometimes it is and sometimes it's not." The discussion lasted several minutes. It bogged down into questions of semantics, perception, lack of explicit wording, and responsibility. Her rebuttal to your assertion that it is a "Rebate Form/Receipt" was that if you cut that form in two just above the line "Rebate Form:" you have a "Receipt" and a "Rebate Form." That to help the customer by not having multiple, small, separate documents that are more easily lost, or difficult to match up with the appropriate rebate form, they are printed together. That the "Proof of purchase requirements:" Section 3, says "a copy of your receipt," not "Sales Receipt," not "Full Sales Receipt," not "Rebate Receipt," just "Receipt." That obviously the "Rebate Receipt" is a receipt. I commented that the Fry's IT department controlled what is printed and how it is printed. That it would be trivial for them to better separate the two forms with a couple of extra blank lines, a line of asterisks, and a line that says "Cut here." That they could easily have changed Section 3 to explicitly state what kind of "Receipt" was re-

quired. That if printing the "Rebate Receipt" is supposed to be a courtesy to the customer, it would be trivial to have the computer print out a "Duplicate Sales Receipt" when that was required by the vendor. That if Fry's is going to the effort to provide this courtesy service at all, they should go the extra step, and endeavor to do it correctly, rather than in the current, confusing, fashion. I commented that Fry's apparently feels it is their responsibility to remind customers that they should make a copy of all documentation submitted for a rebate by handing out a yellow sheet with that warning, why not expand it to include a caution about the receipt problem.

Her response was in essence, I don't have any control over what the IT department does. I counted to ten, thanked her for her time and left. I hope this feedback helps you with future programs.

Sincerely,

Jim Sanders Editor, NOCCC Orange Bytes

On 7-23-05 we put on our best optimistic face and went to the <http://www.rebatestatus.com> website to see how well the rebate had been approved. We were hoping to see a message like: "The check is in the mail.," and lo and behold we did.

Pony Express or 4th Class, but in the mail.

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The discount promised by the Corel presenter can be found at [this website http://www.corel.com/specialusergroups](http://www.corel.com/specialusergroups)

Where did all those photos go? File Management



By Jack Wilfore, Hilton Head Island Computer Club, South Carolina www.hhicc.org/

Do you find that when photos get transferred from your camera to the computer, you feel you have lost control? For now, let's see if we can't gain back just a little of that control.

When photos transfer from your camera to your computer, it's really important for you to know exactly where they go and where they get "filed". There is nothing more frustrating than having your photos or other images or documents, or letters or scans get filed in your computer, and then you can't find them later.

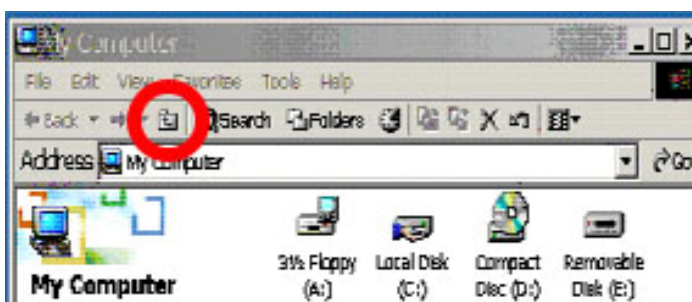
FILE MANAGEMENT

This brings us to the subject of this article, "File Management". Let's begin with the thought that your computer is nothing more than a big filing cabinet. Now it's up to you to decide where and how to organize your "files" on your computer, just as it is with the file cabinet in your office.

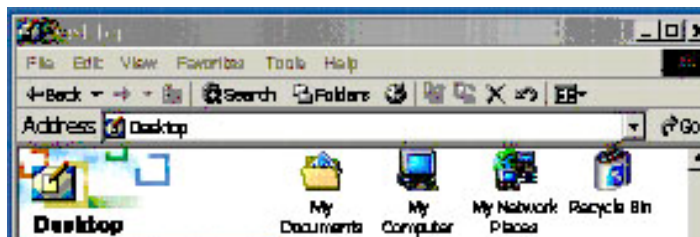
DISK DRIVES

Before we get to actually managing your files, a brief review of how your computer stores data. Computers store data on "drives", some drives are inside the computer and some may be outside or external to the computer. You probably already know that the "C" drive stores everything inside the computer. It is the heart and soul of your computer, and when you have a disk crash, it's usually your "C" drive that goes, and you are out of business. Other drives may include an "A" drive for use of a floppy disk, and a "D" drive designated as CD-ROM drive which is for your CD's. Other external drives, also get assigned letter designations, and could include removable or external drives such as zip drives, or memory cards, or docking stations, or cameras, etc. If you left click on the "My Computer" icon on your

