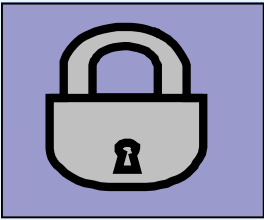


Protecting Your Internet Passwords

by Gene Barlow *User Group Relations Copyrighted April 2005*



The internet plays an important role in our lives today. Almost everything we do has an internet possibility to it. We can access our bank accounts over the internet. We can pay our bills and loans using the internet. Every business that we have an account with lets us access our account and update our records over the internet. We can purchase airline tickets, reserve hotels, and rent cars over the internet. Each of these offers us personalized accounts to make these tasks easier to do. We can even buy groceries, tickets for movies, and order our prescriptions over the internet. How much easier it is today to do all of these things with our internet access. Of course, having access to these internet accounts requires that we set up a private ID and password for each of them. A typical user may have 20 or 30 of these account IDs and passwords to keep track of. So, while the internet has made our life easier in many ways, keeping track of these security codes has gotten harder to do.

Some users will try to bypass these methods set up to protect their privacy and personal information. To avoid keeping track of many codes, some individuals will use the same ID and password on all of their accounts. This is certainly not very secure. Once these common codes are discovered, they open up the hacker to all of your personal accounts. Others will write their codes down on yellow sticky notes and paste them to their computer display. This is also not very secure. Anyone that walks by your computer will see these codes and be able to get into your private accounts without any problem. The real solution is to set up difficult and different passwords for each of your accounts and keep these in a very secure place. That is exactly what WhiteCanyon's MyPasswordVault helps you do.

MyPasswordVault is a database program that stores its information on your computer in an encrypted format so that nobody can find this file and see all of your codes. You still need to remember a password to gain access to MyPasswordVault, but all of the rest of your codes are guarded safely inside the vault. So, when you need to access an account on the internet, you simply open up MyPasswordVault, find the ID and Password for that account, and copy and paste it into your account access fields. You will be able to safely and quickly access the many accounts that you have set up on the internet. This is a great software utility that will let you safely and quickly enjoy all of the advantage of using the internet for your financial transactions.

MyPasswordVault is offered by WhiteCanyon software at the list price of \$25. You can purchase this valuable product at the user group discount price of just \$17. Look for it in our User Group Store at www.usergroupstore.com and click on any of the yellow "Buy Now" buttons to get to our secure web order form. Complete the form including the special user group code of UGNL0405 and submit it. *You may share this discount offer with your immediate family and close friends. These prices are not available to others not involved with a user group.*

I hope this month's newsletter has made you aware of an exciting new software offering from User Group Relations to make your computer usage more productive. Let me know if you have questions about anything in this newsletter by sending me a note to gene@ugr.com. Thank you for your attention.

Gene Barlow is the president of User Group Relations, a consulting firm specializing in promoting computer products to the user group community.

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Cont. Protecting Your Internet Passwords

by Gene Barlow *User Group Relations Copyrighted April 2005*

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He has over 40 years of experience with computer systems. He worked for IBM for 34 years in various technical and marketing positions. He managed IBM's user group support organization when IBM introduced the IBM PC till he retired 14 years later. In this role, he helped hundreds of user groups get started and is sometimes called the Father of User Groups for his involvement. He was the first sponsor of the Association of PC User Groups and was a guiding influence on this

organization for many years and funded many special projects for them. When he left IBM, he set up his own consulting firm and has represented many software clients to the user group community the past 9 years. He currently represents Optimal Access, Acronis, WhiteCanyon, and Spearit software companies and their exciting products. He is an outstanding speaker, writer, and helper of end users and loves working with user groups. He may be contacted at gene@ugr.com.

Simple Password Practices Keep PC and Online Data Secure

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor and Columnist, AARP Computers and Technology Website



Password dilemma: We can't live an online life without them, but if they're too numerous to remember, they encourage unsafe practices. What to do?

First, basics. A password is just the key that opens a computer lock. It may gain access to a newspaper's online edition, protect banking records, let you bid on auctions, open a frequent-flyer account, or do anything requiring verified identity.

