



MUG Monitor

Macon Users Group—Serving Southwestern North Carolina and Northeastern Georgia

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June 2009

Next Meeting:

Web Page Creation

Macon Community Facilities Building
June 9th, 7 PM

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Online Backup Services

by Ira Brickman, President, ICON PC User Group, Inc., New York, from The ICON Graphic Newsletter, Oct. 2008, www.iconpcug.org

There Are Pros & Cons, But They Are Up & Coming

The changing face of how we use our computers includes the latest concept: using programs and services directly from the Internet. Many of us, for example, have found it more convenient to access our email using a web browser (aka "webmail") instead of a dedicated client like Outlook Express. The Internet's ever-more ubiquitous nature means that receiving email is as simple as finding an available computer with browser software. Backing up your hard drive using an online service is one of the up and coming online services. The advantages are:

- No need to buy backup software or purchase external USB drives or optical media to backup to.
- Not storing backups where the computer is located secures against fire, theft, and other risks.
- Like webmail, the backups are available from any computer with an Internet connection & a browser.

As good as that sounds, some of the other considerations are:

- There are some costs usually involved.
- Backup privacy and security is dependent on a third party and transmitting your data over the Internet adds privacy and security risks.
- You become dependent on the backup service staying in business. If not, you are out of luck.
- It takes a lot longer to backup or restore than using a local hard drive.
- There is no imaging, which means you are not backing up a picture of

your hard drive, including your operating system installation. Rather you are backing up folders and files.

All in all, the pros certainly make trying online backup worthwhile. The cons, however, mean you have to judge how private the files are and how large your backups will be. And the risk of a service folding means you should be wary of using smaller, totally free backup services for anything very critical to you.

There are some well-known, reliable services which can be free to use, within certain limitations. Or for a small monthly fee, you can get all the pros and limit your risks.

If you want to use an online backup service, there are three commercial services you can explore and consider to start with. They are: Amazon S3/Jungle Disk, Mozy, and Carbonite. All three have similarities:

- They require that you download and install a desktop client to configure backups and manage restores.
- Once your first backup is created, the client program then works in the background to back up new and altered files.
- All three encrypt your data before transmission and store it in encrypted form on remote servers.
- None require you to restore from the original computer; you can restore your data to a different computer.

(see *Backup* on page 2)

Web Page Creation

7 PM, June 9th

Macon Users Group Franklin, NC

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	Lou Vitale.....	369-2862
Webmaster:	Nancy Cottrell.....	524-6687
Linux SIG:	Jim Swanson....	jswansonst@verizon.net

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.....rhonda1114@verizon.net

Website

www.maconusersgroup.org

Treasurer's Report

Phyllis Minnich

Balance forward.....	748.16
Income: interest, dues, 50/50.....	1096.91
Expense.....	(1386.91)
Balance*	
(including equipment fund).....	\$741.71
*Equipment Fund (50/50, auction).....	31.00
Investment Fund.....	1572.27

(Backup—continued from page 1)

If you search the web, you will find an abundance of reviews about each of these services. There is much that has been positively written about Jungle Disk and Amazon's Simple Storage Service (Amazon S3). The S3 service is part of a package of Amazon services meant to be accessed through third party software. Jungle Disk is the leading program to do that. It "mounts" the online storage so that it seamlessly appears as another drive in your Windows Explorer. Jungle Disk can schedule automatic backups, but the mounted drive means you can drag and drop to manually back up files and folders. And it allows for incremental backups.

This last is important because there are costs involved. Amazon currently charges 10 cents per Gigabyte per month for storage and another 17 cents per GB for the data transfer. Incremental backups mean the transfer costs are kept to a minimum after your initial backup.

JungleDisk costs \$20 after a 30-day free trial. Amazon S3: tinyurl.com/qx87a; Jungle Disk: www.jungledisk.com.

Mozy, at mozy.com, on the other hand, can be free if you use the "MozyHome" alternative, limited to 2 GB of storage. But for \$4.95 per month, Mozy offers unlimited backup of a single home computer. Though not as convenient as Jungle Disk, the MozyHome software makes backing up easy and has many backup options.

Carbonite, www.carbonite.com, offers a yearly subscription for unlimited backup of a hard drive, starting at \$49.95 per year, with lower costs for upfront payment of multi-year subscriptions. This makes it a little less expensive than Mozy per year. The Carbonite software might be a little easier to use than Mozy. Some reviewers found Carbonite to be slower, and the Carbonite website does contain a caution about speed.