desktop, you can see these disk drives. You can also view what's on each drive by using your left mouse button to double-click on the A, C, or D icon. 1



There is one very important icon I want to point, when you are looking at "Windows". The top bar (usually blue) across the top of a window is the Title Bar, the next bar down on the above window is a Menu Bar, and the third bar down is the Task Bar. On this screen shot, I want to point out one very important icon, the UP ONE LEVEL icon within the red circle, which usually looks like a folder with an up arrow. Get familiar with and use this icon to move around within your "drives", or file cabinet. 2



Try it! If you left mouse click that UP ONE LEVEL icon, the next window you see is the Desktop. Within the Desktop window, you can see the "My Documents" folder, which is the cornerstone of the file management structure.

FILES, FOLDERS AND THE FILE CABINET

I like to think of drives as file cabinets. They store

Where did all those photos go? File Management Cont.

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electronic items such as documents, photos, images, spreadsheets, programs etc. Drives may have individual files (usually not a very good idea), and folders which usually contain a collection of files on a particular topic or a particular use.

Recall that the “C” drive stores everything. Now as these files come in, we just can’t let them go anywhere, this is where we can actually put them into an appropriate folder of our choice. And this is how you will get your file cabinet organized.

Let’s review two key items:



Folders provide that organizational structure to a disk drive, just as they do in a file cabinet. First, you will put labeled folders into your cabinet/drive. Each folder will have a name. When you view the contents of a disk drive, folders are normally listed in alphabetical order. New folders can be created by right clicking on your desktop, and selecting New > Folder. The new folder appears on your desktop with the blue title where you can now type the name you have selected for that folder. These folders can now be dragged and dropped, wherever you want them.



Files can and usually are put inside folders. This is where you will put your documents, your photos etc. In order to be able to find your documents later within an overstuffed folder, you give each document a unique name. On a PC, it is wise to use the following naming conventions for both folders and files: A file name is made up of two parts: (1) the name of the document and (2) the file extension which is usually assigned by the computer. If you don’t see the file extensions in Windows XP, go to Desktop>Tools>Folder Options>View Tab and then

unclick “Hide extensions for known file types.”

You may name a file anything you wish (with some punctuation limitations), but it is preferable to name a file something you are likely to remember later. File names should be no longer than 8 characters whenever possible. Although Windows (and Mac) allow longer file names, you may get in problems while transferring files to other computers if you use longer file names. Also, use only letters and numbers in your file names. Special characters like “-”, “/”, “&”, or blank spaces must be avoided in the file name. The second part of a file name is the extension. In the file text.doc, the word text is the file name and the .doc is the extension, identifying this as a Word document. A period always separates the two. The extension identifies what kind of a document you have. Some examples of file extensions are:

