



MUG Monitor

Macon Users Group—Serving Southwestern North Carolina and Northeastern Georgia

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July 2008

Next Meeting:

Online Health Resources

By Lizz Russell
Macon Community
Facilities Building
July 8th, 7 PM

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Lizz's Tech Talk

by Lizz Russell

When my father-in-law was suffering with a terminal illness, I turned to the Internet to find out anything and everything I could do to make his life better. The tools and resources I found were amazing. There was extensive information on his condition. There were detailed explanations of every drug he was taking. There were tools to check for drug and herbal supplement and food interactions. There was extensive information on all the local doctors. There were clinical trials and research programs. There were all kinds of information on alternative treatments and herbal supplements.

During my research, I even located a doctor in Hong Kong that was a world renowned expert on the illness and wrote to him for advice. That incredible, caring doctor on the other side of the world wrote me back a 3-page letter with all kinds of useful information to give to my father-in-law's doctor. He did it out of the goodness of his heart. I was amazed and grateful.

Out of these experiences, "Using the Internet as a Tool for Health and Healing" became the topic for this month's presentation.

How about you? Are you or a loved one suffering? Are you or a loved one taking a bunch of medications? Would you like a guided tour of how to find the wealth of medical information on the Internet for yourself?

If you answered "YES" to any of these questions, then I hope you can come to the next MUG meeting and let me share these Internet-based power tools with you.

Also, if you or someone you know is taking a bunch of medications, please

bring a list with you so that I can use a real list when demonstrating the drug interaction tools.

On the tech side of life, Internet websites, especially big corporate sites, are now the primary source of viruses. The preferred method of virus delivery from these websites to your computer is being called "drive-by" downloads.

According to a recent webinar (web seminar) presented by a computer security expert, websites are being infected at a rate of around one every five seconds. The detection and removal rate is currently running around one every 14 seconds.

What's worse is that the viruses I've been finding over the last few weeks are really, really destructive. One of them that I found this week disabled all logins, deleted all recovery points, and then disabled system recovery. ICK.

Before you go surfing, make sure you have a backup of anything you don't want to lose, and UPDATE YOUR VIRUS PROTECTION.

Hope to see you at the meeting!

Using the Internet as a Tool for Health and Healing

by Lizz Russell

July 8th, 7 PM

Macon Users Group Franklin, NC

Please see the printed edition
for contact information

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Monthly Meetings

MUG meets the second Tuesday of every month at 7 P.M. in the Macon County Community Facilities Building on Georgia Road (US 441 South).

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Volunteers Available

The following club members have thoughtfully volunteered to be on call for other members having problems or needing a little extra help. If you would like to add your services, please email the newsletter editor.

Lee Alexander
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Quick Tips

by Lee Alexander

Laptop Peripherals

If you have a number of USB devices connected to your laptop, it can be a pain to disconnect/reconnect them every time you want to go portable. Consider a powered USB hub. Connecting the devices to the hub leaves a single USB connection to the laptop. Just be sure the PC is in Sleep, Hibernate, or Shut Down prior to disconnecting the hub.

Windows Explorer

The *Status Bar* (at the bottom of the screen, when turned on—View | Status Bar)—will show you the number of objects (files and sub-folders) and cumulative size of the folder selected in the left-hand pane. If the folder contains hidden files and you have not chosen to “Show hidden files,” the number of hidden objects will be shown in parentheses.

The *Address Bar* is typically set to “Show the full path in the address bar;” if not, it can be set to do so via Tools | Folder Options | View (tab) | Files and Folders section. This is a handy place to enter a URL (Uniform Resource Locator), aka a website name. If you type only the center portion of a URL and hold down the <Ctrl> key when hitting <Enter>, it will insert the prefix *www.* and the suffix *.com*. E.g., typing *cartalk* and hitting keys <Ctrl><Enter> yields *www.cartalk.com*, opens your browser and takes you to that site.

Linux SIG

with Jim Swanson, Mentor

The next Linux SIG meeting is Tuesday, July 22 at 7:00 PM in the meeting room at the Macon County Public Library. Our guest will be Kirk Stephens, who spoke at the June MUG meeting, and teaches Linux courses at Southwestern Community College.

