



MUG Monitor

Macon Users Group—Serving Southwestern North Carolina and Northeastern Georgia

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November 2008

Next Meeting:

Second Life

by *Marion Skydancer, Local Artist*
Macon Community
Facilities Building
November 11th, 7 PM

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A Warning for Parents and Employers with Internet Access

by **Lizz Russell**

How do you keep children and employees off porn, gambling, and other inappropriate websites?

Up until now, the answer was web filtering software.

Most web filtering software works by looking up each website's address before going to make sure it is not a banned website. (The website address is also known as the URL—Uniform Resource Locator—for example, <http://www.badaddress.com>).

Now there's a very easy way for children and employees to get to the blocked sites no matter what URL filtering software is in place.

This is done by using a service called Anonymous Proxy. It has actually been around since 2002, but it was a relatively unknown service. In the beginning, there just were a few, but now there are over 10,000 anonymous proxy sites, and it's a service that is growing like a weed.

An Anonymous Proxy service brings up *any* web page that the viewer wants by bringing it up through the proxy service web page—no matter what.

Web filtering services could add the anonymous proxy addresses and block them too, but with over 10,000 of these sites, many more daily, and clever concealment techniques, it is a battle that cannot be won with filtering. For example, there are web proxy services that never tell you they are web proxy

services. Some of the services are two and three screens deep on a website.

So what is the answer?

Do you let your children and employees run amok, which would be the laissez faire method of management (aka lazy fairy)?

Do you sit with your children every time they go on the computer? That's not a practical answer. As my son once told me, "I'll just go to my friend's house and do it." If I were going to give any one piece of advice regarding children and computers, it would be to put computers in common spaces, such as the living room, dining room, office—not the bedroom.

Do you put monitoring software in your computer, such as Big Brother (www.iambigbrother.org) or Spy Buddy (www.exploreanywhere.com) to track your children or employees? It would definitely work, but it would be an after-the-fact method.

I do not know what the right answer is, but I felt it was important to get the word out.

Second Life

by local artist
Marion Skydancer

7 PM, November 11th

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
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Anti-Virus Virus

by Sandy Berger, CompuKISS,
www.compukiss.com

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

I hate writing about computer viruses. It always reminds me of how many unscrupulous, money-hungry people there are in the world. Yet, there are times when I feel that I must write about a certain virus because it is causing so much havoc for everyday computer users. Unfortunately, that time has come again. In the past two weeks, my company has removed a very bad group of viruses from six different computers. So I feel it is time to send out a warning.

There are many different variations of this virus and its cousins. They have many different names, including Antivirus 2008, Antivirus 2009, SpywareScanner 2008, and AntiVirXP08. Some experts are calling them viruses. Some are calling them malware. Symantec calls them misleading applications. McAfee lists them as PUPs (potentially unwanted programs).

(see Virus on page 11)

Linux SIG

with Jim Swanson, Mentor

The Linux SIG will meet on Tuesday, November 25th at 7:00 p.m. in the large meeting room of the Macon County Public Library.

There will not be a SIG meeting in December. The January meeting is tentatively set for Tuesday, January 27, 2009 at the same time and place. Anyone interested in exploring the Linux operating system is welcome and encouraged to attend. We are all learners, and we help each other up the learning curve.

Treasurer's Report

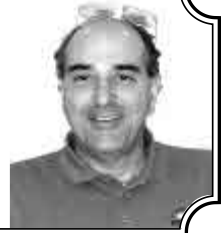
Phyllis Minnich

Balance forward.....	748.71
Income: interest, dues, 5□0/50.....	72.00
Expense.....	(79.00)
Balance*	
(including equipment fund).....	\$741.71
*Equipment Fund (50/50, auction).....	16.00
Investment Fund.....	1572.27

Lou's Views!

Mighty Mini

by Louis Vitale (aka 44RAILGUY)



How much would you pay for a new laptop with a 1.6 GHz processor, 1 GB RAM, 160 GB hard drive, XP operating system, 1024×600 widescreen format, Wi-Fi equipped, network ready, 5.5 hour battery life, multiple USB ports, multi memory card reader, a camera and mike, and weighs just 2.3 pounds? How about \$379!

The Acer Aspire 150-1570 is such a machine and is available now just before Christmas. Granted, it has an 8.9-inch screen and no optical drive, but with flash memory cards that have more capacity than a DVD and a screen that's 10 times bigger than any "video device" currently on the market, it is a bargain by any measure.