.txt : plain text

.doc : Microsoft Word Document

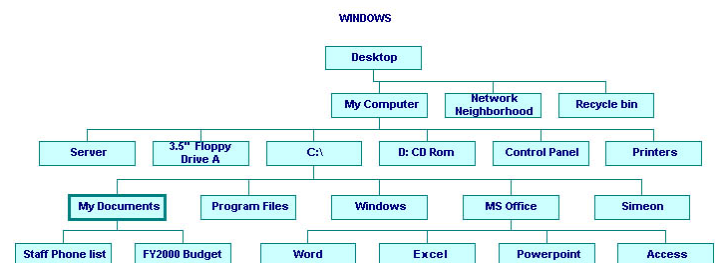
.htm or .html : Web document

.gif , .jpg , .bmp , tif , : images

.ppt : PowerPoint Presentation

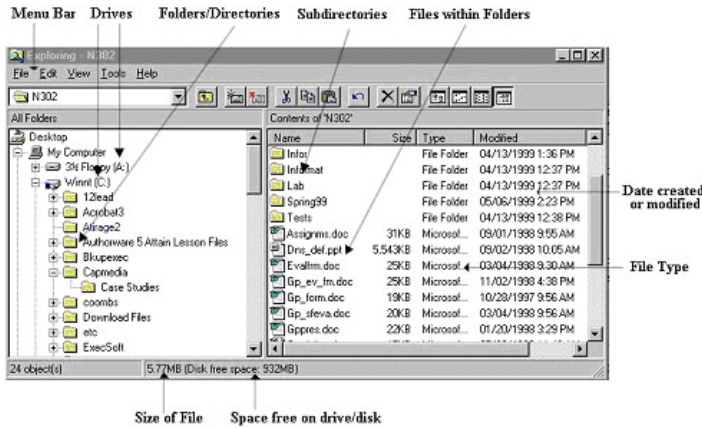
THE STRUCTURE

The File Management structure has a tree type organization or is “hierarchical”. And, you have the ability to set up that structure just as you would with the file cabinet in your office. Here is a graphic of one such structure: 3



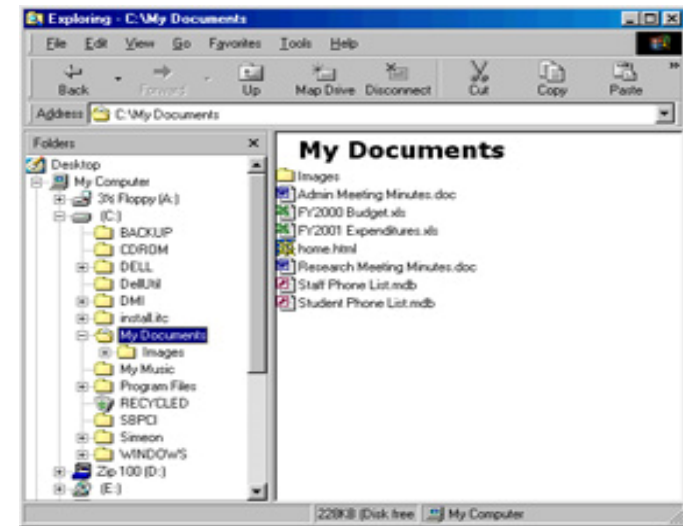
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Where did all those photos go? File Management Cont.



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(Start > Programs > Accessories > Windows Explorer) is one way of looking at the internal file structure of your computer. The following screen capture shows many parent folders, also known as directories, with sub-directories (or sub-folders) and then files expanding beneath them.

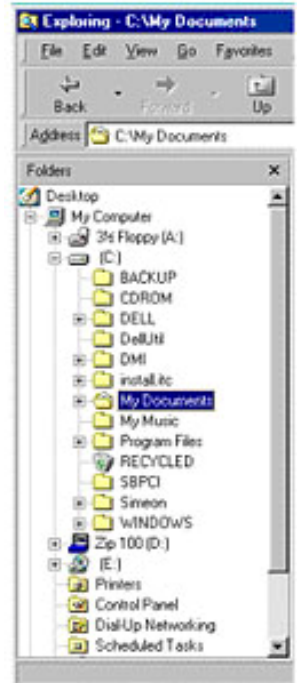


In this example, clicking the plus sign beside My Documents expands the files and additional sub-directories inside, or beneath My Documents.

Clicking the minus sign collapses the sub-directories and files. 6

To clarify how this new knowledge can help, when photos are transferred to your computer, whatever the transfer method might be, some-

where you will be asked to decide “where do you want these photos to go?” Sometimes the program will want to put your photos in either 1) a folder it creates, sometimes named with today’s date or 2) into a folder which already exists perhaps as part of your camera software. If this is your preference, make note of both the folder name and its location or path. Sometimes the program will ask you ... and then you can browse and select the destination folder of your choice.