With costs potentially less than the upfront cost of a hard drive, these backup services are at least worth a look for their convenience for computer users.

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Linux SIG

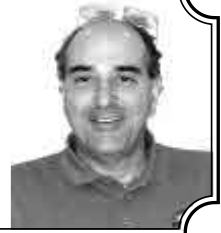
with Jim Swanson, Mentor

The Linux SIG will meet at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, June 23th, in the large meeting room of the Macon County Public Library. Anyone interested in the Linux operating system is encouraged to attend. The SIG "flavor of choice" is Ubuntu Linux.

Lou's Views!

TED vs. the Dark Force

by Louis Vitale (aka 44RAILGUY)



It seems sometimes that the Dark Forces of evil are spreading across the planet. Those forces want to turn back the clock to the good old days. The best or maybe worst example is the current desire of some extreme Middle Eastern cultures to return to a time when no one questioned their authority and there was no change or progress. Anyone who opposed them was an infidel and dealt with accordingly. Science, if it existed at all, only worked if it fit in with their preconceived ideas of how the world worked.

In our high-tech, web connected, cell phone world, it is hard for us to understand how someone would want to return to the Arabian Desert to tend their flocks and scratch out a subsistence life. And yet this force now threatens our world on many levels. There will be many battles in the coming struggle which will be fought on many fronts. But ultimately our culture will succeed only if we have better ideas and the courage to create a better world based them.

There is no shortage of new ideas. That is one of the benefits of a free society. Tradition has its place, but for now we are free to invent, create, or discover something new. I just came across a place where this happens on a regular basis, TED. TED stands for **Technology, Entertainment, Design**. It started out (in 1984) as a conference bringing together people from those three worlds. Since then its scope has become ever broader. The annual conference now brings together the world's most fascinating thinkers and doers, who are challenged to give the talk of their lives (in 18 minutes).

There are over 400 videos available on the site of these talks and performances. The one that originally attracted me was on creating a new sixth sense. This "sense" is a new device that contains a video camera, a mini projector, other sensors, a processor, and it hangs around your neck. On command it scans your world, recognizes objects, accesses the net to obtain data, and then projects that data on any surface you choose.



So you are in the granola aisle at the grocery store and don't know which bar is better. On command, the device scans the box, recognizes it, searches the net for info on it and other granola bars, and then projects on the box the results of the search. You meet someone who you should know but don't remember their name. On command, face recognition software pulls up the data on your "friend" and quietly delivers the name in your ear. A doctor commands the chart of a patient to be projected on the bed. He points to a drug listed in the chart and commands its properties be displayed, all without leaving the patient's side.

This device is still a work in progress, but all the parts already exist and the software is in beta testing. Soon it may be part of your next cell phone. Go to TED.com and put "sixth sense" in the search bar for a demo.

Another idea caught my eye, giant kites. Large kites flying over 300 feet in the air are an excellent source of electric power. For their size, they are much more efficient than the largest wind turbines. In the

right locations they can produce substantial energy at low cost. Search for "kites wind energy."

I read a newspaper every day, but in spite of my faithful support, the industry is in serious trouble. Jacek Utko is an extraordinary Polish newspaper designer whose redesigns for papers in Eastern Europe not only win awards, but increase circulation by up to 100%. Could his designs save the Asheville Citizen-Times? Search for "Jacek Utko."

Bonnie Bassler discovered that bacteria "talk" to each other, using a chemical language that lets them coordinate defense and mount attacks. The find has stunning implications for medicine, industry—and our understanding of ourselves. She spoke for 18 minutes and never took a breath. In her presentation was the germ of an idea to fight the next wave of biological attacks on humans. Search for "bacteria talk."

So what does a new bell or whistle for your cell phone, or talking bacteria have to do with combating the Dark Forces? It has to do with intellectual freedom. We are fighting the same forces that put Galileo under house arrest and burned the Ancient Library of Alexandria. TED and organizations like it that promote science and innovation are essential to counter those forces that are once again on the rise.

We must be free to pressure our naturally creative intellect, and to allow that process to create the possibility of a better world. It is that vision of a better world which we can use as a weapon against the Dark Forces of today's world.