Acer Aspire

Welcome to the world of mini laptops. This is a fast growing segment of the computer market whose price point is less than \$500. It all started with the famous "\$100 computer" designed for mass production and distribution in very poor countries. That initiative prodded the chip makers to design very small, cheap, and energy efficient processors.

The first one is called the Atom by Intel, and this is how they describe it: "The Intel® Atom™ processor is Intel's smallest processor, built with the

world's smallest transistors and manufactured on Intel's industry-leading 45nm Hi-k Metal Gate technology. The Intel Atom processor was purpose-built for simple, affordable, netbooks and nettops."

The first really inexpensive laptop was put out by Asus Eee, It started out in early 2007 as a direct competitor to the \$100 computer and currently has 3 models out; all have solid-state drives and card slots for main storage. It is still the least expensive. At first, it only used a Linux OS, but now has some XP versions. Dell and HP have now joined the fray and both have under-\$500 laptops available. Their machines have internal hard drives and standard memory options.

But none of these machines have optical drives. So if you want to run a DVD or a CD, you must connect an external drive to a USB port. These options are available in the \$50 to \$75 range. Not too long ago, we were bemoaning the death of the floppy drive. Are the DVD and CD soon to follow? With available flash drives at 16 GB and climbing fast, that may be the case.

This revolution has just begun; you can now



ASUS Nettop

buy an ASUS Eee Nettop PC. This is a very small box without a monitor or keyboard. Attach it to the back of your existing LCD monitor, connect your old keyboard and mouse, and get an external optical drive—and for less than \$290 plus the drive, you are in business. It has an Atom processor, 1GB RAM, 80 GB hard drive, XP and much, much more. Think about it, the big beige box is gone.

E-cycle Success

So what are you going to do with that old beige box? I suggest you wait for our next e-cycle event. As you know, MUG helped sponsor a computer recycle event for 2 weekends in October. As you can see from the picture, we collected quite a load. As best I can estimate, there were at least 50 old monitors, 20 to 30 printers and as least that many computers. All the material came from our club members and friends of those sponsoring this event. It will all be sent to Blue Ridge Recycle in Asheville.

The plan is to do this again in a couple of months. We never got any local press coverage, so the next time that will be a priority. I feel if we had better promotion for the event, we would have filled the truck twice.



Ubuntu & Linux Software

by **Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida, www.spcug.org**

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

I suppose some of you might be wondering why I have been writing about the Ubuntu Linux operating system and Linux software. As I noted in last month's article, my laptop is now my sole computer. Although it has a Pentium 4 processor, it only has 512 MB of RAM. Naturally, that means it is incapable of running Windows Vista. But it does easily run Ubuntu with more than enough memory to do multi-tasking with no reduction in speed. I also know that there are a number of the members of the SPCUG that use computers that are running Windows 98 or Windows XP. The point is that it is not necessary to try to upgrade these computers to run Vista or to buy a new computer. Instead you have the free alternative of installing Ubuntu or another version of Linux. This article will discuss some of the range of free Linux software and how easy it is to install it.

The original installation CD of Ubuntu included the OpenOffice software. OpenOffice includes a word processor, spreadsheet and presentation applications. These are fully compatible with the components of Microsoft Office. I frequently receive documents prepared in MS Word and they open directly into OpenOffice Writer. I can edit, comment and save a copy in the OpenOffice format. Then I can return the modified document to the originator in MS Word format with all the edits and comments intact. The same is true for spreadsheets. The OpenOffice presentation application (Impress) reads, writes and modifies PowerPoint files as easily as Writer works with documents. OpenOffice also includes a Drawing application. Drawing is an application that I haven't used.

Other included software with Ubuntu are Ekiga (internet phone software), Pidgeon (internet messenger), Evolution (email), and a remote desktop viewer. Graphics software includes the F-Spot photo manager, GIMP Image Editor and Xsane scanner software. Also, there is a CD burner, movie player for DVDs and two music players.

I grant you that the included software doesn't always meet all the needs for many users. So Ubuntu has several ways of installing additional software. I mentioned last month about installing the drivers for my printer, scanner and the wireless modem. This month I will continue with other applications that are the equivalent of those that I used under Windows. The installation of these applications was much easier than installing drivers for the accessory hardware.

The first step in installing any application is to go to the Applications | Add/Remove menu. When this application runs, it provides you with a list of all the software available through Ubuntu and its third-party providers. On the left side of the window are listed various categories that you can highlight and the appropriate applications are then listed on the right side. When you highlight a specific application, a description appears in the lower portion of the window. There is also a search box that you can use to find a specific program or a group of programs.