Treasurer's Report

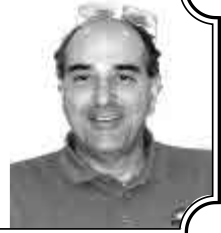
Phyllis Minnich

Balance forward.....	900.95
Income: interest, dues, 50/50.....	944.00
Expense.....	(1027.55)
Balance*	
(including equipment fund).....	\$817.40
*Equipment Fund (50/50, auction).....	334.47
Investment Fund.....	1572.27

*101st Edition of
Lou's Views!*

A Short History of Vista (very short)

by Louis Vitale (aka 44RAILGUY)



I have made no secret of my feelings regarding Microsoft's latest operating system, Vista. So up front, let me say this may not be a "fair and balanced" assessment. I will try to be objective, but it won't be easy.

My first computer was a "multimedia" machine that ran Windows 3.1. It was multimedia because it had a single-speed CD-Rom drive and a sound card. It was already the early 90's, so I had missed all the original versions of Windows. I do remember DOS, but not fondly. 3.1 was the first real money maker for Microsoft, and quickly became the industry standard.

In 1995, MS's new OS (Operating System), code named "Chicago," was released, and became Windows 95. It quickly became a runaway hit. IBM's OS/2 was left in the dust and that ended the last real challenge to Microsoft's dominance of the desktop.

Windows 98 soon followed with the significant improvement of the "Second edition" in 1999. Included in the O/S was "Internet Explorer," which was Microsoft's attempt to crush Netscape and establish itself as THE gateway to the Internet. It succeeded, but in the process broke a few laws. As a result, the courts almost broke up the company, and in fact the litigation is still ongoing.

2001 saw the introduction of Windows XP. It really was the merging of Windows NT/2000, 95, 98 and ME. The first version of XP had a rocky start, but with the release of SP1, and then in August of 2004, SP2, it has achieved a

considerable stability and acceptance. As of June 30th, Microsoft will no longer allow it to be loaded on new PCs, and free support for it will cease in April of 2009.

Vista, the latest version of Windows, was released to the consumer market in January of 2007. To say that it has met with resistance is an understatement. Although the numbers of units of Vista sold are impressive, 140 million licenses, this does not yet match XP's acceptance. Only a very small fraction of XP users have "upgraded" to Vista. Almost all of their sales have been on new PCs. There are so many issues with Vista, that books have been written on the subject.

The question is, how long will the history of Vista be? Will it be just like Windows Me (Millennium Edition)—just pause between 98 and XP, it be around long enough Microsoft to get it right? are a few of the that will have to be if that is to be the

Drivers: does Vista have the drivers for all your hardware? You have spent a lot of money on your printers, scanners and other peripherals to your computer. Will they work with Vista? This has been a chronic problem and only now is being addressed. Make sure if you are taking the plunge that all your "Stuff" will work with Vista.

Will all your software work with Vista? Why upgrade or buy a new machine if it will not run the software that you depend on. Many

major software manufacturers have had issues with compatibility. Sometimes these compatibility issues only surface after an automatic update.

Why does Vista's system performance not match or surpass XP's? With the huge load of code and the many background functions built into Vista, it sometimes performs slowly. Enormous memory and video resources are required to produce the desired effect. Laptop battery performance, for example, has been a major issue. All this needs to be fixed.

Very poor marketing, and bogus "Vista-capable" issues have created a PR disaster for Microsoft. With 5 overlapping versions of the same system, and daunting hardware requirements, been a hard sell to the consumer. The basic "Home Basic," is a real pointment, since it contain many of the important features OS. All of this been avoided and must now be corrected.



Windows 7, the follow-on to Vista, will be launched in 2010. This vaporware is already being promoted by Microsoft. The big question is, will you wait for it and hold on to XP, or upgrade to Vista? Given the history of Microsoft's timely release of promised operating systems, most consumers will have no choice, because their computers will wear out before XP does. So unless you are actually going to use Linux, Vista is in your future.

Google Offers Free Medical Records Service

by **Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director:**
Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio & TV Show Host

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Websites:

www.google.com/health
www.google.com/health/html/privacy.html
www.keyt.com/news/local/19222464.html

Google recently opened for free public access the beta version of its "Google Health" service at www.google.com/health. This service offers users access to a comprehensive user-created database where the user can selectively store medical records. In addition to the storage of personal medical records, Google Health also allows for the importation of medical and prescription records from a variety of services, and the voluntary exportation of medical records to several diagnostic services. Google Health allows user approved physicians, hospitals, pharmacists, and other healthcare services to access the medical records.