Twitter—What You Are Doing Right Now

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

Website: www.twitter.com

Several of the readers of this column asked me, “What is Twitter?” following the media reports that senators and congress people were “Twittering” during recent presidential speeches. Twitter (the internet service and the person who does the posting) and Twittering or Tweeting (the posting of personal activities on Twitter) has become one of the most popular ways of communicating one’s activities so that others can follow what is going on in the life of a Twitter. The service is self-described as, “Twitter is a service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: What are you doing?” According to some of the national media quoted by Twitter.com, “The New York Times calls Twitter “one of the fastest-growing phenomena on the Internet.” TIME Magazine says, “Twitter is on its way to becoming the next killer app,” and Newsweek noted that “Suddenly, it seems as though all the world’s a-twitter.” One may wonder why a Twitter user would post his daily activities as they occur; Twitter explains it this way, “Why? Because even basic updates are meaningful to family members, friends, or colleagues—especially when they’re timely.”

Just to experience the life of a Twitter, I went to www.twitter.com and signed up for a free account. The signup process was very fast and easy, only asking for me to create my user name, create a secure password, and enter my email address. After creating my account, I was given the opportunity to upload a photo of myself for display to anyone that views my



Twitter page, and allow me to customize my page to control the way others view it. I entered my first short message that I was using Twitter, and it appeared on my now personalized webpage. Since messages and other postings are intended to appear as text messages on cell phones as well as on a webpage, individual postings are limited to 140 characters, the maximum length of a text message (SMS) allowed on most cell phone systems. As I was typing this column, I posted a Twitter (message) that I was typing this column; if anyone is following my activities at this instant, he would receive this news as a text message on his cell phone, as an RSS feed on his computer, and email, or by simply viewing my Twitter webpage. On my view of my webpage is a text box where I can type my current activity, as long as I keep it under 140 characters, as shown by the counter adjacent to the text box. Postings can be made or received by computer, cell phone text message, Blackberry, or other communications device. Postings can also be received on any newsreader that uses the RSS format news feed.

Twitter makes it very easy to find friends who also Twitter. By clicking on the “Find People” icon, a window is opened that says “Find people,” “Follow them.” To locate friends on Twitter, I chose to allow Twitter to access my email address book to determine if any of my current corre-

spondents are on Twitter. Twitter can access (but only with your express permission) address books on Yahoo, Gmail, AOL, Hotmail, and MSN. It will quickly scan the online address book, and match any email addresses in the address book against the millions already in the Twitter database. Twitter states that it does not save the email addresses and passwords, and does not send out emails to those located without express permission to do so. I also used the “Find on Twitter” feature to enter my last name to see if any of my relatives are on Twitter, and add them to my friends list. Just as a lark, I entered the names of some of our elected officials, and found that several of them do have Twitter accounts. If I want to invite friends by personal email, I can enter their email addresses in the “Invite by Email” box, and Twitter will send them an invitation.

If I want to add celebrities to my friends list, I can click on “Suggested Uses,” and a list of celebrities who Twitter will be displayed. By checking the box adjacent to their names, we can exchange Twitter posts and monitor each others’ activities. Some of the more interesting celebrities and online services that can be added to anyone’s Twitter friends list are the Jodrell Bank observatory, the Dell Outlet Store, JetBlue Airways Customer Service (monitors Twitter 24/7), the New York Times, 10 Downing Street (the official residence of the British Prime Minister), rapper M. C. Hammer, CNN Breaking News, Al Gore, John McCain, Whole Foods Market (Fresh organic tweets from Whole Foods Market HQ in Austin), Lance Armstrong, Britney Spears (Yes! This is the real Britney Spears!), George

(see *Twitter* on page 10)

Improving Vista Performance

by Vinny La Bash, a member of the
Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc., FL. www.spcug.org

Microsoft has added security features in Vista which didn't exist in XP. There are new functions, and while the graphics are really neat, they can give your system a big performance hit if you don't have enough memory. Thanks to up-to-the-minute technology and great manufacturing improvements, RAM is cheap. There is no good excuse for not loading up with as much memory as possible.

Vista is the most RAM hungry modern operating system in existence. One gig is about the lowest amount of memory you can have without feeling that you're slogging through a lake of molasses. Two gigs should give you acceptable response time, and four gigs will put wings on your PC with some afterburner boost thrown in. Don't be a cheapskate. It's false economy to starve your system of RAM.