Some Web sites assign passwords; most allow choosing them. Rules for selecting passwords are easy to find but are often impractical. Don't use easily guessed familiar names or words; use letters and numbers and special characters? OK. Avoid anything related to facts about yourself? Makes sense. Don't share passwords with anyone? Good advice. Change passwords periodically? Oops, it's a memory test

[<http://www.evaluate8.org/staticpage?page=review&siteid=8906>]. Use unique passwords every-

where? Hm, that takes a *lot* of passwords. Don't write them down or store them in a computer file? Tilt!

Maintaining passwords is a nuisance. So some people use one password for everything -- a bad idea, since sharing or compromising one access opens them all. Password hierarchies are common: use one password for financial matters, another for commerce, and one for trivials such as newspaper sites. That avoids revealing your sensitive e-mail/password combination to junk Web sites.

But don't use a common password for all e-commerce sites (amazon.com, buy.com, etc.) since they're occasionally hacked. And treat sites like PayPal as financial rather than e-commerce. And don't just guess which password you used on a site; some sites lock accounts after just a few failed logins.

As passwords proliferate, it's common to store them in a computer file. And having too many site-assigned passwords guarantees the need to

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Search Engine Tips and Tricks

By Richard Johnson, TUGNET, Granada Hills CA www.tugnet.org



Part 1: Google

I don't have to tell you about Google, which has for many years been the search leader. Aside from the quality of its searches, a big plus is that all Google's paid listings are

clearly distinguished, and do not even appear in the same part of the page. This is unfortunately not the case with other search services such as Yahoo, which intersperses undifferentiated paid and unpaid listings.

Newbies will want to know they can initiate a Google search at www.google.com. All the services I'm recommending here, most of them from Google but a few from other sources, are entirely free.

Google Toolbar

If you don't already use the Google Toolbar, you're missing a terrific navigational aid. Its features are really too numerous to detail here, but I find especially useful its ability to readily

bring up a parent Web page,

search within a website,

find pages similar to what you're looking at,

find sites linking to that page,

translate a page into English,

browse by name (if you don't know the URL),

highlight search terms on the page,

find on the page your search terms or any other terms (more handily than with your browser's "Find" function),

fill forms, and

block pop-ups.

(There are better pop-up blockers and form fillers, but Google's may suit you fine.)

The toolbar enables most of the standard Google tasks, including some described in the next section. Not only are all these tasks easily accessible, but also you won't have to re-type your search terms (for example, when you search for an image after a standard search).

I strongly recommend version 3, which adds many useful tools, the best of which will allow you to

A. spell-check what you've typed on a Web form by clicking a toolbar button,

B. bring up a map page (using the impressive new Google Maps--see below) just by clicking on an address, and

C. track a delivery by clicking on its tracking number.

Since it's still in beta, version 3 is not publicized, and won't automatically replace your present Google Toolbar. To get it, go to www.toolbar.google.com/T3.

Other Google Goodies

Google Maps and Google Local

Google has recently introduced its own map system, that's head and shoulders above the competition. It's available as a stand-alone service at <http://maps.google.com> and as an adjunct to the more established Google Local, at <http://local.google.com>.

Compared to other online maps, the area of a Google map is huge, taking up more than half the screen, and expanding to fill any additional space (for example, if you move to a full-screen view). Zooming (in or out) is very quick, and re-centering is instantaneous. A new feature brings

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up a birds-eye view if you click on "Satellite."

Google Maps and Google Local are now pretty much the same service: A page brought up by Google Maps has a link to "Local Search," which provides the local data on the same page; and a page brought up by Google Local includes the map (which, although smaller, can be expanded with one click). The local data includes the names, addresses, phone numbers, and websites of businesses, and, often, third-party reviews (like restaurant reviews).

You can now get to Google Maps by typing a location in the standard Google search bar. And you'll find a link to Google Local at the top of every page of Google search results.

The best of the rest.

The following are, in my experience, the most useful (or most interesting) of Google's non-standard services. You do not need the Google Toolbar to employ them:

Google's image search at www.google.com/imghp, touted as the Web's most comprehensive, indexes (according to Google) over 880 million images.

