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by Club Members

Macon Community
Facilities Building
January 12th, 7 PM

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A Computer in Your Pocket: a Review of the iPod Touch

by Nancy De Marte, SIG Chairperson, Sarasota PCUG, FL, www.spcug.org

Decades ago, the technology community was predicting that someday computers would be integrated into our everyday life—in cars, phones, refrigerators. This idea seemed far-fetched to us conservative PC users. What we couldn't imagine was a device the size of a playing card that could perform almost all the functions of a desktop computer.

But it's true. A few months ago I bought one of these magic items, an iPod Touch.

The original iPod has been around since 2001 as a portable device produced by Apple and acting primarily as a media player with excellent tone quality. The iPod Touch, introduced in late 2007 as a non-phone version of the iPhone, is also a media player, but does much, much more. Besides listening to my favorite songs through headphones while at the gym, I have used my iPod Touch to surf the Internet, read my email from my Verizon and Yahoo accounts, check my stocks, store and view my digital photos, and play a variety of interesting and brain-boosting games, all without spending a penny beyond the purchase price of the iPod Touch.

How could I do all those activities on something which weighs only 4 ounces and has a 3.5 inch screen? First, let's look at what is required to make the iPod Touch perform: a Mac or PC with an XP SP2 or higher operating system and a 2.0 USB port, a free account with iTunes, and a Wi-Fi connection. The PC is needed to recharge the iPod, to download and install your iTunes application from



www.iTunes.com, and to visit the comprehensive iTunes store, where you can download free and paid little applications (called "apps") for your iPod Touch.

The iPod Touch comes loaded with several basic applications, including the Safari web browser, Mail, a photo gallery, a notepad, calculator, stocks,

and weather. But that's only the beginning. At last check there were over 80,000 free applications available in various categories at iTunes, such as utilities, news, sports, and games. For a total of less than \$5.00, I have downloaded several games, including the old Pac Man; media links such as the Weather Channel, MapQuest, and Shutterfly; podcasts, which are free video or audio recordings of public media broadcasts, and some unique items such as a piano which really plays on the built in speaker. For a small fee (\$.99 - \$20.00), you can purchase songs or albums, online books, TV show episodes, and movies to rent or own.

Each time you connect the iPod Touch to the computer, iTunes opens and automatically "syncs" your iPod Touch; that is, makes sure the same music and apps which are in your library are also on

(see *iPod Touch* on page 2)

Streaming Movies & TV

7 PM, January 12th

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(iPod Touch—continued from page 1)

your device, including ones you have just purchased or downloaded. Since I have copied my favorite songs and albums from my own audio CDs to iTunes, they also get synced each time at zero cost.

The most amazing part of the iPod Touch is the “touch.” Except for a bar on top to turn on the iPod Touch and a button to open an application, all other tasks are performed by merely touching or dragging your finger across the screen. To see a thumbnail photo in full screen, just touch it. Turn the iPod Touch from vertical to horizontal to see a screen image horizontally. Enlarge the text in email or a web page by touching the screen with two fingers and gently drawing them apart to zoom in, or together to zoom out. When you have finished reading an email message, just touch the recycle bin at the bottom of the screen and the message flows into the bin. The device also has an onscreen keyboard to enter text or write an email. If you aren’t a “texter,” as I’m not, using the keyboard took a little getting used to. But I’m improving each time.

To access the internet with iPod Touch, you need a Wi-Fi (wireless) connection. In our home, we have a wireless network for our two computers. The iPod Touch senses this each time it’s turned on. When we were on vacation in the mountains, I found a friendly general store and restaurant with a public wireless connection. Since I don’t store personal information on this device, I was able to read my mail safely while sipping a cup of tea.

So what are the disadvantages of the iPod Touch? The downside for many people will be the initial cost. Recently the cost for a second generation iPod Touch with 8GB storage capacity like mine has come down because a third generation version is available. But even so, it costs around \$200. However, once you own it and set it up, there are no more fees for Internet or any other function unless you choose to purchase music or applications. And with your own music and photos, plus free applications from the iTunes store, you can have a lot of enjoyment for just the purchase price.

