



MUG Monitor

Macon Users Group—Serving Southwestern North Carolina and Northeastern Georgia

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August 2008

Next Meeting:

Wii

by Meg Morrison,
a minister from
Royston/Hartwell, GA
Macon Community
Facilities Building
August 12th, 7 PM

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Skype 4.0

by Joe Nuvolini, Webmaster & APCUG Rep, Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, CO, ppcompas.apcug.org

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I've been a Skype subscriber for some time now. What is Skype, you say? Well, it's an online chat/phone/video service which has, as of the end of March, some 309 million registered users. Last I heard, that is more subscribers than all the US telephone services combined! It allows you to make computer-to-computer calls free worldwide. It can support 12 million users at a time. In addition to audio and video chat, you can instant message, send text messages to phones and share files, or you can call from computer to phone.

It has three levels of service for the computer-to-phone service. For \$2.95 per month, you can make free computer to phone calls anywhere in the US and Canada. The \$5.95 service includes the US, Canada, and Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey Mexico. For \$9.95 per month, you get unlimited free computer to phone calls worldwide. They point out that unlimited means up to 10,000 minutes per month. Let's see, 10,000 minutes is over 6.9 days! I'm currently subscribing to the \$2.95 service. To call overseas with my service it runs about 2.1 cents per minute to Europe or from Europe back to the States. Skype has been offering video calling, as well, since 2005. Their data compression allows quality voice transmissions on a bandwidth of as little as 2kbs and video on 6kbs. It has a new version, 4.0, which is in beta testing. It allows you to see the person you are calling full screen. For this feature to work well you need 90kbs. I'm using it and it seems to work real well. This full screen mode will be very useful for the computer user group community.

While at the Association of PC User Groups (APCUG) Convention held in conjunction with the January 2008 Consumer Electronics Show (CES), attendees in their forum with the vendors discussed presentations at user group meetings. Over the years, the cost of sending representatives out to user groups for the purpose of promoting their wares has become no longer cost effective. We discussed the use of Webinars (live presentations across the Internet).

This new version of Skype looks to be ideal for such a program, and it can be done at little or no cost to the vendors and user groups. If you haven't tried Skype, you should. You can download the current version (3.8) at tinyurl.com/mnqa3. If you are adventurous and want to try 4.0 beta go to tinyurl.com/yq2h5c.

By the way, if you have wireless Internet access, you can purchase a WiFi phone at the Skype online store and it will allow you to make calls whenever and wherever you have wireless Internet access. There's a lot more information which you can checkout at their Website: www.skype.com.

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Wii

by Meg Morrison
August 12th, 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).

MUG Monitor Staff

Rhonda Tomlinson, editor

Website

www.maconusersgroup.org

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
Jerry Ray
John Rymer
Jack Wallingford

Linux SIG

with Jim Swanson, Mentor

The next Linux SIG meeting is Tuesday, August 26 at 7:00 PM in the meeting room at the Macon County Public Library.

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.

Restricted File Formats In Email

Many email programs will not allow recipients to open executable files with formats such as: .exe, .xls, .dll, .bat, as protection against malware. A workaround is to temporarily change the filename extension, the last three letters following the period in the file name. Then in the body of the message, tell the recipient to rename it to the correct extension. Your initials can be an easily recalled mnemonic.

Disable Win XP's Indexing

Replace Win XP's indexing service with a free search engine such as Copernic Desktop Search. To disable the cumbersome, inefficient Index Service, go to the Control Panel | Add/Remove Programs | Windows Components, and deselect Indexing.

Treasurer's Report

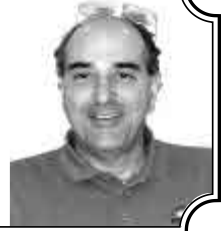
Phyllis Minnich

Balance forward.....	817.40
Income: interest, dues, 50/50.....	646.00
Expense.....	<u>(714.69)</u>
Balance*	
(including equipment fund).....	\$748.71
*Equipment Fund (50/50, auction).....	16.00
Investment Fund.....	1572.27

102nd Edition of
Lou's Views!

Face Time in the 21st Century

by Louis Vitale (aka 44RAILGUY)



Person-to-person communication was pretty simple last century. There was the letter, or as we call it today “snail mail,” and the telephone. Our address book contained the physical addresses of our friends and their phone numbers. It is amazing to me how much we actually got done: we won wars and went to the moon and created the greatest country on earth, and all without a single bit of digitized information.