If you are already loaded with RAM, you can use Vista's built-in ReadyBoost feature in conjunction with a flash memory card or USB key to give an added kick to system memory. You need a high performance flash card or USB drive. Insert the device and Vista will politely ask you if you wish to use the device to speed up system performance. Answer yes, and then tell Vista exactly how much of the device to devote to speeding up the system. ReadyBoost will be active as long as the device is plugged into the system.

Once you have enough memory, examine your video card. If you want to experience the full graphic capabilities that Vista offers, buy a video card that's Vista Premium Certified.

To see how your video card checks out, open up Control Panel, switch to Classic View, and then activate the Performance Information and Tools

utility. Look at your base score. This number represents the overall graphic capability of your system. Notice that your base score is not some combination of all the subscores. Your base score is the lowest performing member of all your subscores. That doesn't seem fair, but that's reality. You can try updating your score, but it probably won't change.

If you get between 1 and 3, general operations which include word processing and spreadsheet tasks will work fine. Email and web browsing should be OK, but websites with large amounts of embedded graphics will take a long time to load. Video applications will be problematical.

A base score between 3 and 4 can run Aero and the majority of the new Vista features, but Vista's more advanced capabilities may bog down your system. For example, your monitor

will be satisfactory even at its highest resolution, but multiple monitors may slow down your system severely. You will be able to watch most TV shows, but a high definition broadcast could be a slow motion disaster.

A base score higher than 4 should handle anything that Vista throws at it, including HDTV and 3D gaming. If what you want or need from Vista requires a higher base score than your system can provide, you need to replace one or more of your components. Use the subscores to determine what stays or goes. A low score may require you to either turn off the Aero interface or upgrade your video card.

Go back to the Control Panel. From the Classic View, activate the System icon and then select Advanced system settings. When the System Properties dialog box

(see *Vista* on page 10)



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The Deals Guy

by Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group



I noticed an interesting article in the Orange County IBM PC Users Group newsletter (nibbles & bits). Linda Gonse does a great job of editing this great newsletter and those of you who don't get to read it are missing a real treat. I don't own an iPhone, but many of my readers do. Lorene Romero, North Coast Macintosh Users Group President (in Santa Rosa, CA), wrote an article about some unique items available for iPhones. Three that I found interesting are quoted below with Lorene's permission:

“Coffee Break: \$1.99 (****): Great app for those who love coffee! It has a very ‘fun’ interface with appropriate company cups. It has the usual suspects (Starbucks, Pete’s and Seattle’s Best), but it also has a category for ‘Other Coffee Places.’ It is a great app if you are a coffee hound, like I am. The seller is Marco Pifferi.”

“AroundMe: Free (****): Cool little app that lets you find banks, coffee places, gas stations, supermarkets, and even an Apple store, located near you. First it finds your location and then accesses a database filled with local shops. I used it in Seaside, OR and found a wonderful coffee shop right down the street.”

“Say Who Free (****): Finally an app that brings back voice activation to the iPhone! Say any name (Jon Jones Mobile) and it will dial it every time for me.”

You can download these from the iPhone store: www.apple.com/itunes/whatson/appstore.html

Why Not Scrap The Crap?

One of the Vendors at the FACUG/APCUG Florida spring conference was Sunbelt Software. They offer Vipre Enterprise, which

they call a non-bloated antivirus, anti-spyware, and antirootkit software that includes other technologies to make it an all-in-one protection. They say it offers Real-Time Monitoring with Active Protection. Removing rootkits is supplemented by VIPRE's First-Scan™, which runs at the system's boot time. FirstScan bypasses the Windows operating system to directly scan certain locations of the hard drive for malware, removing infections where found. They say Vipre's Active Protection delivers real time monitoring and protection against known and unknown malware threats. Active Protection works inside the Windows kernel, (the core of the operating system), watching for malware and stopping it before it has a chance to execute on your system.

VIPRE includes comprehensive protection against email viruses, with direct support for Outlook, Outlook Express and Windows Mail; and support for any email program that uses POP3 and SMTP. In reading their product information, I found more good information on the product than I could possibly include in this column, so please visit their website, www.sunbeltsoftware.com/Home-Home-Office/VIPRE/.