There are more and more of these handheld devices on the market all the time. I chose not to purchase an iPhone because currently its phone functions require you to subscribe to the AT&T network. Since my family and many friends have Verizon as their cell phone carrier, I didn’t want to switch. Someday soon, it appears that these restrictions surrounding cell phones will be lifted. Then I may look into an iPhone, which has all the capabilities of an iPod Touch and more. For now, though, I’m happy with my iPod Touch.

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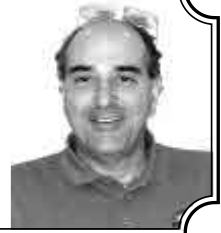
Treasurer’s Report Phyllis Minnich

Balance forward.....	798.20
Income: interest, dues, 50/50.....	2112.55
Expense.....	(298.55)
Balance*	
(including equipment fund).....	\$4227.81
*Equipment Fund (50/50, auction).....	31.00
Investment Fund.....	1615.61

Lou's Views!

3.6 Zettabytes

by Louis Vitale (aka 44RAILGUY)



3.6 zettabytes, that's how much information the US consumed in 2008. It was probably more in 2009. What is a zettabyte, you ask? One zettabyte is one million-million gigabytes. Does your head hurt yet?

What makes up all those trillions of ones and zeros? TV accounts for about 45% and computers about 27%; everything else makes up the balance. Print accounts for only about 8%. It is estimated that the average American consumes 34 gigabytes of content and 100,000 words of information in a single day. (Leo Tolstoy's "War and Peace" was only 460,000 words long.)

That does not mean we actually read all those words, it means that we are exposed to them. How much of that information we absorb depends on the number of active brain cells we still have functioning.

If you lived a hundred years ago, the amount of information you were exposed to in a single day probably could be put on a floppy disk if such a thing existed. Today the terabyte drives in our computers can hardly keep up with the flood of data we are creating and consuming. But never mind a 100 years, how far have we come in just the last 10 years, the first decade of the 21 century?

There were cell phones in 2000, but they were used to make phone calls—how quaint. Now we have smart phones. They merge the best of wireless technology—such as Bluetooth, email, internet, Wi-Fi—with thousands of downloadable applications for such things as music, photos, videos and documents. They are the long-dreamed-of

convergence device, the shirt-pocket computer that does it all. Blackberry just shipped its 50-millionth phone.

Remember the boom boxes, those suitcase-sized portable stereo players? They have been replaced with the iPod nano. It is a 16-gigabyte music player with a built-in video camera and player, FM receiver, and the ability to connect to your running shoes to provide information on your workout in real time. The first MP3 player was introduced in 1997, and the first iPod in 2001; 220 million have been sold so far. Together with iTunes, this device has revolutionized the music industry. Music stores, CDs and powerful music companies are all on the way out. It is now all online and in your ear.

I went to Wal-Mart to buy film, that's right, "film" for our camera. You have to look for it, and there were only 2 or 3 kinds available. Digital cameras were around in 2000, but they were still a novelty to some extent. Today's professional digital cameras surpass film quality and are capable of excellent video. Now our lives and our world can be visually captured by anyone. Recent historic events, such as the rioting in Iran, are now driven by the fact that everybody has a camera and information from them can't be suppressed.

That really is the central change to our lives over the last 10 years. We are now connected in ways unimaginable at the beginning of the decade. All the new devices I have mentioned and many more are just ways of collecting, manipulating and disseminating information on the internet. Think about it. Even

television is now migrating to the internet. But these devices are only part of the story.

It was common wisdom 10 years ago that the internet would create a world where people would lose contact with one another and just interact with their games on the net. Just the opposite has happened. A significant part of our social structure is now online. Those connections are not just between devices, they are between people. Social networking sites like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and a hundred others have created a social fabric that is so dense we now count our friends in the thousands.