To someone who grew up in the last 20 or so years, that must seem quaint. They probably can't imagine life without a cell phone, email, IM and a dozen other ways of communicating with their fellow human beings. I am beginning to wonder myself. Some one asked me the other day if I “Twittered”—I thought it was a neurological disorder. No, it was a form of micro-blogging, another way to stay in touch in the 21st century.

So just how many ways can you keep up to the minute with your “friends” today? Let me count the ways. And this is by no means a complete list.

Email has been around since the beginning of the internet. By the late 80's, everyone with a computer had an email account. Now we could send a message to anyone with a computer and they could reply. This was a momentous social change. It significantly accelerated the communication between people. Plus we could “attach” stuff, like pictures of the grandkids or an Excel spreadsheet, to our email.

In its simplest form, a blog (web log) is an online diary or journal. Prior to the mid-90's, online forums and BBSs (bulletin board systems) allowed

people to have running conversations on a website with a moderator to keep order. Then some high-profile personalities started to keep online diaries which allowed comments from anyone to be posted, and the blog was born.

Today blogging is a serious force to be reckoned with. Anyone can start a blog, and thousands do every day. Currently there are an estimated 12 million blogs and about 57 million blog readers. These numbers are deceiving, since it appears that only about 20% of blogs are active and 60% to 80% of blogs are abandoned after one month. As one commentator put it, “the average blog has the life span of a fruit fly.”

Yet this kind of personal communication has again changed the social landscape. Anyone can comment on anything from personal hygiene to politics, and anyone can respond with their take on the subject. Some bloggers have aspired to become journalists, and others are just looking for some virtual recognition. Either way we are more in touch.

Personal communication has taken another leap with the creation of social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace. These sites and many others like them allow virtual conversation to take place between friends on an almost instant basis. I will confess I don't know much about them, which only proves my age. But without a doubt, from now on a person's identity will forever be linked to their Facebook page and their list of friends.

Will some one please explain to me why someone would attempt to communicate by text using a device no bigger than a deck of cards and

with a “keyboard” consisting of 12 keys? At a minimum IM (Instant Messaging) requires tiny fingers, superb eye-hand coordination and a new language consisting of thousands of newly created letter combinations to represent real words. And another thing, since this device is a phone, why not just *talk* to the person? LOL

The ultimate “personal” communication for the 21st century must be in Second Life. In this enormous virtual world, millions of people interact with millions of other people, one on one. The whole range of human activity can now take place in a virtual environment. You can be anyone you want and “talk” to a dragon or a real priest, free of the most basic limitations of our human form. In a sense, this is probably personal communication on a level never seen before.

Twitter is the newest “form” of



communication. It answers the pressing question “What are you doing *now*?” As you go through your day, you constantly update your Twitter page with mini-blog entries no more than 140 characters long. Now anyone who is logged on to your page can tell what you are doing, what you are feeling, who you are with—at any moment in the day. Why didn't I think of that? It's obvious that I would want to know all the mundane details of all my friends' daily lives.

Face time means actual face-to-face talk. The words, the eyes, the body language, the context—all convey meaning. Let me know when we can do that online. Until then, don't look for my Twitter page.

For Anybody Who Has Thought About Trying Linux

by Drew Kwashnak, Linux SIG Leader, Danbury Area Computer Society, CT, www.dacs.org

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For anybody who has thought about trying Linux, it has become easier than ever before with Ubuntu 8.04 LTS Hardy Heron. As with most Linux distributions, Ubuntu is available as a free download and is freely distributable (www.ubuntu.com). It is even available already installed on Dell computers. The most common method is downloading the ISO image from Ubuntu's website (www.ubuntu.com) and burning it onto a CD.

From the site, you can download the Desktop version or Server for 32-bit and 64-bit systems. There is even an option to download what is called an alternative version which is just the installer and does not include the LiveCD portion, which also includes an installer. If you are like me, until a couple months ago, and living on dial-up or you do not have a CD burner handy or just don't want to put in that much effort then you can order a free CD through the corporate sponsor of Ubuntu, Canonical, ShipIt department (shipit.ubuntu.com).

I have been very pleased with the speed with which their CDs arrive. Alternatively, the website contains links to vendors where you can buy the CDs from under \$5 to more, and they can handle large orders as well.