To open a free account at Google Health requires registration; users with existing Google accounts may use their existing usernames and passwords for access. Once registered, opening the website at google.com/health offers the users an intuitive menu. The primary links in the center column of the page are: "Add to this Google Health profile (Learn about your health issues and find helpful resources);" "Import medical records (Copy and get automatic updates of your records);" "Explore online health services (Find online tools for managing your health);" and "Find a doctor (Search by name, location, and specialty)." On the left column of the opening page are hyperlinks to personal profile information, and the

right column displays a profile summary.

Clicking on "Add to this Google Health profile" opens a menu with the headings "Conditions," "Medications," "Allergies," "Procedures," "Test results," and "Immunizations." Under "Conditions," a condition or symptom can be entered in the search box, or the user can click on any condition in a lengthy alphabetical list to "Add" that condition to the user's profile. Many of the conditions have a "Reference" link that will provide more information on the condition, as well as any symptoms and treatments. The "Medications" heading allows the users to enter both prescription and non-prescription medications, vitamins and minerals, as well as herbal products. The search box displays selections as the product name is typed, or an alphabetical directory can be accessed. "Allergies," "Procedures," "Test results," and "Immunizations" are entered in the same manner as "Medications" and "Conditions," with a search box or alphabetical menu.

The main page selection "Import medical records" allows the user to securely import medical and prescription records from a variety of sources, including clinics, laboratories, and pharmacies. Included on the currently short list of such resources are Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Cleveland Clinic, CVS Minute Clinics, Quest Diagnostics, Medco, RX America, Longs Drugs, and Walgreen's. It is clear in reading about the service that this small listing is in its infancy, as Google Health is trying to sign up additional partners. To experiment with importing data, I clicked on the link for the prescription manager

Medco, which is utilized by my health insurance plan. Clicking on the "Link to profile" icon under the Medco listing opened the secure Medco website where I had to enter the username and password I use at Medco. Seconds after approving the transfer of my prescription history, it appeared on my Google Health profile under "Medications." The information transferred to Google Health by Medco was not just the prescriptions I ordered from Medco, but also recent prescriptions I filled at local pharmacies where insurance was claimed. Medco can automatically update my profile as new prescriptions are entered and filled. Items filled at local pharmacies under their respective \$4 or \$5 generic program, where no insurance was filed, did not appear on the Medco list.

The menu item "Explore online health services" opens a list of over a dozen services that offer online personal health services. These health services which can be linked to Google Health and utilize the information provided to Google Health (but only with the express consent of the user!) include such well-known services as the Cleveland Clinic, the American Heart Association "Heart Attack Risk Calculator," "MyCareTeam—Diabetes" diabetes management system (requires monthly or annual subscription), and several other services. While several of these personalized services are free, others are fee-based. Most of the services listed require some form of registration in order to utilize those services and integrate them with the users' Google health information.

The "Find a doctor" link opens a simple pair of search boxes, the first

(see *Google* on page 10)



Buying a Mouse—More Important than You Might Think

by Vinny La Bash, Member and Contributing Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, FL. www.spcug.org

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The average computer user recognizes how important the mouse is to getting things done. Mice have been part of the computer scene for over twenty years, and with rare exceptions are simple devices to operate and control. That doesn't mean that people who use them are necessarily familiar with all their features and functions. That's not as bad as it may sound. Most automobile drivers don't have a clue how the internal combustion engine inside their auto engine works. Yet they usually manage to drive from one place to another without incident.

Selecting a mouse is much simpler than choosing an automobile, but there are things you should know before laying out money for a device that, if not properly designed, may result not only in poor computer performance, but may cause you injury.

The mouse may be the most common of the tracking technologies used in modern computers, but it is not the only one. There are trackballs, touchpads, and for ThinkPad users, track points. They all have their advantages and drawbacks. We will focus on the mouse.

Mechanical mice, those with the rolling balls on the underside, are obsolete. They have a tendency to gather debris on the underside, and require cleaning. Moving parts are their most serious weak spot, because they will break down sooner than devices that rely on other technologies. Newer optical mice suffer no such defects. They generate a beam of light that combines with an optical sensor to provide a screen pointer that is well suited for meticulous graphics or serious game playing. No moving parts mean less maintenance

and lighter weight. Optical mice will work on any smooth surface; a mouse pad is unnecessary.