In my case, I created a special folder called “from camera” and located that folder in My Pictures, which is in My Documents, which is on my Desktop. Every time I do a photo transfer, I make sure the pictures are going to the “from camera” folder. I can decide later which photos to keep and where I want to store the “keepers”. Either way, you should now be able to sketch out on a piece of paper, ahead of time, exactly where your photos are going, which was the objective of this article.

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, please feel free to send Jack an email at jjwilfore@hargray.com

More information on the subject of “File Management” is readily available on the Internet, especially from academic sources. Some of the material for this article has been extracted and credit is due these four excellent references:

Furman University’s File Management or Where Did It Go?

<http://facweb.furman.edu/~pecoy/mfl195/tutorial/>

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Buying a PC for the Holidays

By Vinnie Labash, Sarasota PCUG, Florida labash@spcug.org

Don't buy a low end PC this year if you have any plans of moving to Microsoft's new Vista operating system next year. If you're sticking with XP, almost anything will do, even video that's integrated with the motherboard.

Vista is not due for almost a year, but a little forethought before buying will prevent much regret in 2006. I say this because if Microsoft keeps only half its promises about new features and improved security in Vista, most of its customers will want to make the move to the new operating system. If your computer's specifications are too weak or only marginally acceptable to Vista, you will either not be able to upgrade or wish you hadn't tried.

Let's start with the processor. You don't need a top-of-the-line CPU, but don't buy anything that's less than mid-range. Either Intel or AMD will do, and you should probably go for a dual-core processor for added speed and processing muscle. By the time Vista is on the scene, a lot more 64 bit software may be on hand. A 64 bit processor makes good sense since it can also handle today's 32 bit programs.

Microsoft appears likely to make 512MB of RAM its minimum requirement. Never settle for minimum requirements with memory. I'm sure you could fly cross-country in a two seat one engine monoplane, but your flight would be much more comfortable if you were sipping your favorite beverage while lounging in a high powered commercial passenger jet. Memory is cheap. Buy at least one gigabyte of memory, two if you decide on a 64 bit processor.

Only masochists should buy a machine with video that's integrated with chips on the motherboard. Integrated video shares your processor memory with your applications and often results in poor performance. Buy the cheapest video

card that has at least 256MB of on-board RAM. You will be happy.

You will need a fast DVD drive that is capable of recording multiple formats. This is an ideal storage medium for backups. Get two. They're not prohibitively expensive any more.

More and more people have digital cameras, picture-phones, music players, video-cams, and other peripherals which attach to computers in one fashion or another. Look for a machine with at least six USB 2.0 connectors. It doesn't hurt to have one IEEE 1394, or Firewire connector.

You owe it to yourself to have a 17" or larger flat panel monitor. Don't tell me you can't afford it. Dell makes a 23" outstanding flat panel device for less than \$1,000. Even good 19" monitors can be had for \$450 or less.

Hard disk space has never been cheaper. Dual 250GB hard drives need not be an extravagance this holiday season if you want the space for music and video files. Optionally, install RAID 1 for disk mirroring and instant automatic backup. If one hard drive is enough, an external USB 2.0 connected hard drive is an excellent backup device.

Audiophiles can consult Creative Labs and drool over X-Fi Elite Pro. Then spring for good speakers with a subwoofer. The rest of us can be content with audio chips integrated with the motherboard.

Media center PCs come with remote control devices and a TV tuner. They are meant to be operated from a distance to play music, present slide shows, view photos, and watch TV. Don't buy the cheapest machines because they leave out a lot of important features.

Most salespeople are paid on a combination of salary, commissions, and bonuses for selling

Buying a PC for the Holidays Cont.

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specific makes and models. Know what you are looking for before visiting a showroom, and don't let a sales person talk you into more or less machine than you want. It's a very good idea to come to your next PC User Group meeting and get the best advice from all the friendly people you will meet there. Many of them will help you

configure your new machine.

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Where did all those photos go? File Management Cont.