Once you have your CD in your hot little hands, trying Ubuntu is as simple as placing it in your CD-ROM tray and rebooting your system. The system will boot from the CD, and after a short moment you'll be greeted with the Ubuntu welcome screen.

If you want to "try before you buy," then you can choose the default "Try Ubuntu without any changes to your computer," and your hard drive will not be touched during your session unless you choose to. You don't even need a hard drive to select this option; you just will not be able to install it from the session.

If you are more certain or just daring then you can go straight into the installer, and in about 60 minutes (45 minutes if you know what you are doing) you're booting to your new Ubuntu installation.



Ubuntu will scan your hardware and load the modules and drivers necessary for your system. If you have hardware that has proprietary drivers available, Linux cannot include them in the CD for legal reasons. Ubuntu works around this by providing a Restricted Drivers tool that lists all such hardware found on your system and provides the ability to download and install the necessary drivers in a click or two, legally.

Now that you have Ubuntu up and running on your system, what can you do? Plenty! Ubuntu brings you a full-featured operating system complete with:

- Firefox 3.05 beta web browser
- OpenOffice.org 2.4 full featured office suite compatible with pre-Office 2007 Word, Excel, PowerPoint and some Access files.

- Evolution personal information manager for email and calendar goodness that a Microsoft Outlook user can feel comfortable with. There are even plug-ins to allow Evolution to access existing Microsoft Exchange servers.
- Pidgin multi-protocol instant messenger including Yahoo, MSN, AIM, Jabber, IRC and more.
- Gimp (GNU Image Manipulation Program), a powerful Photoshop-like image editing program that includes filters, layers and a host of goodies.
- F-Spot image manager for categorizing and minor editing of all of your pictures as well as easily importing pictures from your digital camera.
- And much, MUCH more...

If Ubuntu doesn't come with a particular application, thousands of free applications are available from the Ubuntu online repository, that are easily installed and updated from the Synaptic package manager.

When you decide to install Ubuntu onto your hard drive or virtual machine, you only need to click the "Install" icon on the desktop to start the process. After seven or so easy questions, the installer will copy the files over to the hard disk. Depending on your system's speed, this could take about 60 minutes, more or less. It will even detect if you have Windows installed and

(see *Ubuntu* on page 10)

Painter 4 Essentials, a First Impression

by **Dave Chalmers, Editor, Kern Independent PCUG, CA, www.kipug.org**

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Corel's demonstration of their products at the recent Southwest Computer Conference showed one new product that really interested me. Corel Painter 4 Essentials is a real painting program, not a photo editing program. It has the features of being able to paint or draw with a computer. If you have a shred of drawing talent, you might really like this program.

Now I have no talents this way, unfortunately. Why I would buy a program like this, being a photographer, might surprise you. Painter has a great feature that will auto paint or draw from a photo. In this mode you pick a style from many artistic techniques and stand back.

Will this look great for all photos? The simple answer is no. If you have a lousy picture you will probably end up with a lousy painting. Photos that are dependent on a lot of fine detail to work will also not be a good candidate for this product. Simple landscapes or portraits or more abstract photos will probably work the best. Now having said that, there are always exceptions that will work; trying the process only takes some time.

You start with a photo that has been corrected and cropped using a photo editing program. JPGs, TIFs and PhotoShop PSD files will work. Just open them in Painter and start selecting the artistic medium you want. Once the program commences, you will see a very blobby and abstract image in the beginning. As the process continues, details emerge; you can stop the drawing at any time or let it go to completion. Once done you can go into using your own painting efforts to add or subtract details to enhance the painting. A good example of this

would be a portrait. Increasing the details around the eyes usually helps the overall composition. If some of the background contrasts too much with the person, you can blur and tone down the background.

A graphic tablet is a real plus with Painter, since it uses the stylus for changing the brush characteristics, as you go. A mouse works fine, but it doesn't have as much flexibility as the tablet. Wacom makes some tablets that are fairly inexpensive. Please note: a tablet is not required to get this program to work.

Printing with this program is quite simple. It doesn't have a dedicated color management system as more expensive programs, but if you can



print a good photo, then printing with Painter is no problem.

Painter comes with some excellent video tutorials that really clue you in on the features and give a great how-to aspect to it. They are logically arranged and each segment is not too long. Painter even comes with a nice printed manual, with illustrations. The manual generally follows along with the tutorials.