Google will give you a business address and phone number. The easiest way is through the ResearchBuzz! form at www.researchbuzz.org/archives/001408.shtml.

Google will bring up one or more definitions for nearly any word. In the Google search box just type "define:" (without the quotes), followed by the word of interest. This service is now multi-lingual.

Reverse phone directory. In the search box type the area code and phone number (with a space between them), and there's a good chance you'll bring up at the top of the results page not only

the person or company name for that number, but also the address.

Google offers special searches, limited (for example) to U.S. government or to Microsoft. Go to www.google.com/options/specialsearches.html.

For those who like to purchase through the use of catalogs, Google's catalog search is at <http://catalogs.google.com>.

Google will enable you to view a page that's been removed from the Web. Look for the "Cached" link after the description of the page in a search result. (Or click the Page Info button on the Google Toolbar.) This function will give you access to many closed-down sites not yet available via the Internet Archive. (The Internet Archive -- not a Google service -- is at www.archive.org.)

The Google Directory at <http://directory.google.com> combines the Open Directory Project (the Web's largest human-edited directory) with Google's proprietary ranking system. Use of the directory is helpful to narrow down what might otherwise be an overly broad search. (This tool is also available from the Google Toolbar.)

Google Answers at <http://answers.google.com/answers> is a paid research service--but users are free to browse previous answers, which can be quite helpful.

Weather forecasts are easily obtained by typing in the Google search bar the word "weather" followed by the city of choice (for example, "weather canoga park.") The forecast will speedily appear at the top of a page of search results.

Froogle, a comparison service for online shopping whose listed vendors pay neither for inclusion nor placement, is at <http://froogle.google.com/froogle>.

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Google Print gives you access to books' contents and lets you search within those books. Look for the "book results" entry in standard search results, accompanied by the Google Print logo.

Google Suggest, at www.google.com/webhp?complete=1&hl=en, appears and acts like the standard Google search, except that as you start typing your search request, Google types its own suggestions. These could save you time and also point you to related searches.

Google Desktop, to search files on your own computer, can be downloaded from <http://desktop.google.com>. Unfortunately, it's available only for users of Windows 2000 and Windows XP.

Gmail, which on March 31 started offering rich text formatting, has as of April 1 doubled its storage capacity to a whopping 2 gigabytes. Gmail is not yet open to the public, but invitations can be obtained from various sources, including this writer.

Note that without re-typing you can extend your standard Web search not only to Google Local but also to Google Images and Froogle (as well as to Google Groups and Google News), by clicking on links at the top of every results page. Or you can skip the Google entry page and go to Xtra Google at www.xtragoogle.com for a selection of twenty Google tools, all tied to one search box.

Google Tips

Toolbar tips

Use Alt-G to enter search terms in the search box.

For your news search, don't enable the separate

news button, but instead use the Search News option in the drop-down Search the Web menu. That way you'll be able to use the Alt-G shortcut to enter your news search query, and to use the same query for news and general Web searching, without retyping.

When using the word-find function, hold down the control key to find the exact whole word, and similarly use the shift key to move backwards.

Other Google tips

For academically oriented results (often the most useful), try typing `site:edu` either before or after your search terms. This will eliminate commercial sites, and limit results to those from educational institutions.

Although Google now implements "stemming" (automatically searches for variants of words as well as the words themselves), you can cover still more bases by using the tilde [~] symbol right before a search term (leaving no space). This will tell Google to use synonyms as search queries. For example, a search for `~food ~facts` will turn up cooking information.

Don't worry too much about misspelled words. With any search engine, a search query with a misspelling might get you some good results that you wouldn't see otherwise! Google will suggest a corrected spelling along with its search results, but if the initial search comes up empty will correct the spelling on its own and re-run the search.

Google will ignore some common short words (like a, on, and by) in your queries. The best way around these so-called stop words in most cases is simply to enclose the phrase in quotes, which will force Google to search only for the phrase as given. (A phrase search will of course come in handy on other occasions as well.) Otherwise, you can precede a suspected stop word with the

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plus sign (for example, +on).