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Duke University's Window's Explorer: Managing Your Files

<http://www.duke.edu/~dhewitt/tutorials/explorer/explor.html>

University of Virginia File Management

[http://www.itc.virginia.edu/desktop/docs/fms/pc/st](http://www.itc.virginia.edu/desktop/docs/fms/pc/structure.html#hierarchy)

[structure.html#hierarchy](http://www.itc.virginia.edu/desktop/docs/fms/pc/structure.html#hierarchy)

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The phone numbers and websites for the 3 credit agencies are

Equifax – 800-685-1111 – [HYPERLINK "http://www.equifax.com/"www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com/)

Experian – 888-397-3742 – [HYPERLINK "http://www.experian.com/"www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com/)

Transunion – 800-888-4213 – [HYPERLINK "http://www.transunion.com/"www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com/)

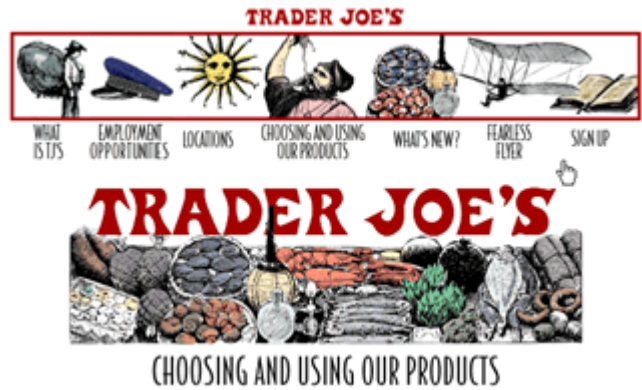
Members, please remember to wear your badge, sign the book. Clean up your spot and push in your chair, when done in our room.

On the way out please pay for **all** printing you have done.

KATHY'S PAGE

Did you know ...
that you can find local ads to grocery stores online?

<http://www.traderjoes.com>



<http://www.frysfood.com>

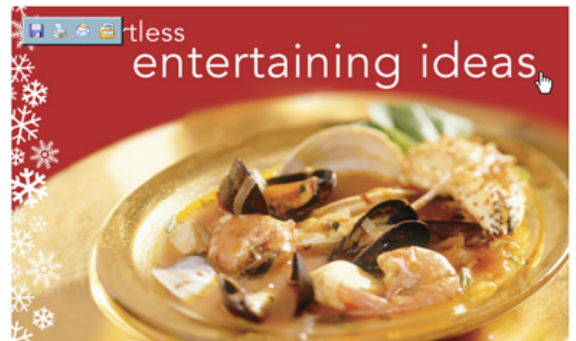


<http://www.sprouts.com>





<http://www.safeway.com>



<http://www.wildoats.com/app/henry's/index.php>
(Henry's)



<http://www.albertsons.com>

<http://www.bashas.com>

Ram & Reason: A Virus and Incident Checklist

By Rob Rice, Member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City

Much has been said about virus and malicious software prevention, but what if all of your precautions fail? So there you are, happily clicking along the Internet when suddenly a popup ad obstructs your view. You start to close it and then another and then another pops up so that in just a few seconds there are so many pop-up ads that you cannot possibly close them all as they just keep coming. So what do you? Delete them as fast as you can in hopes that they will stop? Turn off the computer? Suddenly a program appears from nowhere and informs you that you have been infected with a trojan virus and the program needs to scan your system so that the trojan can be removed. The problem is that you do not remember ever having installed this program. Do you trust it?

There are some industry-accepted procedures for dealing with this type of incident and any virus or trojan infection. Just follow these five simple steps in the following order to minimize damage:

1. Do not turn off your computer unless you are certain that your files are being actively deleted!
2. Disconnect the network cable from your computer and/or turn off your wireless connection.
3. Write down any error messages and the names of any programs or software that was running at the time the infection occurred.
4. Mark the computer "Do Not Use".
5. Run any of your applications that you are certain are yours and that might have opened identifying a virus attack. Next, run your antivirus, anti-trojan tools.

Step One:

Do not turn off your computer. Not every trojan and virus is the same so this rule will have exceptions, but generally you do not want to turn off the

computer unless you can see that the virus is deleting your files. If you think that it can be stopped from deleting your files without turning off the computer, then this is a better option than turning off the computer. The reason is that while turning the computer off will temporarily stop the damage more harm can come when you turn the computer back on. System files can be infected when loading, boot sectors contaminated, hard drive partitions erased, registries corrupted. For example, on a Windows system every time you make a major system change one of the first things that it wants you to do is reboot, "To allow the changes to take affect". In the case of a virus or trojan, the last thing we want to do is to allow the changes to take affect.