Retail price is \$99, and the member price is \$79. It installs on both PCs and MACs. As a supplement to a photo editing program, I certainly recommend it.

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The Deals Guy

by Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group



While working the IBM Rational Software Development Show, I visited with the guys maintaining the registration, cyber café and the classroom setup. They told me they were using VMware for the classrooms and one actual machine could support three or four virtual machines. Since each training class was for a different purpose, some virtual machines were set up for different applications. I assume that the best reasons for using virtual machines is the hardware saving, less heat and lower power consumption, which all translates to lower costs.

In another conversation, I had noticed that security people were not scanning the badges of attendees entering the exhibit floor, but there was electronic equipment there. I asked if there were RFID chips in the badges and they confirmed there were. When an attendee passes through the entrance, the RFID chip in his badge is detected and the data is recorded for various purposes. The technician also mentioned that while on the show floor, the attendee could also be tracked when he was near an exhibit. As the RFID chip nears the booth exhibit, a sensor detects it and even would know the time duration the person was at the exhibit. I assume that service would cost the exhibitor.

He told me the attendee could opt out of the RFID chip when filling out the registration form, but only about 1% do that. I wonder how many people who are always in a hurry to fill out the application even noticed that option on the form. I would prefer not to be tracked.

Are You Interested In A Second Life?

At a Central Florida Computer Society meeting (www.cfcs.org) Hewie Poplock and Mike Ungerman did a fascinating presentation about having meetings on the Net instead of in person, or even a combination of both. They used two projectors so the audience could see both laptop screens and what each presenter saw on their own screen. The displays sometimes included another member who joined them from his home. The presentation had a few glitches because they had not worked with it a lot, but Hewie and Mike are experts who will work out the bugs and refine the process to make it work.

They also demonstrated Dimdim (www.dimdim.com), a free Web Working conference site; Paltalk (www.paltalk.com), where you can videoconference with up to 10 people, or voice and type chat to hundreds in public or private rooms, and Microsoft Live Meeting. They said the Association of PC User Groups is presently negotiating with Microsoft to obtain a license for Live Meeting for every APCUG user group and that there are several more applications that facilitate video chatting or conferencing; including a new Adobe site (www.acrobat.com) where you can try "Connect Now," presently in Beta testing. Here is a comparison website: tinyurl.com/5hl7tb.

Along the way, they also threw in a little about "Second Life," a website that seems to have become a fascination for some folks and perhaps a sort of addiction for others (www.secondlife.com). At "Second Life," you create a new, but virtual, life of your own, even creating and

building just about any virtual item you wish. Second Life seemed limitless and you can buy virtual items, or sell virtual items you have constructed, using "Linden dollars." Some "residents" of Second Life have actually been able to earn a lot of real dollars by converting Linden Dollars into U.S. currency at L250=\$1. It was all completely new to me, and the traffic on that website is tremendous. Hewie has a friend who spends up to 10 hours a day on the site.

Just Paste In A Note

How often do you want to write something down for future reference while you're working on a project? Probably more than you realize. Flashnote can be helpful when you work with text and it is absolutely free software so it's easy to take a look at it. Whether you're recording a telephone number, saving a URL to reuse, or just copying pieces of text for editing, you could use a personal information manager or some other program for creating and saving text, but most of those options are slow. Flashnote is small, quick and convenient, so here is a way to save time: tinyurl.com/6lx6af.

Keep Track Of Everything

Remembering all the things that have been planned can be a major nuisance, and when important tasks get neglected it can be really serious, so here is a personal information manager. EfficientPIM Software announces the release of EfficientPIM version 1.61, the newest upgrade for its flagship tool, enabling you to maintain and secure personal information, make task lists and schedules, write notes, memos and even diaries to immortalize your

(see *Deals Guy* on page 10)

Moving on to Vista, Part 8

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

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

Windows Vista is becoming more popular every day, but there are still several special features that few people are aware of! Besides the energy saving features I mentioned last month, there's another feature that goes largely unnoticed by the average user. It's about displaying time in multiple time zones using Vista's system clock. It works very well, particularly since we work with countries all around the world and are no longer confined to one time zone. It also helps when you intend to chat with a friend or family member who lives in another part of the country. Now, instead of calculating different time zones in your head, you can have a handy toolbar on your Vista computer that will tell the time for you.