Google recognizes the OR operator, or, in its stead, the vertical line. So if you're seeking search results concerning cats or dogs (but not both), you could type "cats OR dogs" or "cats | dogs" [without the quotes]. Use the minus sign right before a search term for "not." ("Animals - dogs" [without the quotes] would ignore dogs in the search.) For complicated queries, you can if necessary group search words within parentheses.

Instead of clicking on the main link at the top of each Google search result, try clicking on the word Cached. The page that will come up will

now have your search words highlighted. (Don't use this technique if you need to see the most recent page revisions.)

Google supports word wild cards. That is, you can in your query use the asterisk [*] as a stand-in to represent any word. (This won't work in Google for parts of words.)

Next month: [Beyond Google.](#)

Richard Johnson is a writer and editor, and founder/administrator of FREE FOR ALL The Skills Pool, a 29-year-old membership organization (<http://theskillspool.org>). He is a volunteer with TUGNET HelpContact for assistance with Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, and Gmail. You may reach him at rj@theskillspool.org.

The Latest on DVDs

By Bob Elgines, Colorado River Computer Club Editor, Lake Havasu, AZ

The DVD world is going crazy. The price range is from \$59 to \$130 well within most of our budgets. DVD blanks are down to 50 cents a piece, almost as cheap as CDs. The top four recorder manufacturers are Plextor, Toshiba, Pacific Digital, and Memorex.

Speed is up to 16X, which is max on the outer part of the disk, but only 8X blanks are readily available.

Dual layer (8.5 GB of data space) is labeled as the latest big deal, but is it really? These disks are hard to manufacture and are very expensive. The most important thing is, what will they play in? Well not much of anything. Most DVD players will not recognize the format and neither will your older recorders. So I don't look for this to do anyone much good even in the future.

What is in the future (next year)? The digital world has still been undecided on DVD-R and DVD+R formats, so most of your recorders will do both. Now we come to the future of introducing two new formats named "HD-DVD" and "Blu-ray". These new formats have been developed to use the new blue-laser, where has, they have been using the red-laser in our present recorders. Red laser single level DVDs have 4.7 GB of capacity where the Blue-laser single layer DVDs will have a capacity of 15 (HD-DVD format) to 25 GB (Blu-ray format) at present.

A HD (High Definition) two hour movie uses about 17.4 GB with out max compression. The compression schemes (MPEG-2, MPEG4, etc.) will be the same for both, so there will be no big difference in playback quality. Here we go again, new DVD players will be needed and this reminds us of the old video tape war on formats "Beta" and "VHS". Remember VHS won out due to more recording time and lower costs. Will this be true of the two blue-laser formats? Only time will tell.

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Cont. Simple Password Practices Keep PC and Online Data Secure

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor and Columnist, AARP Computers and Technology Website

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record them. But please, don't call the file "passwords.txt" and don't use the word "password" in it. The paranoid and geeky encrypt such files, but that risks losing the file by forgetting the encryption key.

You can print and save registration pages, but that leads to bulky files, cumbersome to search and requiring updating. Some people use an address book or print lists of sites and accounts, then handwrite passwords. But that still needs updating, and can be lost, destroyed, or found by someone untrustworthy.

If you have multiple email addresses, note which you use on a given site, since that's often the key for logging in or receiving password reminders.

Hackers use special software to attack logins, applying dictionary word lists and other guessing techniques. Passwords are described as "strong" (hard to crack) if they have at least eight characters, include upper/lower case and punctuation characters and at least one digit. So even if you use a memory aid for remembering passwords -- such as words from a poem -- convert them to strong passwords in a way that only you will know.

High-tech devices can add security, but they're usually used only in business settings; they include biometric devices which check fingerprints or eye structure and random logon-key generators.

Software password managers are more practical. These record and secure passwords and then auto-fill online logins. Good ones offer a "don't remember/don't ask" option to avoid recording info about sensitive sites. Encryption is desirable but not mandatory; it should be possible to secure the password manager itself with a master

password.