Whole new realities exist in cyberspace, where there are no religious, ethnic or social barriers, and disabilities don't exist. A friend is sitting home alone tonight (New Year's Eve) but he, or I should say his Avatar, is enjoying a party with hundreds of friends from all over the world. They are gathered on an island in Second Life and are enjoying live fireworks displays from every major city on the planet. He and probably 50,000 other souls are connected in a way inconceivable just 10 years ago.

It is a fact that the pace of change has quickened. How much information, entertainment and social contact will there be 10 years from now? How deeply will the internet be imbedded in our lives at the end of the next decade? I only hope I have enough active brain cells left by then to be amazed. hmi.ucsd.edu/pdf/HMI_2009_ConsumerReport_Dec9_2009.pdf.

The Deals Guy

by Bob Click,
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group



Problems Never Cease

A while back, I mentioned my lightning strike and replacing my damaged router with a new one by D-Link. I'm told that D-Link has many glowing reviews, but my experience has been just the opposite. It stops working whenever it feels like it and if I switch the Ethernet cable from the router directly into the modem without rebooting either the modem or the computer, the computer accesses the Internet OK, and faster than it did before. When I get the router running again, my network connected printer no longer prints and I have to get Ricoh's help to reconfigure the IP addresses so my printer works. The Ricoh techs have been great. I've tried reconfiguring the printer using the printer's manual, but have not mastered working with IP addresses so far. The D-Link router tech support also leaves a lot to be desired; in fact, they sometimes brush you off whether they get the router working or not, and they're sometimes hard to understand. Once they advised me to upgrade the firmware and quickly got rid of me. Updating the firmware didn't help.

Last week that router quit working twice and I decided I'd had enough of that piece of junk, so I bought another router on sale, but this one is a Netgear, as was my last one, which worked great for a couple of years, until the lightning strike. The Netgear has a disk to help set it up (so did the D-Link) and this Netgear is working fine, but my printer again had to be reconfigured. I'll see if D-Link will let me return the router for them to check, but at this point, it doesn't matter to me. I've had enough of D-Link.

Time To Help Pay Back The Stimulus Loans

I'm sure there will be several articles soon about doing your income tax return free, but I'll add my two cents worth on that topic now. There are several ways to do your income tax at no cost, but my favorite is "Tax Act," www.taxact.com, which has a free version and a pay version. The free version does your tax return just fine, except that it pesters you frequently about the advantages of their pay version. I used the free version the first year I tried it and it did what I needed just fine. I had already taken my data to a free preparation service and just wanted to compare the results. Tax Act actually found a mistake in the one I just had done for free.

The following year I decided to use the deluxe version (right now they are offering it to me for \$12.95) because that one brings forward all of the information from your previous year's

return, saving a lot of typing and possible errors. I also called their tech support a couple years ago for help with my "green" credits and had good response with it. Also, don't forget AARP's free tax help for seniors.

This One Can Improve Your Photos

AMS Software announced the release of Home Photo Studio, a new program for photo editing, creating original greeting cards, and decorating ordinary pictures. It offers plenty of frames, tools, masks, filters, and effects (such as 3D and plastic effects). The number of effects may be confusing at first, but it offers opportunities for making every photo special. Greeting card templates can be colorful, darkish, funny, or romantic, and will help the user create a proper greeting card for any occasion. Home Photo Studio offers all necessary functions for uncomplicated photo editing.

(see *Deals Guy* on page 11)

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Finding Our Roots

by Constance Brown, President, Canton Alliance Massillon Users Group, Ohio,
The Memory Map, October 2009, camug.apcug.org

Finding our roots has become important to many families as they begin realizing that much of the past will be lost, as those who have been a part of our lives forever begin to slip away. Capturing the information the older generation knows about our families, recording the stories of their joys and struggles, and discovering the strength that sustained them, is an important part of preserving our family history. Not everyone has the patience to research their family roots, but those who do may find surprises along the way: family members they have not met in the past, ancestors who actively created history, others whose lives were an embarrassment to their families and society. When you research genealogy, you have to be prepared for it all!