This company is not based on some small Pacific atoll, or some strange sounding name of a country you never heard of, but is located in Clearwater, Florida where their tech support will speak good English (maybe Spanish if you need that) if you need to talk to them. Trip Kirk, Sales Engineer for Sunbelt Software, said they'll offer user group members the following coupon code (DealsGuy) that's good for \$5 off of any Vipre consumer license through August 31, 2009 at [\[software.com/licensing.cfm?product=VIPRE\]\(http://software.com/licensing.cfm?product=VIPRE\). Trip says that can be a single license, a two-computer license, or even the unlimited home license, which is good for as many computers as someone has at their one home address; or if they have computers in Florida and also in another state, such as snowbirds can, they can use it for all of the computers that they personally own. I guess that being surrounded by seniors in Clearwater has influenced them favorably.](http://shop.sunbelt-</p>
</div>
<div data-bbox=)

For what it's worth, I realize that you can instantly name at least six places to find FREE protections of all types, but it can also be said that “you get what you pay for?” Just about every free protection product also offers a pay version with added features that they hope you'll buy later on to give better peace of mind. Here you get the peace of mind right up front. I have not had the chance to try this product.

A Photo Production Line

Bits&Coffee has released BatchPhoto V 2.5, a powerful Windows photo manipulation program that makes it easy to annotate, touch up, transform, apply effects, convert, and rename hundreds of pictures in a single operation. BatchPhoto lets you select a group of images, define a series of edits, and apply them in a single operation rather than individually.

With version 2.5, BatchPhoto introduces Raw Photo Development. DSLR digital cameras can save the raw image data as read by the optical sensor without any loss or additional processing. The resulting files, often called raw images or digital negatives, need additional processing on the PC with specialized software. Almost every digital camera manufacturer has

(see *Deals Guy* on page 10)

Magic Word Brings Email to the Offline World

A review by Gabe Goldberg, Computers and Publishing, Inc.

If you've ever wondered how to bring email to the techno-phobe in your life, the answer isn't Abracadabra, it's Presto.

If you're reading this online, you own or have access to a computer. But you likely have friends or relatives—perhaps elderly, budget-restricted, technophobic—who don't. So they're not in close touch and can't share online family or community activities.

Presto (www.presto.com) is a combination color inkjet printer and paid web-based service which allows people without computers to receive email, including attachments.

Setting it up is simple: after purchasing the device, someone with just a bit of tech savvy creates the account, picks an email address (such as gabeg99@presto.com), and lists people allowed to send email to the address. At specified times of day, the printer dials a toll-free telephone number, downloads accumulated email, and prints it.

With only two controls—Volume and Stop—it's easy to operate. It plugs directly into a telephone jack and doesn't need a separate phone line or jack or even a splitter, since an existing telephone or accessory (answering machine or Caller ID device) can plug into it, daisy-chain style.

Presto is ideal for letting seniors receive email from children, grandchildren, friends, former colleagues, military buddies, etc. And it's useful when businesses request customer email addresses to conduct or simplify



transactions. It handles pictures and many attachment formats nicely, printing them as if it was a FAX machine. So it allows sharing any online or computer content as PDF files such as maps and directions, travel itineraries, web pages, spreadsheets with financial or family contact information.

Simple steps authorize new people to send email, and when ink runs low, the printer is smart enough to either alert the person who set up the account or automatically order new cartridges.

After failing for a dozen years to excite my in-laws about email—they steadfastly resisted being online—my retired Navy father-in-law fell in love with a Presto I loaned him, discovering that it let him hear from his

old Navy buddies around the world. And receiving color pictures of the grandchildren sealed the deal.

The printer costs \$150 or less (always comparison shop online!) and the service costs \$12.50/month with a yearly subscription. The only thing missing is the printer downloading paper and ink through the phone line—but that would need real magic!

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There Is More to Music than the iPod®

by Mike Morris, Editor, Front Range PC Users Group, CO, www.frpcug.org

There is more to music—and more to life—than the iPod. I think I can prove that statement with the words that follow. Please don't misunderstand me. I admire the iPod as a successful product—a success technically and financially—even though I don't have one. However...

I need to start my “proof” by saying that in previous articles that I have written for this newsletter, I made a claim to being an Old Analog Guy (as a reminder, the acronym = OAG and is pronounced “ogre”). It is with that persona that I bring this subject to your attention.

I just completed a catalog of nearly 300 old LPs that belonged to a family member who died last year. And when I say old, I mean some of those LPs have release dates more than 50 years old. Some of the recordings are much older than that. There are many memorable, and even historic, performances recorded on those albums.