Step Two:

Disconnect the network cable from your computer and/or turn off your wireless connection. Trojans are designed to open a door and let other trojans, spyware and viruses in. Physically disconnecting its link to the Internet stops this behavior, prevents your personnel information from going out and prevents other machines from being infected. Many checklists have this action rated number one and for good reasons. I rate it here as step two because step one is simply a quick decision that can have a significant impact on the recovery outcome.

Step Three:

Write down any error messages that appear and the names of any programs or software that was running at the time the infection occurred. This is important not only for repairing the system but also for identifying which alerts are real and which ones are bogus. Error messages that contain misspellings and poor grammar are likely bogus and generated by the virus.

Ram & Reason: A Virus and Incident Checklist Cont.

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Step Four:

Mark the computer "Do Not Use". This is in case you get called away and have to leave the system alone for any length of time.

Step Five:

Run any of your applications that you are certain are yours and that might have opened to identify a virus attack. Next, run your antivirus anti-trojan tools.

It's possible that your antivirus or anti-trojan software may have detected the attack and started running a system scan or is prompting you and waiting for instructions. If you are certain that it is your software then let it do what it wants to do and let it clean the system. If you have any doubts as to whether the program is in fact one of

your programs then **DO NOT RUN THE SOFTWARE!**

Some trojans actually install and run a program pretending to be antivirus/anti-trojan software and scan your system all the while claiming to be cleaning your computer. In reality it is part of the trojan. Some of these programs look very commercial and very polished so be careful!

Rob Rice is a computer specialist working in Anchorage, Alaska. Rob can be contacted at articles@isp.com

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.

Informative Tech News

By Bob Elgines; CRCC Editor; elginesz@rraz.net

More Free Spyware - There is another one out there like Spybot called SpyBlaster which can be downloaded at : www.javacoolsoftware.com . There is a slight catch, you will need to manually update, unless you pay \$10 for an automatically update subscription. This unlike Spybot will prevent installation of spyware. [

PCI Express vs AGP-8X Graphic Cards - Are they here to stay? The PCI-Express cards are about the same speed and higher in price. So don't run out and change your Mother Board to accommodate the PCI-Express. The only difference right now is the Bandwidth, but there are not programs out there to use this advantage. It's main use would be used in Gaming. [

Windows 2000 Info! - Microsoft released an update containing a collection of previous patches. The final service pack for Windows 2000 is SP4, which was released in March, 2003. Support for Windows 2000 will end in 2010. [

What is "Windows XP N"? - Windows XP N is a version without the MS Media Player. Windows XP Home (the standard version) sells for the same price. [

What is "Windows XP Media"? - Basically the standard home version with all of the latest photo,

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Backing up data Put a lock on your memories

By John R. Quain Usa Today

(These articles appeared in the Arizona Republic Paper on Tuesday, November 29, 2005 in the Business section. Originally published in USA Today NOW Personal Technology Holiday 2005 mag., on sale at newsstands. More information at www.usatoday.com.)

Yes, backing up computer files is pretty boring. But losing all your precious digital photos would be a lot more painful.

When it comes to his financial records, Stan Waller, a 72-year-old retiree in Wilmette, Ill., says he always backs up his computer files.

"Quicken reminds me, and I do it religiously", he says. But when it comes to the thousands of priceless digital family photos he has, Walter admits he isn't as disciplined.

"I've still got a lot of things on floppy disk going back a few years".

Making backup copies of computer files is a task most of us regard with the same enthusiasm we reserve for cleaning out the attic: We know we're supposed to do it, but it's no fun at all.

Yet coping valuable digital files is essential to ensure you don't lose your keepsakes, including photos, music tracks, video clips and personal correspondence. Remember: One computer crash could wipe out years of digital memories.

You can copy files one at a time and burn them onto a CD. But that's a painfully tedious process and you're not likely to do it very often. The best way to make backups is to use software that helps organize and synchronize files. Some programs make backups for you automatically

Clearly, the days of storing family photos in a shoe box are gone. So make this your mantra: Back up, back up, back up.