If you are ready to find out more about your roots, the Internet offers an abundance of materials to help you locate information that will shed light on world events that shaped the lives of your ancestors. Other sites will help you locate missing pieces of the genealogical puzzle. Here are a few sites you will want to visit. First is FamilySearch.org, the official genealogy records site hosted by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City.

Not only do they provide free genealogical software, but also a huge database of records, including census, military, marriage and death records. If you are looking specifically for death certificates, they can be found at familysearchlabs.org. The records are for dates after 1908 and prior to 1953.

Newer death certificates can be found at the County Health Department of the county where the individual died, or the state's health department. The records at Family Search are free. Newer records typically cost \$17.95. Family search also provides, at no charge, the ability to permanently archive your family tree, making it available for download or on CD.

Another of my favorite sites is found at www.usgenweb.org. The USGenWeb project is developing as volunteers add information to the site. The amount and type of information for each state varies. If you click on Ohio, you will find each county listed. Under them is the information that has been preserved for that county. More is added regularly. I checked Clinton County where my paternal grandparents lived and was delighted to find the old Clinton County history book preserved and readable there.

Yes, I read about my great great grandfather, Jonathan McKay! As I searched Vigo County in Indiana, I was surprised to find the newspaper obituaries for my grandmother Harvey who died in 1982, as well as my aunt whom we buried on Christmas Eve in 2001.

I found that watching Robert Ragan's 5 minute Genealogy Courses was a great help. He gives a number of tips on how to find information about your family using specialized Google searches. Here are links to some of his materials:

- www.5minutegenealogy.com

- www.youtube.com/user/5minutegenealogy
- amberskyline.com/treasuremaps/

To understand the political, economic, and scientific events that were shaping the times in which your ancestors lived, you will want to visit Google's Time Line at newstimeline.googlelabs.com. You may also want to check through the lists of Google Books to see what books were read and shaping the lives of that generation.

Here are a few more helpful tips. Robert Sizelove has spent a lifetime photographing cemeteries with a special focus on stones that are difficult to read and cemeteries that are not visited frequently. If you have pictures of any tombstones, he appreciates your sending them to him so they can be uploaded to the USGenWeb project and other sites to preserve these memorials.

To look at cemetery pictures he has collected, do a Google Search for Robert Sizelove, along with the county and state name, putting both into the search box, e.g., [robertsizelove stark county ohio](http://robertsizelovestarkcountyohio.com).

Not all research can be done free. One of my distant cousins works at a family history center for the Latter Day Saints. She has created 60 family genealogies and has researched and traced the family tree to 168 AD. The only site for which she pays a fee is Ancestry.com. Most other paid sites eventually send you there, so you might as well pay that fee. When you upload your GEDCOM file,

(see *Roots* on page 11)

Hints for the Wannabe Blogger

by Joan McIlmoyl Cleghorn, a member of Big Blue and Cousins. Canada. www.bbcc.org

Do I Need Or Want to Have a Blog? Now, for many, the first question is “what on earth is a blog?” and “why would I want one?” The origin of the actual word “blog” comes from the definition of what it really is—a **web log**—which then became shortened to “blog.”

People are using blogs for many varied purposes. Some use them like a personal diary, as though the world is truly fascinated by the minutiae of their daily lives (though in the case of celebs, that may be the case). Others, for sharing their knowledge of a particular subject which doesn't necessarily lend itself to publishing a book; and still others for reporting on the constantly changing happenings in a specific area of interest. In many instances now, professional reporters, whether radio, TV or in print, are writing blogs as well as their regular reporting functions. Others, for reporting on the constantly changing happenings in a specific area of interest.

There are two advantages of using blogs over publishing in the more traditional ways—first, they can be interactive, allowing the readers to make comments, add to the information or contradict the writer; and, second, as mentioned, the ability to update immediately with new or additional information.

My purpose in starting a blog at the end of June was prompted by an article in the Family Chronicle which pointed out how, by publishing a family history book, relations that you'd never known or connected with would suddenly contact you.

This struck a chord with me as I was in the midst of planning a family history book and wanted to connect with others researching this same family. Obviously, publishing a book wasn't the answer for my particular situation.