Since I maintain my financial records on my computer, I wanted a financial program that ran under Ubuntu. Not knowing the specific name, I just searched on the term "finances." This

brought up a list of financial software. One of the interesting aspects of the Add/Remove application is that programs are rated based on feedback from users using 1 to 5 stars. There was a 5-star application listed, GNUcash, which can import files in the Quicken format. So I put a check mark in the box by the application name and then clicked on the Apply Changes button. This brought up another window for verification of the changes to be made. After clicking on OK, the application was downloaded from the Internet and installed on the hard drive without any further action on my part. A shortcut icon was also added to the Office portion of the applications menu. There was no reboot required to complete this process. After the installation, the Add/Remove application reported the successful installation and remained open in case I wanted to use it further.

My Windows financial software was Microsoft Money. Supposedly it will export its data files in the Quicken format. I did that and then copied the files from the Windows partition to the Ubuntu partition. However, the import into GNUcash was not really successful. I'm not sure why, but I suspect there was information missing which resulted in misidentification of some of the accounts. Anyway, I selected an arbitrary date and entered opening balances for that date. So now, it is working perfectly and is in agreement with my bank balances. Using it is even somewhat easier than working with either Money or Quicken. Plus, the price is right.

Another application that I needed for Ubuntu was a genealogy program.

(see *Ubuntu* on page 5)

(Ubuntu—continued from page 4)

Here again I was able to find a 5-star program, GRAMPS. (Very appropriate name I thought.) It was also available through the Add/Remove application, so installation was completed quickly. GRAMPS imports GED files as do many genealogy programs. So I exported my files from my Windows software in the GED format then copied the GED file to the Ubuntu partition. The import into GRAMPS was essentially a two-click operation. Everything, including notes and references, were now available in an Ubuntu application. GRAMPS also has more report formats than my Windows software included. So I consider it a very successful replacement.

For quite some time I have used a PDA, specifically a Sony Clie which runs Palm Pilot software. The Sony CD loaded the Windows version to the hard drive and also included software to synchronize with the PDA. Since I have considerable contact information in the Clie, along with many memoranda, I really wanted to be able to run this under Ubuntu. In the System-Preferences menu there is a selection for PalmOS devices. Now that sounded like it would be quite simple to install the applications necessary to run the Clie. Clicking on the selection runs the Gnome-Pilot application which helps the user to determine the settings for synchronizing with the Clie. Unfortunately, it could not find the Clie PDA. So I had to go back online to the Ubuntu forums to see if I could find the secret. It turns out that getting a PDA recognized and synced with Ubuntu is not always simple. After spending considerable time reading various solutions, I came across a command line entry that showed the entries where my Clie was being recognized by Ubuntu. The PDA was properly identified by vendor and product IDs. Now all the information I had gathered indicated that the PDA should be listed as using a USB

connection—usually ttyUSB0 and ttyUSB1. Much to my surprise, my printout showed the Clie as using ttyUSB9 and ttyUSB10. The Gnome-Pilot software refused to accept either of these as valid locations. However, another application, J-Pilot, accepted ttyUSB10 and synced with the Clie when the sync button was clicked. The synchronization transferred all of my information directly into the J-Pilot software. This software works on the desktop in a very similar manner to the Clie and Pilot software I had used under Windows. Successive synchronizations have also been successful. So that was one less application that would need to run under Windows.

There has been one big disappointment in the hardware setup. I have a multi-function media card reader built into the laptop. It reads SD cards as well as xD, MMC, and memory sticks. This reader works great under Windows as a way to transfer photos from my camera to the computer. However, there is apparently no driver available for this to work under Ubuntu. The card reader is manufactured by 02 Micro and they apparently don't believe Linux is here to stay, so they have no plans to create Linux drivers

for any of their products. At least that's the quotation from a response to a query from a Ubuntu user. So when I have photos to transfer to my computer I can either reboot into Windows, or I can connect the camera with a USB cable. The USB cable works fine, as Ubuntu recognizes the camera right away. It also opens the F-Spot Photo Manager which allows me to choose the pictures and the location where I want them saved.