A small part of that music has been re-released on CDs. But there is much of that music—almost all Jazz—that you will not currently find in any digital format. So put down your iPod (or one of its imitators) and please listen to what I have to say.

I decided to create a database for this catalog using Microsoft Access®. One significant issue, as you might expect, is just how much information to include in the database. This database is for family use—not for radio station or other broadcast use. I did, however, want to make a record (no pun intended) of whatever information was necessary to properly document the collection. The most significant decision was related to the

track (song) names, sequence and times on each side of each LP. Clearly, if I needed to document that information, both the data entry task and complexity of the database were going to be much higher. If the average number of tracks per side is 4 (it is probably higher), and I wanted to include all that information, then I was faced with a data entry task of $4 \times 2 \times 300 = 2400$ entries (plus all the other information I wanted to include).

“No big deal” you say—there are many much much larger databases in the world. You are correct. But remember, I am an OAG (please correctly pronounce that acronym). Therefore I was looking for an “easy” way to complete this task. Credit is due to Ken Campbell of radio station KRFC (more on that in a moment), a local public radio station, for a solution. Ken told me about an online music database called allmusic (www.allmusic.com). It turns out there are many online music databases (a Google® search turned up more than 68,000, using the phrase “online music database”). The allmusic.com database was the best for my catalog project for the following reasons:

1. A successful search for an artist will provide an Overview, a Biography, a Discography (a list of all albums by the artist known to the database, with title, date and label), Songs, Credits, and Charts and Awards.
2. From the discography, one can click on an album and get information (usually) on the album tracks (including times), composer(s), recording date(s), release date, label, format (LP or CD), the label's catalog number, and, for some albums, a review of the album.

3. The search options include artist/group, album, song, classical work.

4. There is substantially more information about the Jazz genre than just a list of names and dates. For example, on the Jazz “home page,” there are a number of “Related Essays” on Jazz, including *A Brief History of Jazz*.

For a project such as the cataloging of an existing music collection, with LPs that are up to 50 years old, this database is the best choice by far of all of the databases examined or considered. It is the equivalent of an encyclopedia, and the functionality makes searching easy, with related data presented on a single page. The ability to link from a list of albums (discography) to a single album (or CD reissue) provides very efficient searching for a project of this type. That is not to say that it is error free. There are albums not included in the database—the website makes no claim that it contains every album ever released. There are also tracks missing from some albums (or the track order in the database doesn't match the order on the disk). An album may be in the database, but not in the artist's discography. And, there are numerous problems with release and recording dates. Still, the “pros” far outweigh the “cons.”

There is a feature offered by this website that is unique. Each page (any of the choices listed in item 1 above) has a “Corrections to this entry?” option, allowing the user to submit corrections. Those corrections are then researched for confirmation (if the website statement is correct) before they are added to the database. That feature

(see *Music on page 9*)

(Music—continued from page 8)

was used extensively during the research for this music cataloging project—although not every error or missing item was submitted.

For my project, the search by artist was the most effective. If an album was not listed in the artist's discography, a search by album was the alternate choice. Although the database has many very early Jazz albums, there were a few albums in the collection, both old and new—or at least “newer”—by well-known artists that were missing from the allmusic database. So, although not perfect, the allmusic database is an excellent research tool, and you don't need the iTunes media player (or any other media player) to use it.

The database is not limited to research, however. You can listen to short sound bytes from some tracks, and there are links that allow you to buy selected tracks or albums (correction—CDs).

OK, so your iPod and the iTunes media player are great for listening to (and buying) current and even “relatively” old music. But the iTunes media player is not going to help you—to same extent as the allmusic database will—find classic old Jazz performances (and perhaps classic performances from other genres). And, you must have the iTunes media player installed on your computer before you can do any searching with it.

You may be wondering why I am talking about online databases and why I consider a good online database important to my “proof.” Yes, there is a relationship. But before I offer the conclusion, I have several comments on other databases.

Another online database used rarely was Gracenote®, a wholly owned subsidiary of Sony Corporation of America. Gracenote is used “...for digital media recognition of CDs, digital music files, and streaming audio. With the most comprehensive database of music information in the

world, the Gracenote Media Database contains information for more than 80 million tracks and 6 million CDs...” This database is normally linked to media players, such as Winamp®, to automatically identify music on a CD or from a download. It provides album title (and, in some cases, an image of the album cover), and track names—if you connect through a media player (or other audio/video equipment with the enabling software installed that is connected to the internet).