1. The first step is to right click on the clock in your system tray at the bottom of your desktop.
2. Select *Adjust Date/Time*.
3. Click on the *Additional Clocks* tab at the top of the window.
4. Choose the checkbox that you want to show the additional clock.
5. Next, pick a time zone and give it a title.
6. You can add up to two additional time zones this way.
7. Apply your changes.

To see the additional times, just hover your mouse over the clock in the system tray.

Vista's Service Pack 1 is out; if you have automatic updates enabled on your PC it should already be installed. So what does SP1 do? Microsoft previously announced that Service Pack 1 would improve the operating system's performance and

security. It would speed up file copying, waking up from sleep and hibernation faster and add and extract files from compressed folders faster.

When you install SP1, it apparently checks to see if you have installed previous updates, and if it doesn't find them it installs them. Then it proceeds to install its new features. I had used automatic updates to keep my installation current, and Service Pack 1 installed quickly on my laptop without any apparent problems.

Did I see any improvements? < sigh > Not really. I saw no noticeable improvements in performance. As far as I could tell, start-up time was the same and file copying was the same, but I had previously installed the file copy "fix" (see *Moving Up to Vista—Part 7*). Other people have reported similar impressions. One person reported Vista with SP1 compressed

files faster than without SP1, but it is still slower than Windows XP.

What about new features? Frankly, the only one I looked for and found was the disk defragmenter. Pre-SP1, when you selected the defrag function you had no choices. The function simply defragmented your all of your hard drive. With SP1 installed, the defragmenter first examines your computer and makes a suggestion as to whether your drives and partitions need to be defragmented. There's also an option to schedule defragmenting at regular time intervals. I don't remember if this was available pre-SP1.

If you select the button to defrag your hard drive, you see a new screen which gives you the alternatives to defrag all of your partitions and drives or select specific parti-

(see *Moving On* on page 11)

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Firefox 3—Hot New Browser

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

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Websites:

www.getfirefox.com—Free
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addons.mozilla.org/firefox/—Add
ons

After a lengthy wait, Mozilla has released the latest and greatest release of the very popular web browser, Firefox 3. This new release, available for free download from www.getfirefox.com, has many new features, making it a very strong competitor to Microsoft's ubiquitous browser, Internet Explorer.

Firefox evolved from an earlier browser, Mozilla, which in turn grew out of the Netscape browser as AOL announced the cessation of Netscape development. Since its first release several years ago, Firefox in its current and previous versions has developed a wide following, with hundreds of millions of copies downloaded. The newly released version 3 has tentatively set a Guinness world record with over 8 million copies downloaded in its first 24 hours of public release, despite overloaded servers that discouraged countless people from downloading it the first day of issue. According to published reports, the number of copies of Firefox 3 downloaded surpassed 14 million downloads in the first 72 hours. Obviously, many people are using it.

Rhetorically, so why are so many using Firefox 3 rather than Internet Explorer (IE), which is installed by default on all contemporary Windows computers? There are several other fine browsers in circulation, such as the newly released update to Opera,

and Apple's Safari (for both Windows and Mac), but for Windows computers, Firefox is firmly in second place, right behind Internet Explorer. If Internet Explorer was not preinstalled on Windows computers and integrated into the operating system, there is a good chance that Firefox 3 could surpass IE in a fair competitive market. Firefox 3 is faster at rendering web pages than IE, has superior tabbed browsing, is written in tighter code taking fewer system resources, and has many advantages over IE. There is no reason why PC users should not download Firefox 3 for Windows (7.8 MB download), and install it, as it runs happily on computers that already have IE installed. On a fresh installation of Firefox on a Windows computer, Firefox will nondestructively import the favorites (bookmarks), cookies, and other information from IE, without making any changes or impeding IE in any way. If Firefox 3 is installed on a computer that has an older version of Firefox installed, it will automatically install it as an upgrade, including all bookmarks, passwords, cookies, and other information. Once installed, many users, such as me, prefer to use Firefox instead of IE. In my case, I would say that I use Firefox for 98% of my browsing tasks; it would be 100%, but I have IE set up to access another internet account that I have, but rarely use.