Look for a mouse with a USB connection. It will probably be difficult to buy a mouse that does not have this type of connection today. Make sure it is compatible with USB 2. The mouse is not considered a high-speed device, so this caution may be unnecessary.

You may want a wireless mouse for no other reason than to reduce desktop clutter. There are many generic wireless mice on the market that will perform adequately, but doing this on the cheap comes with a price. You will have a mouse that requires AAA batteries. Save your pennies and get one with an integrated rechargeable battery. High-end wireless mice include receivers that double as battery chargers, so your mouse will never suddenly expire in the middle of an important project.

Most rodents on the market today feature at least two buttons and a scroll wheel. The right button is used mainly for bringing up menus or lists of options. The left-hand button activates functions or commands. The scroll wheel, as its name implies, is used to scroll up and down screens. Sometimes the wheel can function as a third button to activate instructions. Advanced scroll wheel functions allow left to right scrolling which can be very useful in wide spreadsheets or large graphics. Used in conjunction with the keyboard, the scroll wheel can zoom in and out of some applications, and can be used to make text appear larger.

Mice do not come in a one-size-fits-all product. Enlightened companies such as Logitech manufacture mice that are specifically contoured to fit a wide variety of hand sizes. Logitech

(see *Mouse* on page 8)



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The Deals Guy

by Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group



Biometric Lock Update

I said I was going to return the Kwikset Biometric (fingerprint) Lock for my door because it was very unreliable, but I really liked it and wanted it to work better. I watched the video on their website and tried changing my finger scanning technique. It's working better for me and mostly opens on the first scan, but not always. However, my wife still has poor luck so she always uses her key, or waits for me to unlock it. Kwikset had a booth in a hardware show we worked, so I asked a rep how to improve my wife's success getting the lock to work. He told me the lock can hold 50 different fingerprints, so, if I didn't need them all for other people, try scanning her finger several times in different ways with the chance that things might go better with more choices for the lock's computer to compare. He said it actually scans the skin makeup, not the fingerprint. It's worth a try!

For What It's Worth!

When I wrote up the USB Medical flash drive deal, my proofreader told me no medic in his right mind would plug it into their laptop, if they even had a laptop in the ambulance, because an unknown device might cause damage to the computer or entire system. It made sense, so I talked to a few medics about that and there seems to be varied opinions. One told me that he only looks to see if the patient has a wallet card or medical necklace, and they would not plug anything unknown into their computer. Another medic told me that if she saw the USB device with the medical logo on it, she would indeed plug it into their laptop to see what it revealed, and that their computer system would not allow any damage. In spite of the varied opinions, most said they would want to see

the USB drive's content because the patient's welfare was important. Some said good advice is to post a conspicuous note in your wallet about the device. Would anybody fake a serious injury just to damage computers?

Interesting Business

Bill Shook is the editor of a great newsletter for The Northwest Arkansas PC User Group and I really enjoy reading it each month. He seems to be the editor for life and doesn't mind. I read a very interesting tidbit in their March issue that had me wondering if it was for real, or just an April fool's joke, considering the month. NWA-PCUG's President, Wes Eckles Jr., starts the NL with the "President's Corner," and in his March Corner, he included an item about "cheap broadband service available from Space Data Corporation by way of shoeboxed transmitter/receivers carried aloft via ten balloons launched each day by ranchers and dairy farmers." Sound fishy to you?

I surprised Bill with a phone call to inquire, and he said he also wondered about that, but later was astonished to read it in their local newspaper. He even sent me an article taken from the Wall St. Journal about the company. Here's the URL to read Bill's article: pcgroup.nwark.com/pres--38.htm, and also the URL, www.spacedata.net/news022008.htm, to read this interesting article about Space Data Corporation, who also provides data services for truckers and oil companies. You'll find it fascinating.

The Boca Raton users group just lost their long-time ISP, so maybe they should consider this method with various members launching the

balloons each day. <G> That's another way to beat the big guys.

Anyway, I had a very interesting visit with Bill Shook and you'd be surprised to know he publishes most of his interesting newsletter using a DOS version of Word Perfect (5.1), but does use MS Windows XP every day. How many editors would you find sticking with their favorite DOS program yet today? I assume his philosophy is "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Sort of like "in with the new," but not necessarily "out with the old." He said that like many other user groups, not many members write articles/reviews for their newsletter any more, and he is indebted to Judy Tylour for putting the APCUG editor articles together, as well as to APCUG's Ira Wilsker and his articles. He also thanked the "World Renowned DealsGuy."