If you connect to Gracenote directly from a browser (www.gracenote.com), the search options are artists, albums, tracks. A successful search on an artist returns a list of albums (a lot less than the allmusic database) released by that artist that are known to the database. It is important to note that the quantity information in the Gracenote advertisement makes an explicit reference to CDs. The album information is similar to that in the allmusic database, except that there are no track times. There are, however, links to the lyrics of some tracks—for those songs that have them. Also the “Buy” buttons are much more prevalent, and much more obvious in the Gracenote database, compared to the allmusic database.

Another online database examined briefly was Rhapsody®, www.rhapsody.com, a service provided by RealNetworks.com, better known for its Real® media player. The company claims to provide “Technology and services that help people enjoy digital entertainment whenever and wherever they want.”

Connect to the Rhapsody website and the first thing you will notice are the annoying animated ads. Get beyond that and the search options are artist, keyword, track, album, composer, video, lyrics, and playlist. If a search for an album is successful, you can, for most albums, get track information by clicking on the album image—but that track information (no times) is very probably going to be from a more current CD release, not from the orig-

inal LP, depending on how old that original LP is and how popular the album was. However, there is nowhere near the same level of information available from this database, compared to the allmusic database. The Rhapsody database is organized for listening to (or buying) music that is already known to the user, either by song name or by artist (in my opinion). It is not an effective research tool for finding information on old LPs.

It is not necessary to have the Real player installed in order to search the Rhapsody database.

Now listen up everyone! Here is my reason for talking about music databases: There is some great old music out there! In all genres. Please don't get so comfortable with your iPod that you ignore that music. Especially when you have a resource such as the allmusic online database to help you identify it, catalog it, find reviews on it and find some history of it.

I suspect that many of you reading this article (I hope there are many readers) have some of that “great old music” sitting on your shelves or in your cabinets. Or perhaps stored away somewhere. If so, “unstore” it. You will, I am certain, enjoy that music, especially with the added information available from the allmusic database.

And *that* is what I mean when I say “There Is More to Music than the iPod.”

Here is the additional information I promised on radio station KRFC: Front Range PC Users Group (FRPCUG) has a partnership with KRFC, 88.9 FM in Fort Collins, CO. KRFC provides “Community powered music, news and entertainment.” For more information, connect to krfcfm.org. FRPCUG provides computer maintenance help to KRFC, and, in return, KRFC helps expand the knowledge of FRPCUG activities within the local community. An internet audio stream is available from the KRFC website.

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(Deals Guy—continued from page 6)

one or several different file formats for storing the raw image data, which leads to poor support from software vendors. BatchPhoto can read and convert most of those formats, including formats from these digital camera makers: Canon, Nikon, Sony, Olympus, Fuji, Kodak and Pentax.

By taking advantage of multi-core processors, BatchPhoto can convert hundreds or even thousands of raw images to common image formats like JPEG or TIFF in a single session. Custom defined settings, like White Balance, allow detailed control. Additional filters and transformations can be applied to photos (e.g. Watermark, Resize, and Sepia).

BatchPhoto can convert raw images to dozens of image formats, including JPG, TIF, PDF, PNG, GIF, BMP, EPS, TGA, and PSD. It can also change the names assigned by digital cameras to custom keyword-based names, in the same operation. It can also create PDF documents from multiple images. In the same process each image can be annotated, watermarked, and adjusted.

BatchPhoto has more than three dozen graphical filters that can be applied to pictures, divided into four main categories: Annotate, Touch Up, Transform, and Effects. BatchPhoto adds itself to Windows Explorer's right-click menu, so predefined or custom defined profiles can easily be applied to groups of pictures.

BatchPhoto V. 2.5 runs under all versions of Windows, including Windows Vista and Windows Server 2008. Home version is priced at \$29.95, and Pro at \$59.95. User group members get a 40% discount by using discount coupon 5A1398E4, good through June 2009. www.batchphoto.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.

(Twitter —continued from page 4)

Stephanopoulos (ABC News Chief Washington Correspondent and Host of "This Week"), Women's Wear Daily, the Nightline TV news show, Martha Stewart, comedian and magician Penn Jillette, rapper 50 cent, and many more. The business and news outlets listed post breaking news or special deals to their Twitter friends. One that I added, being the nascent bargain shopper, is Woot.com, which posts one deeply discounted bargain each day in each of its merchandise categories.