According to the Firefox 3 website at www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox, over 15,000 improvements were made to version 3 over version 2. The newly released version 3 is claimed to be faster, safer and smarter than the previous version, and also IE! One of the new features, which I have personally verified, is the fact that

web pages do indeed load faster than on IE and previous versions of Firefox. Firefox 3 also consumes less system memory and system resources, leading to improved computer performance when Firefox is loaded and running, compared to the previous version, or even IE. Firefox 3 is also more secure than previous browsers, and incorporates the latest technologies to help prevent phishing (identity theft), and other website forgeries. A neat new feature in Firefox 3 is "Instant Website ID," where clicking on the tiny website icon ("site favicon") at the left of the URL in the menu bar will display site information and identification, which will likely indicate if the site is as intended, or a web forgery. Firefox 3 has also been engineered to work smoothly and complements Vista's parental controls, as well as most anti-virus and other security programs.

Another interesting feature unique to Firefox 3 is the "Smart Location Bar" that shows detailed information on websites recently visited, and is accessed by clicking on the right side of the menu bar. This Smart Location Bar is intelligent, in that it adapts to personal preferences to locate better website matches. Typing a "tag" or keyword in the menu bar opens a detailed list of previously visited websites containing that keyword, making it very fast and easy to locate websites that have previously been visited. Another very useful feature is the integrated spell checker, which underlines any misspelled words typed in a browser window; right clicking on the word opens a list of suggested spellings, and a mouse click will instantly replace the incor-

(see *Firefox* on page 9)

(*Firefox—continued from page 8*)

rect word with the correctly spelled word.

Malware of various types, including worms, Trojans, viruses and spyware, is a growing menace to internet users. Firefox 3 integrates a sophisticated anti-malware feature that provides some protection if the user either intentionally or erroneously accesses a website that contains attack code. If such a dangerous website is accessed, a full screen (browser window) display will appear as a warning. Firefox, working with other organizations (including Google), maintains a continuously updated list of so called “attack sites,” so there is nothing for the user to update or maintain. In the event the user does happen to fall into a suspect site, such as a very freshly created phishing (identity theft) website, the forgery can be quickly reported by simply clicking on *Help—Report Web Forgery*; this will connect to a Google service that collects such information on a real-time basis, verifies the forgery, and automatically adds it to the malware list, as well as forwards the information to groups like Phish Tank (www.phishtank.com) for further action.

Many of us use multiple passwords and user names on countless websites. Firefox 3 has an excellent integrated and secure password manager. When a password is first entered, Firefox 3 asks if you want it to remember that password and logon information, without any annoying pop-ups. Speaking of pop-ups, Firefox 3 incorporates a sophisticated and easily configurable pop-up blocker that can stop pop-ups and pop-unders, speeding and making more enjoyable the surfing experience. In some cases, pop-ups are not irritating advertisements, but instead contain important information; these can be easily allowed when desired.

(see *Firefox on page 11*)

Uniblue Registry Booster 2

by Terry Currier, Vice President & Webmaster,
WINDows usERS (WINNERS), CA, www.windowsusers.org

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I've tested a number of programs on my secondary test computer over the years. I've also installed and uninstalled a number of programs. At start up, the computer loads up my anti-virus, anti-spyware, fire-wall, UPS monitor, motherboard monitor, QuickTime, Intel graphics monitor, Maxtor storage monitor, printer software, TV software, and others. It takes a while for it to boot up. I turn it on when I need it, go away to do other things, and come back after it's ready.

Rebooting is even longer with it shutting down everything and restarting. So I thought Uniblue Registry-Booster 2 would be something good to try. Rebooting took 4 minutes 45 seconds. When I first ran Registry-Booster it found 459 Problems/Errors. The vast majority being Missing or Invalid Path.

The Windows Registry in a broad sense is a database of the hardware and software on your computer. It contains all your settings for Windows and other software. Whenever you install new software, it creates new settings in the registry. When you uninstall software, it removes all those registry settings associated with the software, right? Well it does uninstall the programs, removing them from the hard drive. Most really do very little removal from the registry. So the software is removed, but the settings are still in the registry and you have a bunch of orphan links.

Even before I installed Registry-Booster 2, I did a backup, for safety's

sake. It also can create a backup of the registry before you have it do any repairs. It can create up to eight backups, keeping the most recent. Before running it, my reboot time was 4 minutes 45 seconds. After running and fixing what it said were problems, I also used it to defrag the registry. Using RegistryBooster 2 (twice), my reboot time was down to 3 minutes 39 seconds, saving 66 seconds. Okay

that's great, but for a program like this you want to make sure there are no problems later. So I've used this for two months now and I can say I've had no problems. I've run it

about ten times total. Each time I chose to trust the program with what it said was a problem.