No Announcements With Discounts This Month

I did receive a number of announcements, but nothing new offering us a product discount. Those will be posted on my website. As you can see, my column is mostly personal items that I thought were of interest, and I will include some freebies sent to me by readers. I have also seen these in columns published in a few UG newsletters. There are several good monthly "help" articles and I only get a few newsletters, but some of these columns are reprinted in newsletters I do receive. I hope you get some good from these suggestions.

Some Suggestions For Defragging!

This is a freeware defragging utility that was said to be a good product. I have not used it yet, but I'm passing it on to you. It is called SpeedDefrag

(see *Deals Guy* on page 10)

Moving on to Vista, Part 7

by Neil Stahfest, Shareware Librarian, Tacoma Area PC User Group, WA, www.fapcug.org

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Does your computer go to sleep? By default, Windows Vista was designed to go to sleep after an hour of inactivity. This feature is primarily designed to conserve laptop battery power. Microsoft estimates that allowing a PC to go to sleep during off hours, as compared to leaving it on all the time, saves anywhere from \$55 to \$70 a year, so this feature has some value for desktop users. Of course, the amount you save will vary depending on the type of monitor that you use and your local electric utility rates. Here in the Pacific Northwest, with our relatively low electric rates, I suspect that the savings will be something less than \$55 a year, but multiply that amount by the number of computer monitors that you have, and you can probably fill your gas tank once or twice. ;-).

With Windows XP, application programs can veto a user's request for the PC to enter sleep mode. Consequently, laptop owners who thought they had put their computer to sleep might discover a few hours later that the machine had remained on and the battery had been drained. Vista features a group policy tool that can enforce power management settings over the wishes of application programs. Vista's new sleep option allows you to wake up your computer to install security updates, while letting it remain in the power-saving mode the rest of the time.

So how can you control this energy/battery saving feature?

1. Go to your **Control Panel** and select the **Classic View**.

2. Double-click on **Power Options**.

3. The right pane of the **Power Options** window shows the main power plans that are currently available or in use. In the top-left pane of the **Power Options** window, you'll see the following options:

- *Require a password on wakeup* is self explanatory.
- *Choose what power buttons to use* opens a new window where you can select implementing the sleep mode by pressing a *sleep* button, the power button or closing a laptop's lid. Actually there are a number of options available here including Hibernate and shut down.
- *Choose what closing the lid does* is similar to the above option (it even uses the same window).

- *Create a power plan* offers three basic plans, plus an option to create customized plans.
- *Choose when to turn off the display* offers sixteen different time intervals to activate this feature.
- *Change when the computer sleeps* works the same as the *turn off the display* feature.
- *Adjust the display brightness* obviously controls the screen's brightness and the amount of power consumed by the screen.

So make your choice(s). Save power, your battery and the environment.

On another topic, when I first tested the pre-release version of Windows Vista, I noted that file transfers seemed to be much slower than with Windows XP. This problem was not

(see **Moving On** on page 11)

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The Art of Keeping Cool—Non-Fan Cooling

by Jerry Goldstein, Vice President & Newsletter Editor,
The PC Users Group of Connecticut, www.tpcug-ct.org

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Last month we went into how to cool off your desktop PC with fans. In Part 2, we look at alternative and leading edge ways to cool your computer. We also discuss how to keep your laptop from frying.

To reduce computer noise pollution, computer designers have come up with many solutions to reduce the heat. Strangely, liquids have proven successful in cooling computers. Liquids provide two benefits over air cooling your computer. Liquid computers run quieter than fan cooled ones, and water is better at drawing out heat than air. For complete submersion of computer parts, manufacturers have immersed the computer in a variety of oils—synthetic motor oil works well, but cooking oil is also used. The oil is low conductive, so the electrical parts are not damaged. Complete submersion is typically only used on extreme density computers made for business purposes. One problem with oil is that it evaporates, so proper maintenance of topping off the oil must be done.

You may say water and electronics don't mix (go ahead and say it, no one's around) but computer designers have worked out a way. The water flows inside tubes through the computer, passively pulling the heat off the components of the computer. It works the same as your cooling system in your car. A number of computers hit the market last year using water cooling systems. The obvious problem is leaks, but since water cooling has proven successful with gamers, due to water's increased heat absorbing ability over air cooling, you'll probably see more computers next year cooled by water. Just make sure you don't change a water-cooled computer's

parts in excess of the manufacturer's parameters, or you may overheat the computer and cause a pipe to leak or burst.