Twitter, the company, is headquartered in San Francisco, and was founded in 2006. It is a small company, with only a few dozen employees, but has millions of

(Vista —continued from page 5)

comes up, click the Settings button in the Performance section. You're about to make some tough choices.

If you can't make decisions, you can "let Windows choose the best settings for my computer" and be done with it. "Adjust for best performance" disables all the great visual effects that make Vista a terrific graphical interface. "Adjust for best appearance" makes your system look spiffy, but you'll take a hit on speed.

Choosing "Custom" allows you to make some reasonable compromises while keeping full control of your PC. Some features, like sliding menus, are pure eye candy and do nothing useful. Turning them off gives performance improvement with no loss of function.

There are options in the Advanced tab where you can control how the CPU processes work. What's more important to you, adjusting for visible performance, or making sure that the housekeeping services Vista performs are performed efficiently? Make your choice and monitor your system. You can always change it back later.

Unless you know what you are doing, leave the Virtual memory

members. It has a marketing model to generate revenue, but the revenue model has not yet been implemented, leaving all of the posts and web pages currently free of advertising.

I am not sure how much I will be using Twitter on a regular basis by posting my personal activities and short commentaries, but I will check my page occasionally just to see who is following my activities. The main purpose of Twitter is to answer the question, "What are you doing?" For those who want others to be able to know the answer in real time, they can do so with Twitter.

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section alone. Virtual memory is a portion of a disk drive that's configured to masquerade as memory. Because it's part of a disk and not physical memory, it can't work as fast as real memory. When the system runs out of physical RAM it can use a disk drive to keep going instead of stopping dead in its tracks.

You can change the location of the file to a different disk, resize it, or do both. Each choice has consequences of its own. Making the wrong choice won't destroy your system, but it could noticeably slow down performance. The default choice is to let Vista manage the file. That's the best choice for most people.

There are many other things that you can do to get the best possible performance from Vista, such as modifying the Index Options, but that's a subject for another article.

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Directory Update

Changes:

Lizz Russell, 828/342-0782 (Cell)

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: _____

XP Utilities

by Warner Mach, Editor of the SEMCO Data Bus, newsletter of the
Southeast Michigan Computer Organization, www.semco.org

I have discovered that Windows XP is chock full of various utilities to solve various kinds of problems. Here are some of the utilities that I have occasion to use in recent months.

Windows Task Manager

You bring up the Windows Task Manager by holding down ctrl-alt-delete. Some of the useful features are: (a) Go to the applications tab. This shows the running tasks and is useful for ending a task that refuses to go away. (b) Go to process tab. This shows all the miscellaneous tasks in the system and shows the CPU time that each is using. This can frequently be useful when you are not sure what the system is doing. (c) Go to performance tab. This shows the use of resources. Especially useful is the dynamic graph of CPU usage.

Event Viewer

The Event Viewer has a log of recent events, including events at power up and power down. This was of value to me when I was attempting to learn

about certain messages that were appearing at power down time. Under the "application" and "system" tabs, the logs are listed. To get more detailed information on a particular problem, double-click on the "type" portion of a particular entry. This will give some keyword search hints that can be typed into Google. You bring up the Event Viewer by going to start | run and typing "Eventvwr.msc" into the box | OK.

System Configuration Utility

The tab that was useful to me was the "startup" tab. These are tasks that automatically come up at startup. By unchecking groups of entries (and saying "apply" and then rebooting) I was able to zero in on one particular entry that was causing a problem. You bring up the System Configuration Utility by going to start | run and typing "msconfig" into the box | OK.

Check Disk

This utility checks the space usage on the disk. It also checks the

control block chains to be sure that they are correct. Go to start | all programs | accessories | command prompt and type in "chkdsk." If the program detects bad command chains and you want to correct the situation then type in "chkdsk /F". This command may require a reboot during which it runs stand-alone.

Useful Resources

There is a useful list of utilities, with examples and explanations at tinyurl.com/9um8or.

There is also information about the Microsoft "906569" update at support.microsoft.com/kb/906569. This update "...adds the tools tab to the System Configuration Utilities in Windows XP Service Pack 2." But even if you don't want to do this, there is a list of useful utilities with an explanation of their function.

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Macon Users Group

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*It's Time to
Renew Your Membership*

FIRST CLASS • DATED MATERIAL



May's Door Prize Winners



Karen Burney won the May 50-50 jackpot!