Conclusion

RegistryBooster 2 is very easy to use, and at \$29.95 it is a good value: tinyurl.com/v3ahr.

Supported Systems:

Windows 2000, XP, Vista 32-bit.

Recommended Requirements:

Intel Pentium 4 1GHz or equivalent processor, 512 MB RAM, 200 MB free hard disk space, Graphics mode 1024×768 true color (highest 32-bit), Internet Explorer 6.

Terry Currier is currently Vice-President & Editor of WINNERS—WINDows usERS which meets in Fountain Valley, California. He has been a member of computer user groups since 1984 (months before he even brought a computer.)

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(Ubuntu—continued from page 4)

offer to transfer over your files and compatible settings from your Windows accounts!

Of course, if the limitations of the LiveCD, such as settings, are not saved from session to session, and you are hesitant to partition and install the full operating system on your hard drive, Ubuntu offers yet another alternative called Wubi. From the Ubuntu website, “Wubi is an officially supported Ubuntu installer for Windows users that can bring you to the Linux world with a single click. Wubi allows you to install and uninstall Ubuntu as any other Windows application, in a simple and safe way.

Are you curious about Linux and Ubuntu? Trying them out has never been easier!” Wubi can be downloaded as an .exe file directly. With Linux, the installation is not the end, only the beginning! Whether you try the LiveCD, Wubi or a full installation, you will find a wealth of quality applications, refreshing freedom and a community unlike any other! If you have problems, questions or want to find out more, then you need look no further than the third Wednesday of every month for the DACS Linux SIG at 7:30 PM in the DACS Resource Center!

[Macon Users Group’s Linux SIG meets on the fourth Tuesday of every month at 7 PM in the meeting room at the Macon County Public Library.]

Drew Kwashnak has been losing more nights of sleep with Linux since 2002 and just can’t keep from downloading and trying the latest versions! When not working with Linux he works with ASP.NET and Microsoft SQL Server for a small financial company. He is also the DACS Linux SIG leader and a father of 3.

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(Deals Guy—continued from page 6)

memoirs. All this information can be password protected. With the Password Manager, you need to remember only one password to be able to record and find the others.

The Calendar display, Edit Note and Desktop Note functions have been improved from the previous version. You can literally stick some important notes on the desktop the way you do adhering paper notes to the fridge. EfficientPIM relieves your business life, enabling you to record, not only the information about your contacts, but all the events or appointments connected with them. The patented embedded search engine allows you to perform comprehensive searches, enabling you to find every piece of information you once recorded to the program.

EfficientPIM runs under Windows 98, Me, NT4, 2000, XP, 2003 and Vista and costs \$39.95 for a single-user license. The coupon code “EFFI-OMRW” gives user group members a 20% discount. Enter the coupon code on the EfficientPIM purchase page. This coupon code expires on Oct. 31, 2008. Licensed users are entitled to free updates and priority technical support for 24 months. More information is available at www.efficientpim.com.

Sib Icon Editor Goes Freeware

SibCode announces the release of Sib Icon Editor 4.0. The new version of this renowned icon editor is now being offered at no charge under a freeware license. Sib Icon Editor is a fast and lightweight image-editing tool designed for creating and editing icons, toolbars, navigation buttons, small logotypes and similar graphics. Filling the niche between simplistic Windows Paint and the almighty Adobe Photoshop, Sib Icon Editor offers small-graphics designers a way to unleash creativity without the steep learning curve.

Sib Icon Editor supports graphics of any size, color depth or aspect ratio. Both 16 and 256-color images are supported while 32-bit graphics get alpha-channel support for creating images with no edge jaggedness. The alpha-channel comes in handy when adding semi-transparent shadows. Sib Icon Editor offers a choice between a number of pens, sprays and paint-brushes. There is the usual bucket tool for filling the void, and there are gradients and chess fills to quickly achieve desired effects.

Only a few clicks will add a translucent or opaque shadow, modify opacity, colors and gamma. Disabled icons are typically grayscale, so there is a tool for that as well. Tools for smoothing, inverting and colorizing images are also available. The resulting image can be saved in ICO, ICPR, BMP, JPEG or PNG formats. Sib Icon Editor can also convert Mac icons into Windows format. Sib Icon Editor is available for free at free-icon-editor.com.