To assist in reducing CPU heat, heat sinks are used. Heat sinks are the fins you see rising above the CPU. Often the CPU fan rests on top of the fins as well. The heat sink works by giving additional square footage for the heat to dissipate. Kind of like when you spread out to cool off in a summer breeze. The extra space lets the air get to the heat.

Laptops pose a unique cooling problem, as they are tightly packed and sit flat and horizontally and compared to the desktop's vertical tower. Heat likes to rise but, with the laptops configuration, the heat gets trapped and needs to be blown out the bottom or sides. Laptops are more subject to user error, as people tend to forget the laptop sides need to be kept free of anything that could block the exhausts. No exhaust equals a fried computer.

When this happens, it may be cheaper to buy a new laptop than to try to fix the parts. Then again, it may be better for you to avoid laptops if you cannot remember to keep them clear of blockage.

A common mistake laptop users make is to use them in bed. The laptop sits ensconced in the bedding getting all nice, warm, and cozy. That is until they fry. If you want to use your laptop in bed, buy a laptop writing pillow. These are pillows with a hard surface on one side to keep the laptop free to breathe. Then you only have to make sure you don't fall asleep with your finger on the delete key, erasing your "great American novel."

To assist the cooling of laptops, you can buy a laptop external fan. These are powered off a laptop's USB port, and some even come with additional USB ports so you don't lose the port. These fans blow cool air on the bottom of the laptop, helping to drop the temperature. You can also try to save some money by buying a notebook stand that will raise your laptop a bit off the desk to give the laptop a bit more air space below it to cool off. I find that the stands are being penny wise and pound foolish though. The money you invest in the laptop fan will save you more in the long run, giving your laptop added longevity.

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(Mouse—continued from page 5)

was among the very first companies to recognize that different-sized people have different-sized hands. Choose a mouse that is ergonomically designed to fit your individual hand size. This will go a long way to reduce the probability of developing carpal tunnel syndrome or some other crippling ailment.

A mouse is a simple device by computer standards, yet it seldom gets the attention it deserves. Take the time to find a good ergonomically designed mouse that suits the physical characteristics of your hand, along with suitable options for your personal computing preferences. Productivity and good health are not mutually exclusive.

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Why I like the Ubuntu Operating System

by Phil Vogel, Director at Large,

The Olympia Microcomputer User Group, Washington, www.oly mug.org

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups

My interest in alternative operating systems started 20 years ago when I worked for the State of Maryland during a year of computer chaos. We had a good office system using WordPerfect, but some high State official(s) made a decision to go with Microsoft Word. At our facility, WordPerfect was no longer funded and we were no longer able to use it. Yet our mental facility didn't have the budget to buy all the copies for all of our computer, only a few.

Thus my co-workers and I became interested in alternative sources of software. One of the writing programs that we used was the predecessor of OpenOffice, and not very good. And because of the high prices charged for an inferior product (Word compared to WordPerfect) at the time, we looked to finding an alternative Operating System to Microsoft products. I remember investigating Red Hat distribution of Red Hat Linux at the time. But at the time it was not up to par with Microsoft's Windows 95.

When I joined OMUG, I was delighted to find that there was a Linux SIG. "Linux" is a term for many operating systems (OS) using the Linux "kernel" or "heart" or "engine." The kernel "drives" the system like a car engine powers a car. Conrad Schuler, one of the leaders of the Linux SIG, was promoting SUSE, a "distribution" of Linux which originally came from Germany. Paul Braget, another leader, liked Ubuntu. When joined, I found I was totally lost. However, I stuck it out and some of the understanding and data is beginning to stick to the walls of my mind.

I listened, worked on the Linux programs on the computers in the Senior Center, and became convinced that I wanted to try it out for myself. I like laptops. I can grab a computer and move it to a room or across the country easily. In this country, all computers are Microsoft friendly, but only some brands and some models of the other brands such as Dell are Linux-compatible.

I decided after some research to take a chance on a new Toshiba Qosmio. We had difficulty installing SUSE and because of inexperience it became corrupted. However, it was easier to install Ubuntu.