Many managers are free, some are bought, and common software such as Web browsers and e-mail clients often includes it. Google returns many hits related to "password manager" and classy software site Tucows [www.tucows.com] numbers 300 such tools. Before installing one, make sure it supports your software applications, especially if they're non-Microsoft.

Many people don't secure home computers -- but consider cleaners, workers, friends wandering through, perhaps even having permission to use the computer. Suddenly security becomes more appealing. If you handle money online, check banking/financial sites occasionally for unauthorized transactions.

Remember that you may occasionally need access to secure sites while away from your computer. You can copy passwords to a thumbdrive or PDA or simply print them, but remember that they're powerful keys and must be protected. Before traveling, check your passwords so you're not surprised on the road. If you leave your computer running, you can access it remotely via tools such as GoToMyPC.

On business-owned PCs, separate personal from work-related material. Determine whether your office has policies for personal computer use and monitoring of computer activity. Some businesses install keystroke loggers which can capture passwords before they're encrypted. And remember that system administrators can often defeat security measures as part of their job, so you may not want to store sensitive personal material at work.

Work and home PCs both need disaster preparation, so family members or colleagues can access what's needed in an emergency. Work-

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Cont. Simple Password Practices Keep PC and Online Data Secure

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor and Columnist, AARP Computers and Technology Website

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related passwords and instructions can be stored securely so they're available but can't be secretly used.

For home computers and facilities such as e-mail and finance, remember that many ISPs and companies have privacy policies prohibiting revealing information to family members, even in cases of illness or death. Instructions and important passwords should be stored with essential family re-

cords. Note that changing situations may require special care -- for example, a divorce might motivate tight security.

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Spyware Swindler By Sandy Berger

A cyber citizen's worse nightmare has come true. A deceitful marketer has been deviously downloading spyware to computers, then selling software to the computer owners to remove the spyware he implanted. The Federal Trade Commission has filed a lawsuit to stop the alleged illegal activities of Sanford Wallace, a New Hampshire man who is accused of this corrupt activity.

It has crossed everyone's mind at one time or another. Could companies that manufacture anti-virus, spyware removal, and firewall software be creating and releasing viruses and spyware just to generate a need for their software? Unfortunately, this type of behavior is a distinct possibility as shown by the filing of this lawsuit.

Web surfers unsuspectingly download the spyware when they visit Web sites that contain certain banner ads. The spyware is able to enter the computer through a hole in Microsoft's Internet Explorer Web browser. It redirects Web browsers, causes CD trays to mysteriously open, and generally slows down the infected computer. It also starts a series of aggravating pop-ups that advise the computer user to purchase one of two programs, Spy Wiper and Spy Deleter. The pop-ups promise that these programs will rectify the problems with your computer. Sanford's two companies, Seismic Entertainment Productions Inc. and SmartBot.Net Inc. have been named in the lawsuit.

This is the first time that the FTC has taken action against a company for secretly installing software. While several states have already enacted laws against spyware, currently there are no national "spyware" laws. The FTC will prosecute this case based on laws against deceptive business actions. The Legislature currently has several anti-spyware laws under consideration.

This is scary stuff, folks. Thank goodness the FTC has taken some action. Let's hope that if the legislature comes up with some spyware laws they will be more effective than the recently enacted anti-spam legislation. I am now receiving more spam than I was before the spam law went into effect. While spam is aggravating and costly, it is not as devastating as the deceptive practices allegedly used by Mr. Wallace.

We must stop this type of behavior before it becomes more widespread. If you want to see what can happen when unscrupulous companies take control, rent the Sandra Bullock movie "The Net" where the main charac-



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Another Silent Attack on Our Computers

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, Texas' Radio Show Host; Police Officer

WEBSITES:

<http://research.microsoft.com/rootkit>

<http://www.sysinternals.com/ntw2k/freeware/rootkitreveal.shtml>

<http://www.f-secure.com/blacklight>

<http://www.f-secure.com/blacklight/rootkit.shtml>

At the recent computer security symposium in Corpus Christi, one of the speakers mentioned something that I was vaguely aware of as a threat. The threat is considered as a silent attempt to invade our computers for the purposes of installing viruses, Trojans, worms, or other malware devices. This silent threat may be used by terrorists to launch a coordinated attack on our infrastructure, steal our personal information, or otherwise wreak havoc. So insidious is this threat that it would sound like the content of an urban legend, yet it is documented as real. Imagine a threat that would be undetected by the current antivirus, firewall, and anti-spyware software, yet be so powerful as to effectively take over our computers, without our knowledge. This threat, formerly considered solely as an unproven concept, is now known to be real. This threat is also now implicated in taking over countless computers. This contemporary threat is known by the innocuous term "Rootkit".

A rootkit is defined on the Sysinternals website as, "... the mechanisms and techniques whereby malware, including viruses, spyware, and trojans, attempt to hide their presence from spyware blockers, antivirus, and system management utilities. There are several rootkit classifications depending on whether the malware survives reboot and whether it executes in user mode or kernel mode." The security software company F-Secure expands the definition with, "Rootkits for Windows work in a different way and are typically used to hide malicious software from for example an antivirus scanner. Rootkits are typically not malicious by them-

selves but are used for malicious purposes by viruses, worms, backdoors and spyware. A virus combined with a rootkit produces what was known as full stealth viruses in the MS-DOS environment."

Because rootkits are currently very effective at hiding malware from our antivirus and anti-spyware scanners, it is quite possible or even probable that our computers are infected, despite repeated scans with properly updated software.

Microsoft, and other vendors, have acknowledged the threat and are now beginning to produce software that can detect and destroy the rootkits on our computers. The software is still in its infancy, and lacks the ease of use, automation, and attractive graphical interfaces that we are used to with our antivirus software. It is inevitable that as word of the rootkit threat spreads, and more computers are identified as having stealthy rootkits hiding viruses and other threats, that the small current crop of rootkit detecting software will improve, and other competitors, probably the major antivirus vendors, will join the fight. If rootkit technology continues to spread, the current crop of generally excellent computer security suites from the likes of Symantec (Norton), McAfee, Panda, TrendMicro, and others will be forced to add rootkit protection to their respective suites, or face competitive obsolescence.

Fortunately for us, there are a few rootkit detectors already available, mostly for free! This first generation of products still needs much refining to enable the average person to scan for rootkits with ease, but they are still a very good first step. There are a few rootkit detectors available which are currently free. One "RootkitRevealer" is from a company known for its excellent and often free software, Sysinternals. This software uses a patent-pending technology to detect rootkits, and is currently available for download at www.sysinternals.com/ntw2k/freeware/rootkitreveal

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Cont. Another Silent Attack on Our Computers

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, Texas' Radio Show Host; Police Officer

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.shtml. RootkitRevealer will run on almost any Microsoft operating system, NT4 and later, which includes Windows 2000, and XP.

Another rootkit detector is from F-Secure, a well-known computer security company headquartered in Finland, with offices in the US and elsewhere. F-Secure's product is "Blacklight", available as a free beta (pre-release) version until July 1. Blacklight can be downloaded at www.f-secure.com/blacklight.

I have recently tried both products, and I personally found Blacklight the easier to use. It seemed effective at detecting and eliminating rootkits.

Microsoft will shortly be making available its rootkit detector, the "Strider GhostBuster", details at research.microsoft.com/rootkit.

Persons unknown who wish to do us harm, either at

a personal level such as stealing our account information and committing the crime of identity theft, or the impersonal level, such as cyber terrorists intent on shutting down our critical infrastructure, may use the rootkit technology to bypass our otherwise necessary defenses.

Until such time as the integrated computer security suites catch up with this threat, I will now have to add a rootkit detector to my recommended list of essential computer security utilities, alongside anti-virus software, a good firewall, and a spyware detector. It is also imperative that all four of these utilities be frequently updated to ensure a reasonable degree of personal security. We will also have to add rootkits to our vernacular of cyber threats, along with the now ubiquitous terms "virus", "spyware", and "hacker".

I shudder to wonder what may be coming down the pike next.