One of the applications included with Ubuntu is Brasero, a CD/DVD burner. When I first tried to use it, it refused to recognize my DVD+R discs. It would read and write DVD-R/RW with no difficulty. Since I had a supply of the +R discs, I decided to look for other DVD burning software. In the Add/Remove application, there were several CD/DVD burners listed. One of them was 5-star application called K3B. It was written primarily to work with the KDE desktop that is an alternative to the GNOME desktop. The KDE desktop comes with Kubuntu and has an interface that is closer to the one found in Windows. Anyway, K3B will work with GNOME, so let Add/Remove install it. Any software

(see Ubuntu on page 10)



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The Deals Guy

by Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group



Proper Credit

I wrote about Hewie Poplock and Mike Ungerman of Central Florida Computer Society working on the live meeting technique whereby members could join the meeting online if they couldn't make it in person. I also gave you the URL to see the video of a meeting. They wanted everybody to know that it was not originally their intention to do this work, but Dave Dockery of Tampa Bay Computer Society (www.tampa-bay.org) convinced them to give it a try since he has been doing it successfully for some time. They are still trying to get the technique perfected and www.ustream.tv is just one of the URLs they use for a monthly or SIG meeting, but while it's a lot of work, it has its rewards. Check www.cfcs.org for meeting information.

A Word of Caution

I have not tried any of the items listed below so do your homework if you're interested.

Share Your Artistry With The World

Acoustica (MixcraftLive.com) has introduced a free service allowing anyone to upload their music, podcasts or sonic creations to share with the world. The site allows artists to create an account, upload artwork and publish up to 100 megabytes of music. Each artist account has a forum and a blog to help foster a community and fan database. Each song can be ranked and, if popular enough, can appear on the top song charts. Artists can update an event calendar with their "gigs" so that their fans can find out when the next performance is. The service is completely free and can be used by anyone wishing to showcase their sonic creations recorded with Mixcraft.

Mixcraft is a multitrack music recording studio for Windows computers and has recently been awarded the Computer Music Value Award and the Keyboard Magazine Key Buy Award. It is seen as the Windows equivalent of Apple's Garage Band for price and functionality. MixcraftLive.com adds even more value to the software and is intended to showcase the musical skills and talents of artists recording with Mixcraft.

Mixcraft now includes an additional 574 new music loops and over 300 new sound effects which are automatically downloaded on demand. These sounds are free to all Mixcraft customers. The loops include 13 exciting new Song Kits: Breakbeat, Crunk, Drum N Bass, Electro House, Film Score, House DJ, Jungle Drum N Bass, Progressive Euro, Southern Hip Hop, Synth House, Tribal House, Underground Hip Hop, and Urban Street Mix!

Would You Believe Eyeball To Eyeball? (I can't remember where I read this one.)

Eyeball Chat is a free product that you can use for talking on the phone and seeing each other at the same time; that is, if you are both using the product. At www.eyeballchat.com, you can download the software to accomplish all this. Of course, there is more to it than that, but at least this product is free for you to experiment with. Check out their website and you will find further information.

Everybody Talks About It, But Here is More Than Talk

Other than spam, a frequently discussed subject is the privacy of your computer. There is a place on the web where there is help. Check into

www.saltmeadow.com/privacy, where you will find seven tools for working on the privacy of your computer. Some of them you may already know about, and others you may not. Best of all, it is all freeware.

Do You Love Games?

MyRealGames has launched a free gaming portal that provides downloadable and online casual games. The portal, www.MyRealGames.com, is aimed to ensure a great pastime for audiences of all ages. Arcade, puzzles, shooters, dress-ups, sports and more are all free now. The portal also features free games which were only available in "try-before-you-buy" versions before.

MyRealGames.com can be recommended to those who are tired of advertisements in games because they don't have disturbances like annoying banners between levels. The only thing obligatory is a visit of the site after a user exits a game. The games are available in both 2D and 3D, and have three working languages.

With more than two hundred games, MyRealGames.com has something in stock for everybody. If you're an arcade game lover, don't forget to check out Space Bubbles. There are extraordinary power-ups and amazing bonuses to discover within every puzzle! Enjoy endless hours of bubble blasting action: www.myrealgames.com/files/space-bubbles.exe.

Exercise your billiard skills with the help of Billiard Masters or Cool 3D Billiards, which you can play against the computer or friends. The atmosphere of a comfortable place makes the game even better. Join billiard

(see *Deals Guy* on page 10)

Broadsides: Windows Tips, Tricks & Hints

by Ron Broadhurst, a member of the Space Coast PC Users Group, Inc.,
Florida, www.scpcug.com

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

These ideas are compiled from years of accumulations from various magazines, books, online sites, and my own personal experience. I claim neither originality nor ownership to any of its contents. My only intent is to share these various tips, tricks and hints in hopes of helping & maybe enhancing your computing experiences. They are all intended for anyone who uses a PC. It is for beginners as well as advanced users. Enjoy and use as you will.