After some thought on this, I decided to investigate what was involved in creating a blog, thinking this might accomplish my purpose. Of course, one can use any of the social media sites such as MySpace, Facebook, etc. as a type of blog. However, I was looking for specific blog sites. Well, typing “free blog sites” into Google gave me far more results than I could have dreamed of! Fortunately, there were two with which I was somewhat familiar, so I opted to check them out first.

I wanted simple and easy to use...nothing fancy, just the ability

to type whatever I wanted to post and have it work. Obviously I was asking a lot for anything connected with technology right? Actually, wrong. I was able to set up the blog, type out my first posting, and have it online within an hour!

You want a site that gives clear, easy-to-understand directions, and allows you to have some choices on the appearance or theme of your blog. Also, if you want some interaction with your readers, make it easy for them to add their comments. The site I chose definitely qualified under these points; much more so than the second site I checked out. I also checked out a few that I wasn't as familiar with and found that my first choice was still the best for my purpose. The two choices I initially checked out were Google's Blogspot and Word-

(see *Blogger* on page 7)



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(Blogger—continued from page 6)

press. They can be found at www.blogspot.com and www.wordpress.com; however, be sure to check out some of the others as well.

Should you decide to start a blog, there is one caveat I'd both read about as well as heard about from others—don't start posting, and collecting followers of the site, only to lose interest, and just stop posting, or become very erratic in your postings. When first starting my blog, I hoped to post about three times a week, with no less than once a week. In the nine weeks since I started, I've made 18 posts, so have averaged two per week, even though I had a couple of weeks when I didn't make any posts due to the death of my mother.

Now, was posting my blog successful in my original purpose? So far, yes. I've heard from a couple of researchers with whom I'd lost contact a number of years ago, plus another couple of whom I'd never heard, so I certainly accomplished that part of my goal. Another bonus is the information I'm gaining from those connections that I might not have otherwise found. Should you wish to take a look at my blog, here's the address:

www.mcilmoylfamna.blogspot.com
. If you decide that having a blog is something you'd like to do, I wish you well, and have fun with it! For tips on how to blog, just type "blog tutorial" into a search engine and you'll find lots of choices.

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Directory Updates

See the printed edition.

Computer Tips for Seniors

Reviewed by Gregory West, PC and Mac Instructor & Tech Columnist, Sarnia, Ontario, Canada; member of Computer Operators of Marysville and Port Huron, MI, www.bwcomp.org

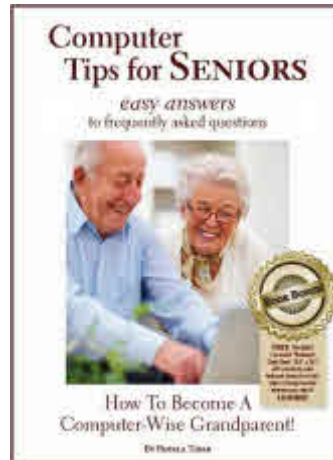
All too often we find ourselves sinking in the mystery sea called Windows. We know what we would like to do but just can't figure out the "how." The further we click through our computers, the worse our adventure becomes. We end up at a DEAD END, completely frustrated to the point of never wanting to turn the computer on ever again.

Several years ago, Pamela Tabak, better known as "The Computer Tutor," started helping seniors with their computer issues. Pamela began offering a free 24/7 help desk. She would have people email her their computer problem and guaranteed to return an answer within 24 hours at no charge. Of course this took off quickly and became a huge success.

Born from this concept of an email help desk, Pamela developed a book comprising some of the most popular, nagging, questions that were asked. In Pamela's words she explains the book's conviction as "easy answers to frequently asked questions."

This book comes with easy-to-read and view colored graphics depicting each step in the solutions process. There are three main sections: Knowledge Base, How To, and of course, Answers to Frequently Asked Questions.