Spyware Swindler By Sandy Berger

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ter has her identity stolen. Another movie called "AntiTrust" shows what can happen when a large computer manufacturer goes awry. Let's hope our law-makers recognize the importance of the legislation they are now considering.

Here are a few things you can do to protect yourself and your computer.

1. Make sure that you use the Windows update feature to keep your software up-to-date.
2. Use a different Web browser. Because Internet Explorer is the most widely used Web browser, it is usually the one used by conmen and deceitful marketers. So consider using an alternative Web browser like Opera, which can be found at www.opera.com or Firefox, which can be downloaded at www.getfirefox.com. Mr. Wallace's banner ads will not download his devious software to your computer if you are using Opera, Firefox, Netscape or any browser other than Internet Explorer.
3. Don't purchase Spy Wiper or Spy Deleter.
4. In fact, when you purchase anything from spam or from a pop-up ad, you feed the spam and pop-up frenzy. Do not buy anything from an unsolicited e-mail or pop-up ad.

Link to digital movies with Movielink

by Sherry Zorzi, APCUG Advisor and Director of Cajun Clickers, Baton Rouge, LA

www.clickers.org szorzi@apcug.net

While Blockbuster and Netflix (www.netflix.com) battle it out for your entertainment dollar, a new online player just may sneak around them. Movielink (www.movielink.com) allows you to order and download recent movies on a pay-for-view basis.

The movies are downloaded to your PC for viewing there, or on a TV connected to the PC, or on your laptop. The cost is about \$5 for a recent release, but some offerings are as cheap as 99



cents. You have 30 days after download to watch the movie. You are renting the movie, though, for a 24-hour period which means that once you click "Play", you have only the next 24 hours to watch (and re-watch, if you like) the

movie. You can buy additional viewing time at a reduced rate.

While visiting the Demonstration Digital Home at the Consumer Electronic Show in Las Vegas in January, I got a coupon for a free download from Movielink. I visited Movielink's website as soon as I got home and decided to give it a try. The selection of movies is pretty good and includes most of Blockbuster's Top Ten Rentals.

Before downloading a movie, you must register

with Movielink. They are not overly intrusive, asking only for name, email address, sex, and age during the registration process. You will, of course, probably want to deselect the opportunity to receive a free email newsletter from Movielink.

Movielink installs Movielink Manager software onto your computer, which controls the download and playback of the movies you order. You should read the End User License Agreement carefully, since it does give Movielink and its partners (RealNetworks and Microsoft) the right to push upgrades and updates to you without asking permission. That might be a deal-breaker for some – indeed, it almost sent me running for the hills. But for the sake of you, the reader, I bit the bullet and signed on the virtual dotted line.

The download took about 25 minutes on my Cox cable internet connection and proceeded smoothly. It was several weeks before I had a chance to view my movie. When I clicked "Play", though, the media player would not load the movie so I went to their website for help. The live chat feature of Movielink's website worked beautifully. I was very quickly connected with a technician who reset my account and had me re-install the Movielink Manager software. Within minutes everything was working fine.

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Cont. The Latest on DVDs

By Bob Elgines, Colorado River Computer Club Editor, Lake Havasu, AZ

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These Blue-laser recorders and players will be coming out near the end of this year or the start of next year, but I think we are going to have to wait and see if they can decide on a format for the blue-laser.

Cont. Link to digital movies with Movielink

by Sherry Zorzi, APCUG Advisor and Director of Cajun Clickers, Baton Rouge, LA

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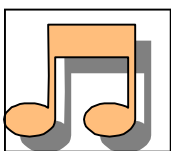
(Continued from page 12)

The video quality of the movie was excellent. Watching a movie on the typical PC, though, is much different from watching one on the typical TV. My computer screen is a 17 inch LCD flat screen. The image was beautiful but much smaller than my TV. I don't have a top of the line sound card nor great speakers on that particular computer either, so the audio was acceptable to me while not outstanding. Next time I'll probably download my movie to a different computer in my home – one that has a top-notch video card, a top-notch sound card, and an awesome Surroundsound speaker set that includes a huge subwoofer.