How to Get Rid of "Send Error Report to Microsoft"

- Right click *My Computer* on the desktop or in the Start menu.
- Click *Properties*.
- Click the *Advanced* tab.
- Click the *Error Reporting* button at the bottom.
- Click *Disable error reporting*. You can select the checkbox under it if you still want to be notified when errors occur.
- Click *OK*.

Note that you can disable error reporting for the operating system only, or for programs only, by unchecking the appropriate box under the *Enable error reporting* option. You can also configure error reporting only for specific programs by clicking the *Choose Programs* button.

Alphabetize Start Menu Listings

When you install a new program on your system, it will often appear at the end of your Start menu. Reorganizing files alphabetically in the All Programs menu does not affect how they appear in your start menu. In order to alphabetize your start menu, you'll want to click *Start* and select *All Programs*. On any file or folder, right-click and then select *Sort By Name*. Now all of your Start menu programs are in alphabet-

ical order. You can also sort subfolders in your Start menu the same way.

Make Quick Launch Icons Bigger

- Unlock the Toolbar
- Right click the Quick Launch toolbar
- Select the View tab
- Select large icons

Pin An Application To Start Menu

The Windows XP Start menu includes an area where two or more Microsoft applications, usually Internet Explorer and Outlook Express, are permanently positioned for easy access. You can add your favorite application to this same convenient location. Open Windows Explorer and locate the executable file for the application. Right-click the file and select *Pin To Start Menu*. The application will now appear in the Start menu. To remove an application, locate it, right-click it, and select *Unpin From Start Menu*.

Alternatively, you can right-click the app in the *Start* menu and click *Unpin From Start Menu* (or *Remove from This List*).

Change System Sounds

Through the Control Panel, you can change your system's program event sounds. Click *Start* and then *Control Panel*. If you're using Category View, click *Sounds, Speech, and Audio Devices*; and *Sounds and Audio Devices*. If you are using the Classic View, click *Sounds and Audio Devices*. This loads the *Sounds and Audio Devices Properties* dialog box. Choose the *Sounds* tab. Select the sound you'd like to change in the Program events box, and then select a new sound from the Sounds drop-down menu. Or select a sound you've saved to the hard drive by using the *Browse* button to navigate to the sound file. Change as many sounds as

(see *Broadsides* on page 11)

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Google's New "Chrome Browser" (Beta) Not Yet Ready for Prime Time

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

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

Website: www.google.com/chrome

As I type this, the national media is playing up the fact that today is Google's tenth anniversary. In that time, it has become the predominate player in the search industry, with a market share of about two-thirds. By more than coincidence, Google also recently announced the public release of a beta version (pre-release) of its free new browser with the moniker "Chrome." It is no secret that Google is in a competitive war with some parts of the Microsoft dynasty, and Chrome is intended to be a competitor of Internet Explorer (IE). By design, Chrome may be a superior browser to IE, but in the few days that I have used it, I have to conclude that the current beta version is "...not yet ready for prime time." Several of the websites that I routinely visit, including two different webmail accounts, My Yahoo, my weather page, and some other sites, would partly load and display, and then disappear with a black window with a white font and graphic displayed. The graphic is of a frowning web page, and the expression "Aw Snap! Something went wrong while displaying this webpage. To continue press Reload or go to another page." Reloading would not fix the problem on any page where the error appeared. This is why I believe that this beta version, while fast, attractive and feature rich, is not quite ready to take its place as a primary or secondary browser. For the record, every page that failed to load in Chrome, loaded flawlessly in IE and Firefox. Despite this nagging bug, Chrome is still a worthwhile free download, because it has several interesting features lacking on the competing browsers, especially its obvious target, Chrome's nemesis, Internet Explorer.

Chrome (beta) was fast and easy to download from www.google.com/chrome, and effortlessly installed on my XP machine. During the install I was given the option to import bookmarks (favorites), cookies, and passwords from Internet Explorer, which I chose to do. While unstated by Google, it appears obvious that later versions of Chrome will be able to import data from Firefox. Chrome will also run on Vista, and versions for Mac and Linux are in the works.