SOFTWARE

To protect all of your PC's software and data, a full backup is worthwhile. **Symantec's \$70 Norton Ghost** is a nifty program for making a complete copy or "mirror" of your computer's hard drive. Ghost will make automatic scheduled backups, too.

If you're concerned only about safeguarding personal files, you can use other programs to select and regularly back up files to a CD, DVD or external drive. In addition to Ghost, two programs that do incremental backups-which means they copy only files that have changed since your last backup- are **Unibue's \$50 Win-backup** and **Nero Backup**, which is part of the **\$100 Nero 6 Ultra Edition** CD/DVD package.

External hard drives

Plugging an external hard drive into a computer's USB or Fire Wire port is the quickest and easiest way to back up a PC.

One of the most popular models is **Maxtor's \$300 One Touch II**. With 300 gigabytes of storage, it can copy the entire contents of most computer hard drives. You can initiate a backup by pressing a button. **The One Touch II** can do scheduled incremental backups, too.

Go for DVD

Many of us now have thousands of photos and music tracks stored on our computers. The most cost-effective way to back up these valuables is to use a DVD-recordable drive to copy files onto DVD's.

If your system doesn't have a DVD burner, an excellent external option is **Sony's \$280 DVD Direct**. It can copy up to 8.5GB of files onto a sin-

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Backing up data Put a lock on your memories Cont.

(Continued from page 16)

gle DVD.

Among other things, it includes software that allows you to create a slideshow of photos so you can bore, oops, entertain your friends by displaying your vacation pics on a TV. You even can quickly back up home videos without a computer just by plugging a digital camcorder into the box and burning a DVD directly.

Online services

If you travel a lot and want a convenient way to back up your files, here's a handy potion: Subscribe to an online service that lets you load files to their computers for a storage.

Should something unfortunate happen to your laptop, you can still access files from any Internet-connected computer. **iBackup** is one: it charges \$9.95 a month for 5GB of storage. As an additional safeguard, Paranoid home computer uses can subscribe to the service. But it's more economical to burn your own disks.

SAVE THESE TIPS TOO!!!

STAY ORGANIZED

Keep important files in one place on your computer. Some photo and music programs create folders for photos, making them hard to find. To make backing up easier, make your own folder.

DON'T COMPRESS

Many backup programs cram more pictures and files onto a disk by digitally compressing them. But most photos and music files are compressed. To recover compressed backup files, you usually must use the same program to restore and back up the files. To avoid this headache, make only full uncompressed copies.

VERIFY

Make sure that what you copied matches the original. Check the copies. Most programs call this "verification". The extra time it takes is well worthwhile.

KEEP IT SEPARATE

Preserving digital heirlooms and leaving the disks sitting next to you computer won't do much good if a burglar steals everything in your home office or if your equipment is destroyed in a fire. So store them in a separate location. Examples: Your desk at work, at a vacation home or even a friends house.

I learned that if you pursue happiness, it will elude you. But if you focus on your family, the needs of others, your work, meeting new people, and doing the very best you can, happiness will find you .

Informative Tech News Cont.

(Continued from page 15)

music,, and movie enhancement pack. This includes such things as Plus!Photo Story, Media player, Movie Maker, etc. These items can be download from Microsoft for free in most cases. [

New Microsoft Windows Software - Microsoft's new operating system called "Longhorn" has been officially named "Windows Vista", and is set to be released to the public in 2006. The three new goals are summarized as Clear (new methods), Confident (better security) and Connected (seamless) by Microsoft developers. [

New WD Hard Drive - Western Digital released a new high-class series of Caviar drives and announced a new high capacity drive of 400 GB SATA (Serial). This drive has a speed of 7200 rpm, 16 MB of cache, and a transfer rate of 150 MBps. The WD Caviar SE16 400 GB is priced at approximately \$280 with a three year warranty. [

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Tidbits:

January 2006

- Jan 6- business meet
- Jan 12 - Your Q & A's
- Jan 19 -Smart Computing
- Jan 26 -CD&DVD burning

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 Jan. 1, for publication Jan. 10, 2005.

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 Mindshare.

Business Meetings 9:30 am-11:00 in the Ballroom

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