I'll probably rent from Movielink again. I'm intrigued by the possibilities of instant access to the movie of my choice without leaving home or waiting for it to be mailed to me. The service would be even more attractive to me if it offered a monthly subscription deal and if it allowed me to transfer my rental to the device of my choice, including my Pocket PC and other computers on my home network

Movielink and other services like it may not overtake brick-and-mortar rental stores like Blockbuster or online CD rental services like Netflix overnight. But it's a worthy opponent and will become more and more of a threat as more homes connect their TVs to home entertainment PCs. Give it a try.

How To Record Your Cassette Music to a CD! By Bob Elgines, CRCC Editor, elginesz@rraz.net



Most of the equipment you already have includes the Soundboard and a Cassette player. Next of course things needed are a recording program, such as Musicmatch Jukebox and a cable to connect your cassette player with your computer. This basic Jukebox software is available free at: www.musicmatch.com (go to JUKEBOX tab and click on "Free Jukebox download", it is over 24 MB in size) The cable is made up of 1/8" Phone Plugs (RS 274-284c) and a three wire shielded cable. This cable can be purchased or made on your own. (Some of the older cassette players will use a larger 1/4" Phone plug.)

Now we are ready to setup your computer and programs. Connect your cable between the "Output" (might be labeled Headset) of your Cassette Player and the "Line in" of your computer Sound board.

Do a right click on your Speaker icon located on the right hand side of the task bar. Select (or left click) "Adjust Audio Properties", click on "Audio". Under "Sound Recording" click on "Volume". Select "Line in" and set the input level at approximately 20%, this may have to be changed later, so you can leave this on the screen if you wish.

Next activate Musicmatch Jukebox, then go to "Options"/ "Recorder" / "Settings". Set "Recording Format" to WAV, "Recording Source" to LINE IN. Now click on "Advance", set "Fadeout" to 1, and under "End of Record Notifications" uncheck "Play sound" & "Eject CD". Click OK

On the bottom left click the red "Record" button. Another window appears with a number "one" on the right. You can click on here and change the name now or do it later. If you are going to record the complete side of

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Cont. How To Record Your Cassette Music to a CD! By Bob Elgines, CRCC Editor, elginesz@rraz.net

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the cassette under one file then name it now, otherwise if you are going to record one track (or song) at a time then you can change the name later.

Now play your cassette to check out the input level for no distortion listening to it on your computer speakers. If it is too loud and there is distortion then reduce the input level or the volume out of the player. Rewind the cassette.

We are ready to roll, start your player and press the "Record" button on the lower left window. When the song is over press the "Stop" button, then press "Record" again because the next song will start within a second or two. The press "Stop", continue this until each song is recorded from the cassette.

Now we have them in the computer, let's name each one, but keep the names short. Use "Windows Explorer" and go to "My Documents" / "My Music" / "Artist" / "Album". Here you will find your recordings and you can rename them by doing a right click on each one. After you are finished, exit, go to your CD recording program such as "EZ CD Creator" or "Nero". Now you can grab all of the recordings you made and make an AUDIO CD. (Do not record any faster than 8X, because most players will not accept anything faster)

Another method can be used and that is by using MP3 sound files. If you convert from WAV to MP3 files, you can put up to 150 (or more) songs on a CD instead of just 15.

To convert the WAV files bring up your "Jukebox" program. Go to "File" / "Convert", then select your Source folder that contains your music files. Select "Source Data Type" and set to WAV, then click on "Select all". Next select your Destination folder and select your "Destination Data Type" setting it to MP3. Click on the start button and it will now make MP3 files out of your selected WAV files.

After you are finished, Exit, go to your CD recording program and record your MP3 files on a CD as data files (do not make an audio CD), this MP3-Data CD will now play in a DVD Player or computer capable of having over 150 songs.

Tidbits:



Class and Special Interest Group Schedule is posted on the website and is updated frequently! Check the CAL-ENDAR page. Articles for the next issue of Tales from the Mouse are due on Nov. 1, for publication

Nov. 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.



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