After reading about Chrome and its features, I was excited about its potential. It is written in open source code using some of the best features of other open source products such as Firefox and Apple's WebKit. The code is tight and compact, and when it works, appears to load and display websites much faster than IE. Some of the technical websites have actually tested the load times of popular websites, and Chrome may be the fastest browser available. One feature about Chrome, which I was especially interested in, was its default display of thumbnails of the websites most frequently visited by the user. Clicking on the thumbnail would instantly open the website either in that window, or in another tab (window) at the user's discretion. The appearance of the Chrome browser is clean and uncluttered. Each Chrome tab or window is loaded in a virtual "sandbox" such that if one web page crashes, it will not take down the entire browser, but instead only close the affected tab.

More and more applications are being integrated, many of which can be run directly from Chrome. Clicking on the control icon on the toolbar of Chrome gives several options, one of which is to create instant application shortcuts

which can load applications into Chrome. An icon is created and placed on the desktop by Chrome, and clicking on that icon directly opens the application in a Chrome tab, even if Chrome is not loaded or is offline. This can give near instant access to such services as Gmail, Google Calendar, or most other applications.

Utilizing a concept "one box for everything" enables the traditional address bar of the browser to perform several simultaneous functions. As information is typed in the address bar, Google (by default) will identify previous websites visited as well as suggested search topics which become more detailed as more is typed. While Google is the factory default search setting, it can be easily changed to other major search engines, such as Yahoo. Multiple sites, such as EBay, Amazon, and others can also be selectively searched as determined by the user.

Chrome uses tabbed browsing—long a staple of Firefox, but fairly new in IE. The tabs are dynamic, in that they can be dragged—changing their order on the top of the screen, or into a window creating a new window. This gives the user total control over the appearance of the pages displayed for comparison or other purposes, and is an attractive feature. Another useful feature in Chrome that also previously appeared as a default in Firefox is a safe browsing function. Chrome dynamically checks websites entered in the address bar against a continuously updated database of malware and phishing (identity theft) websites, and displays the following in a red warning window in a large font,

(see *Chrome* on page 9)

The New, The Best, and The Worst

by Pim Borman, Webmaster, SW Indiana PC Users Group, swipcug.apcug.org

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

Could Cuil Cool Google?

Let me digress. I suspect that most of my readers, like myself, have reached that stage in life when our wisdom exceeds our wits. To make sense of our surroundings we must keep our glasses clean and a fresh battery in our hearing aid.

Recently my son, Mike, and I were watching a DVD from his vast collection (*Batman Begins*, in case you're wondering). Mike turns on the subtitles for me, so it wasn't until we took a break for some light refreshments that I noticed that my hearing aid battery had died. As I proceeded to insert a fresh battery, Mike marveled at the tiny disk that successfully powers a small in-ear hearing aid for several weeks. I told him that they are unlike watch batteries and that they are air-powered to the best of my recollection. Before the first use, they are activated by removing a small foil tab to admit air. Mike appeared to question my wisdom, if not my wits.

Just to be sure of the facts, back home I fired up Google and searched for "zinc air battery." That yielded 433,000 results, confirming that my recollection of the technology was correct. One of the results made me sit up and take notice:

Zinc-Air Batteries

With the removal of a sealing tab, oxygen from the air is introduced into the cell. A zinc-air battery usually reaches full operating voltage within 5....

I often have trouble getting a new battery to work right away and have been scratching the electrodes with a pen knife to assure good electrical contact. The incomplete reference

snippet teasingly suggested that the battery simply needed 5 somethings (minutes maybe?) to activate. Maybe the scratching had nothing to do with it? I tried to retrieve the full article, but the link was dead and the cache was empty. None of the other Google retrievals mentioned anything about activation time.

I recently read about a new search program, called Cuil (pronounced "cool"), meaning "wisdom" in Gaelic. Reportedly it improves on Google by scanning articles for organization of ideas, instead of number of links. It was mostly created by former Google employees and can be accessed at www.cuil.com.

Early reviews of Cuil have been mixed, so I thought this was a good time to give it a try.

As a result of my query about "zinc air battery," Cuil produced exactly 8 results, including 5 virtually identical ones from a single vendor site, www.batteriesplus.com. Not very helpful. So much for Cuil, as it stands now.

The same query on Yahoo yielded 4,270,000 results, with the first page mostly from hearing aid battery sellers that probably paid to be listed first. The teasing reference found earlier with Google was listed by Yahoo at the bottom of the page, but it also ended in 5... (what?).

I went back to Google and narrowed the search to "zinc air battery activation." That yielded the mysterious reference right on top, adding that the activation time was 5 seconds.