"Ubuntu" is a South African word which means, "I am because you are." I am writing this article because you are here, OMUG. I am using Ubuntu because a lot of people around the world contribute to its innovation, maintenance, and security. By the way, the Toshiba came with Windows Vista Home Edition. I only use it for QuickBooks; that is, I can boot into Vista when I need to, but use Ubuntu most of the time

I use Ubuntu to surf the web because it has a very secure hard kernel. It is almost impossible to attack a Linux-based machine, because all the software programs are attached to the outside of the kernel. At most, a particular program will become dysfunctional, but not the operating system. For this reason, about 90 percent of the servers around the world use Linux-based software. Some servers are so reliable that service is minimal.

The Linux kernel is simple, clean and fast, allowing me to turn it on and be on the web in a fraction of the time required by my Windows machine. My web browser is Firefox, an excellent free program.

I am writing this article with OpenOffice because it is another excellent writing program that is on a par with Microsoft Office. And it is a free program also. I must admit that Microsoft's "Access" program is superior to OpenOffice's "Data."

All the above programs are "open source," which means that you can obtain them for free by a download, or on DVD or CD for a nominal charge. However, there are also companies that will supply a person with disks, manuals and service contract just like Microsoft. But everyone is bound by the EULA of the "open source" contract, including companies and also users like me. For instance, anyone who comes up with a change or improvement must make it available to any one else for free.

So this is why I like Ubuntu, Firefox and OpenOffice. I also use other features such as watching movies, burning DVDs, and WiFi—and they work well. Now I want to edit and burn a homemade movie. Plus Ubuntu has an extensive Internet support system. New programs and updates are coming out all the time. It is an example of a technology rising up from the grassroots rather than from the top down.

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(Google—continued from page 4)
 (left) of which is a directory of specialties, and the second box (on the right) is where the user can enter a zip code, city, or other information in order to generate a listing of physicians, chiropractors, and specialists that meet the selected criteria. The listings provided include physician or practice name, address, and phone number, as well as links to the practice website (if any), driving directions from Google Maps, and a link to “Save to medical contacts.”

Once information is entered, a personal profile is created, and several analyses are made by Google Health. One that may be critically important shows up in the left column on the main page with the label “Drug Interactions” with a red exclamation point if there is a potentially dangerous interaction between prescription and non prescription drugs, vitamins, and herbals. On my personal page there is one advisory about a synergetic effect between two of my medications that says “Discuss with your doctor soon” (this effect is desirable in my case), and another interaction between three of my non-prescription medications that is labeled with a red icon “Requires immediate attention” (I already checked, and it is OK in my case).

In its privacy statement (www.google.com/health/html/privacy.html), Google Health explains the confidentiality of the information entered, and how it will not be released or shared with any third party without the express consent of the user. By my personal choice, I would be willing to allow my personal physician (if he participated), as well as any specialists or hospitals that I visit, to access my information. It could be a great time saver to allow them to access my medical records online, rather than me having to complete handwritten forms at each office I visit. Because of its inherent completeness, this online “Personal Health Record”

(PHR) can also be a life saver by providing healthcare establishments with instant access to medical histories, medications, and allergies. By having a voluntary service, such as Google Health, Microsoft’s upcoming competing service “HealthVault,” or “Revolution Health” (bankrolled by AOL’s co-founder Steve Case), which can be securely accessed by health care providers, it becomes easy to create and maintain an accurate health profile for both the benefit of the user and healthcare providers approved for access by the user.

It should be noted that there are always security and privacy risks of posting sensitive information, such as health records, online. It is quite conceivable that hackers could penetrate the security of any establishment or server that contains or has access to sensitive personal information. While I know that they are not perfect, I basically trust Google Health with my information.

While there are many other “PHR” systems and services in use, often administered by corporations for their employees, others are offered by health insurance companies, as well as some regional PHR services, Google Health has the reputation and distribution (as well as the deep pockets) to create and securely maintain such a system, and sign up participating partners who are willing to allow the sharing of medical records.

I knowingly volunteered to post my medical records on Google Health. I hope the project succeeds, and more local physicians, pharmacies, labs, and hospitals partner with the service. As more healthcare providers transition to purely digital medical records, it will become easier to securely share this vital information.

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(Deals Guy—continued from page 6)
 5.2.1 and is located at: www.majorgeeks.com/download4889.html. I’m not sure if it’s adware or freeware. There is also a free Windows Registry Cleaner there, but I don’t know how it compares with cCleaner.