Beep Beep What??

Here is a tip I found in “Nuggets from Nuvo” by Joe Nuvolini, a great monthly column in the Pikes Peak Computer Application Society newsletter, *Bits of Bytes*, ppcompas.apcug.org. What’s your state of mind when your computer does not come to life, but instead only gives you certain beeps? File this information away where you can lay your hands on it if, some day, that happens instead of booting. What do those beeps mean? Visit tinyurl.com/446sv to get a list of the beeps. I wish my readers could read all the newsletters that I see for the valuable bits of information they contain. Not that I would know what to do with that information, but some of you might.

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 Cheapskate) Click, bobclick@bellsouth.net. Editor’s note: This column has been edited for space and content considerations.

(Moving On—continued from page 7)

tions and hard drives to be defragmented. As with pre-SP1 Vista, you can defrag your hard drive(s) while continuing to use your computer. There is no specific information that tells you how badly fragmented your drives are or how much space is used. In my opinion, the disk defragmenter in Windows XP was more useful. For that kind of detail, you'll need to use a third-party disk defragmenter. I would say that Vista's defragmenter with SP1 is improved, but still a disappointment.

And that's my general impression about Vista SP1. I'm disappointed. The speed improvements that were predicted just don't seem to be there. Maybe the security is improved, but it's not obvious to me. Maybe Service Pack 2 will be better....

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Quick Tip

by Lee Alexander

Outsmart Calendar Spam

A new tool for spammers uses Google Calendar and Microsoft Outlook's Calendar to deliver junk. How it works: You receive a meeting request with an obviously unwanted subject. It is openly spam, so you delete it. However, it still shows up in your calendar because the software automatically accepted the request or it blocked out the time for it.

In the case of Google Calendar—click on *Settings* at the top of the page and select the General tab. In the section *Automatically add invitations to my calendar*, choose *No, only show invitations to which I have responded*.

(Firefox—continued from page 9)

Many of us choose to tweak the appearance and features of our browsers, and Firefox 3 happily obliges. Firefox has many themes and “personas” that can be selectively implemented to change the appearance of the browser to meet our individual tastes. For those of us who want additional features, Firefox offers over 5,000 free “add-ons” (addons.mozilla.org/firefox), which are easy to install devices to customize the browser to work as desired. I have installed about a dozen add-ons, including some security add-ons (PhishTank, McAfee SiteAdvisor, and others), as well as an enhanced download manager (the one integrated in Firefox 3 is very adequate for most users). I also have selected to use differently colored tabs on the top of the browser window, an add-on that can make a tab an IE window (for the rare cases when a website is intended for IE only), a PDF manager, and several other add-ons.

For Outlook's Calendar—go to the menu Tools | Options | Calendar Options | Advanced Options | Resource Scheduling. Uncheck *Automatically accept meeting requests and process cancellations*.

For Outlook Express users—no sweat—the program (as of now!) does not have the feature.

Directory Updates

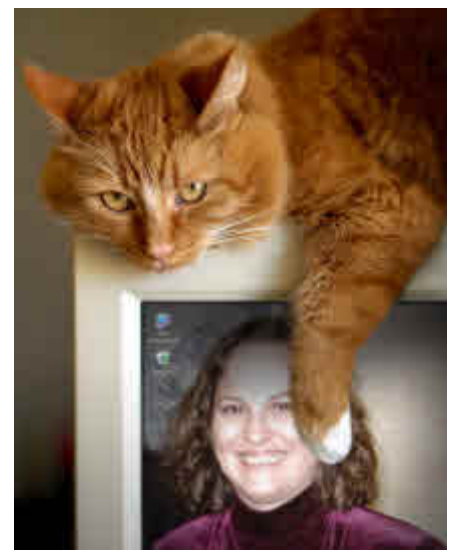
See the printed edition.

Firefox 3 is an outstanding and free product. It is a very worthwhile competitor to Internet Explorer, and users should try it to see if they like it. I like it, and use it almost exclusively on my desktop and notebook computers. That is the best recommendation I can give it.

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PhotoFunia: Fun with Images

Here's an online tool to have fun with your photos. Photofunia lets you render awesome effects in few simple clicks. Upload your photo, select the effect, and it's done—no download or registration. There are more than 50 very different effects to choose from. Here are some examples:



Go to www.photofunia.com. Thanks to www.tothepc.com for the tip.

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