Well, it takes longer than 5 seconds to insert the battery and check the hearing

aid by holding it in the closed fist and listening for its feedback squeal.

With a magnifying glass I detected 3 tiny air holes under the tab in the positive top of the battery. Certainly, it would take some time for sufficient

(see *The New* on page 10)

(*Chrome—continued from page 8*)

"WARNING: Visiting this site may harm your computer!"

Many users like to create lists of bookmarks and favorites, and Chrome makes bookmarking sites very fast and easy. There is a small star on the address bar, and clicking on the star creates the bookmark, with the option to modify the bookmark. Another common task that Chrome handles very well is downloading files. Rather than using a download manager, Chrome displays download progress in the bottom of the window. When completed, the downloaded file can be dragged to the desktop or elsewhere, or opened directly by clicking on the filename in Chrome.

Chrome has been a lot of fun to play with, despite my frustrations trying to open some websites. Google will be releasing frequent updates, and hopefully the page-loading bug will be quickly remedied. If you want to try the latest in browser technology, being fully cognizant that it is currently a beta version, then Chrome may be a worthy browser to download and install. Chrome coexists just fine with IE and Firefox, and does not interfere with them.

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(Ubuntu—continued from page 5)

that you add through Add/Remove can be removed simply by locating it in the list and removing the checkmark that indicates it has been installed. So now I have both Brasero and K3B installed. I also found, the next time I wanted to burn a DVD, that Brasero would now work with my external burner and the +R discs. I do like the interface for K3B better than Brasero, but they both work.

As you can see, one of the nice attributes of using open-license software is the ability to install it and use it at no cost. If you don't like it, you simply remove it. It's certainly not that simple in Windows. So, if you want to try a Linux OS on your computer, download a Live CD and try it out. Also check out the online help forums. I think you'll find them easier to understand than much of the material Microsoft makes available. Whatever you decide, enjoy your computing!

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years, developing software and assembling systems. This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author at [bwsail\(at\)yahoo.com](mailto:bwsail(at)yahoo.com).

(BroadSides—continued from page 7)

you like. Save your changes as a sort of theme from the Sound Scheme drop-down menu above the Program events box. (Select the blank line and click Save As.) You can also choose to disable program event sounds. When you're finished, click *OK*.

Saving Email Messages

To save email messages, highlight the message you want to save, then click on *File | Save As*. Select where you want to save the message and then save it as a .txt file.

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(Deals Guy—continued from page 6)

club at www.myrealgames.com/files/billiard-masters.exe.

Try Nuclear Bike. Complete levels as fast as possible to achieve maximum score points. Speed up! Traffic police can't catch you here: www.myrealgames.com/en/play_online_nuclearbike.html.

Here Is Another Free Defragger, This One Has Rave Reviews!

IObit is proud to announce the release of Smart Defrag. Smart Defrag was in development for 1½ years, tested by over one million users, and is now available to all PC users for free. Most users cannot clearly know the current fragmentation status of their hard disk, and have no good control over performing the defragmentation. "We have taken care of PC users' needs in our free Smart Defrag" says Hugo Dong, president of IObit.

Smart Defrag includes an "install it and forget it" feature that works automatically and quietly in the background of the computer. It places the frequently used data into the fastest area of the disk, and is specially designed for modern, large hard drives. It is free for home, organization and business, and 100% safe from any spyware, adware and virus, and is designed for Windows 2000, XP, Vista and future Windows 7.

Smart Defrag is available in English and other languages. More information and free downloads are available at www.iobit.com/iobitsmartdefrag.html.

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.

Directory Updates

See the printed edition.

(The New—continued from page 9)

air to diffuse through those little holes to activate the battery. I ran a quick experiment, checking how fast the voltage builds up in the hearing aid battery after removing the seal tab, and found that it took about 1½ minutes. With the battery under load in a hearing aid, it may well take a little longer than that.

Next time my hearing aid needs a new battery I may only need to wait a few minutes for it to get up to speed.

Meanwhile, I'll stick with Google for my searches until Cuil has added more wits to its wisdom.

More About Zinc-Air Batteries

Zinc-Air batteries, as used in hearing aids, are great performers in comparison to other types of batteries. On an equal weight basis, they carry 4-5 times as much charge as lead-acid, nickel-cadmium and nickel-hydride batteries, and 30% more than lithium ion batteries. They maintain a constant power output over better than 85% of the time to full discharge. Because of inexpensive ingredients: zinc, aqueous caustic, carbon and some plastic membranes, encased in a metal container, they are inexpensive to manufacture. The batteries are non-toxic and pose no danger to the environment on disposal. They are not a fire hazard, like lithium batteries.