Another Free Defragger

Here is another free defragging product. Go to www.auslogics.com/en/software. This item was in an article by Joe Shipley, owner of Smart Ideas, a computer consultant firm. Auslogics also offers two other free products; Registry Defrag and System Information, which gives you data about your computer. There are also some products you must pay for.

Free Picture Resizer

Resize, shrink and crop your pictures for free. Resize photos before posting them on whatever website you choose, www.picsize.com. Since I have not tried it, I can’t offer much of a description. However, they do the resizing for you right there.

Analyze Everything In Your PC

Here’s a free utility that can be used to analyze and even benchmark your computer. It offers information on hardware, including such things as motherboard, CMOS, processor, memory, the display adaptor, keyboard, mouse and all types of drivers. Also shows any peripheral devices connected (such as printer, multimedia devices) PCI/AGP buses, I/O ports, DMA channels, IRQs, Advanced Power Management, memory, resources, DirectX, DirectDraw, DirectSound and the list goes on. They say it’s easy to use and offers an attractive interface. See www.freshdevices.com/freshdiag.html to download it. Before you decide, look at the pro and con remarks on download.com.

That’s it for this month. I’ll have more new product announcements on my website (most not offering a discount). www.dealsguy.com. Bob (The Cheap skate) Click, bobclick@bellsouth.net. Editor’s note: This column has been edited for space and content considerations.

Annual Membership Renewal Form

MUG Membership Dues are only \$24.00 per year for families or individuals and are due at the June meeting. To renew your membership, fill out this form and bring it, along with your \$24 check payable to "Macon Users Group," to the MUG meeting, or mail it to:

Phyllis Minnich, MUG Treasurer
1144 Bates Branch Rd.
Franklin, NC 28734

Names of PC users in household: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State ZIP: _____

Email: _____ **Work Phone:** _____

Home Phone: _____ **Fax:** _____

(Moving On—continued from page 7)

corrected when Vista was released to the general public. The problem becomes very noticeable when you try to transfer very large files from one partition to another. Maybe it will be corrected when Vista Service Pack 1 is released but, in case it isn't, here's how you can fix it.

The cause for slow file transfers is apparently something called *Remote Differential Compression*, which is used when files are transferred from one partition to another. The fix is to disable Remote Differential Compression. How do you do that?

1. From the **Start button**, open the **Control Panel**.
2. Go to the **Programs and Features** section.
3. In the left pane select **Turn on or off Windows features**.
4. Uncheck the option for **Remote Differential Compression**.

That's all there is to it! Enjoy your faster file transfers.

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Quick Tips

by Lee Alexander

Windows Explorer

The *Status Bar* (at the bottom of the screen, when turned on—View | Status Bar)—will show you the number of objects (files and sub-folders) and cumulative size of the folder selected in the left-hand pane. If the folder contains hidden files and you have not chosen to "Show hidden files," the number of hidden objects will be shown in parentheses.

The *Address Bar* is typically set to "Show the full path in the address bar;" if not, it can be set to do so via Tools | Folder Options | View (tab) | Files and Folders section. This is a handy place to enter a URL (Uniform Resource Locator), aka a website name. If you type only the center portion of a URL and hold down the <Ctrl> key when hitting <Enter>, it will insert the prefix *www.* and the suffix *.com*. E.g., typing *cartalk* and hitting keys <Ctrl> <Enter> yields *www.cartalk.com*, opens your browser and takes you to that site.

Digital Cameras

Disable the startup screen for a quicker Power ON. Most cameras have this feature in the main menu. My Canon

S30 has a shortcut: holding down the Microphone button during startup will disable the splash screen and sounds.

EXIF (Exchangeable Image File Format) data is typically stored with each image. Information included is the ISO setting, flash usage, exposure settings, date, camera name, etc. if your software fails to display such information, try Google's free Picasa.

Directory Updates

See the printed edition.

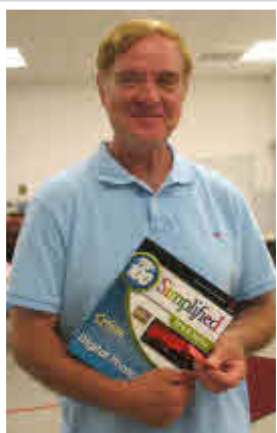
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June's Door Prize Winners



Joe Loewy won June's
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