They have two major shortcomings: a limited lifetime when air is admitted, and they are not rechargeable.

Zinc-Air batteries are fuel cells that consume zinc. In comparison to the much-ballyhooed hydrogen fuel cells, zinc is inexpensive, easily transported and stored, non-hazardous, and the spent fuel, zinc oxide, is easily regenerated electrically from renewable sources.

Large-scale experiments have demonstrated that the batteries can power city buses for a full day's

*(see **The New** on page 11)*

(Virus—continued from page 2)

Whatever you call them, they are terribly invasive.

By most accounts, these awful applications piggy-back on programs that are downloaded from the Internet. However, some experts are warning that your computer may become infected by simply visiting certain websites, especially if your operating system and/or antivirus software is not up-to-date.

The gist of the matter is that once your computer is infected, you will begin to see pop-up windows that give an exaggerated report of the number of threats that your computer is infected with. The window may say something like "Your computer has become infected with 231 computer viruses and spyware." These pop-ups try to scare you into purchasing their antivirus or antispyware software. If you purchase it, they send you a registry key, but it doesn't work

because the program they sell you doesn't exist. These viruses are also being spread by malicious websites that sell fake antispyware software.

On top of that, there are many other viruses or pieces of malware that can piggyback on the main virus. So this malware can dramatically slow down or even stop your computer. The infections being caused by these viruses and malware programs are extremely harmful and can be very difficult to remove. They often require a cleanup by a professional or a complete reformatting of the hard drive and reinstallation of the software.

As an everyday computer user, you need to be very careful about the software that you download from the Internet. Make sure that it is from a source that you know to be reputable or a website that has been recommended by a trustworthy source. You can also use a program like the McAfee Site Advisor to help you

assess the validity of the website before you download the program. McAfee's Site Advisor is a small program that is used by your Internet browser to indicate the safety of websites. It is a free download available at www.siteadvisor.com and it is a valuable tool.

Also, as usual, be sure that you update your operating system and antivirus software regularly. Don't fall for any program that pops up on your computer trying to scare you into purchasing antivirus or antispyware software.

Yes, the bad guys are out there and they have a lot of computer savvy. So we all need to be smart about the software we download and the websites we visit.

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(The New—continued from page 10)

use, using recyclable zinc-electrolyte cartridges for fuel. The US Army is a large-scale user of Zinc-Air batteries in battlefield operations. They provide 4 to 6 times the run time of conventional batteries, and are used with portable equipment in locations where reliable electrical power is not available.

Desktop Publishing With Scribus

Now that the format of this newsletter is no longer restrained to eight Xeroxed pages for mailing, I will add some color and variety to the layout. That requires switching from the OpenOffice Writer word processor I have been using to a desktop publishing program, preferably inexpensive and easy to use.

I considered my old copy of MS PictureIt! Publisher, but that uses a proprietary file format not easily converted to pdf.

I found an offer of a free desktop publishing program online, PagePlus,

list price \$129.99, with a special download offer for only \$10. Inexpensive enough to be worth a try. I paid my dues, downloaded and installed the program. The interface was not very intuitive, so I started with chapter 1 of the tutorial. That pointed me in the right direction and I eagerly went on to chapter 2. Surprise! The rest of the tutorial required downloading or ordering a CD at a cost of \$99.99! I quickly lost interest.

I am much in support of Open-Source (free) programs, many of which are quite sophisticated, such as OpenOffice Writer and The Gimp. At one time I had looked at Scribus, an Open Source, full-featured desktop publishing program, available in versions for Linux, the MAC and Windows. At the time I was scared away by its extensive set of icons and cascading menus, since I could not find a helpful manual.

I decided to give Scribus another try and went looking for online help. Happily I found an excellent tutorial

at wiki.scribus.net/index.php/Get_Started_with_Scribus. I am still learning as I am writing this, but if the newsletter looks different when you read this you'll know that I learned at least the basics of Scribus and desktop publishing. As usual, it all seems so simple when you follow the tutorial, but when you are on your own, the feared unintended consequences rear up. Fortunately, there is a lot of helpful information to fall back on in the aforementioned reference, so I'm getting there.

Of course, the desktop publishing program is only a tool, and it will require new skills to design attractive layouts. Suggestions are more than welcome!

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