The "Knowledge Base" section deals with topics such as ergonomics, the health of both you and your



computer. There is an interesting section on whether to "Recycle or Reuse Your Old Computer;" a section we all should read up on. The book does an excellent job of covering most other areas of computing topics, including computer maintenance, Internet security, Flash Drives, Web Browsers, eBay and Emailing.

As I went through this book finding things I already knew, I found myself wondering what type of answer would go with the question, and then finding out various things I had either forgotten or didn't know existed. Going the extra mile, as Pamela does in this book, she has included several little "Tip" bits where you find yourself gathering even more quick and helpful information.

Whether you are a senior who is just starting out in the world of computing, or you have been around the block a few times with your hard drive; this book is a great read and a good reference book to keep near the desktop.

Computer Tips for Seniors
by Pamela Tabak
Published 2009 by Computer Tutor Inc.
Pages: 204
USA: \$24.95 plus shipping
www.computertutorinc.net/order.htm

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Windows Experience Index

by Sandy Berger, CompuKiss. www.compuKiss.com

Have you ever wondered how fast your computer is compared to other computers? Or would you like to know which component you should upgrade in order to speed up your computer? In Windows XP and older versions of Windows, there were always ways to get performance information. However, this information was given in cryptic charts and numbers. The average person would have had to spend a lot of time to find and assess that information. Now, however, with Windows Vista and Windows 7, Microsoft has made finding and assessing this information much easier.

Inside of Vista and Windows 7 is a feature called the Windows Experience Index. This is a simple tool that gives you an easy-to-read assessment of your computer's performance. To access this feature, click on the Start button and choose Control Panel. In Windows Vista, choose the Classic View. In Windows 7 choose one of the icon views. Then click on Performance Information and Tools. You will be given a snapshot of your computer's performance.

The report is divided into five categories: processor, memory, graphics, gaming graphics, and hard disk. Each one of these has a score that indicates your computer's performance in that area. A Base Score is given in bold letters. You need to be aware that the base score is not the average of the scores, but rather, it is the rating on the slowest component. So if your gaming graphics score is 2.2, your overall score will be 2.2 even if all of the other subscores are higher. The base score is given in this manner assuming that your computer can only be as fast as the slowest component.

Currently the scores for a computer running Vista range from 1 to 5.9.

The scores for Window 7 computers range from 1 to 7.9. They do not go all the way up to 10 because Microsoft is allowing a little leeway for the added performance levels of future hardware components.

Don't be shocked if your computer has a low base score or low subscores. Microsoft says that a score of 2 is adequate for basic computer tasks like email and word processing. Graphics-intensive software like Photoshop and games should have a score of 3 or higher.

If you use your computer for heavy duty computing, including media center for multimedia, like recording HDTV programs, then subscores in the processor, memory, desktop graphics, gaming graphics, and hard disk categories are all important and should be at least a 3.

In most cases, inexpensive computers will have the lowest score in the graphics category. This will be more important in a laptop computer, because you cannot easily upgrade the graphics card later. In a desktop computer, you can always add a better graphics card later, if you choose to do so.

To give you an idea of how these scores stack up, here's the scoring of my one-year-old dual-core, 64-bit computer that was recently upgraded to Windows 7.

Processor: 6.0
Memory: 6.0
Graphics: 3.8
Gaming Graphics: 3.4
Hard Disk: 5.9
Base Score: 3.4

My computer retailed last year for about \$500 and would currently be selling for less. I do everything on this computer—

including running as many as 10 programs at once, working with Photoshop, playing movies, and recording TV. My point is that even though the scores can go as high as 7.9 on a Windows 7 computer, you don't need extremely high scores to have a very useful computer.

This index is a good way to pinpoint slower components that may be worth upgrading. For example, my computer's scores tell me, without a doubt, that if I were to purchase a high-end graphics card for my computer, I could almost double its base score and speed its performance.

While this little tool is a great way to score your own PC, it also excels at letting you see how the computer you may be thinking of purchasing stacks up against the others. Most stores that sell computers have a demo running in the store. If that is the case, you can pull up the Windows Experience Index on any computer that you are thinking of purchasing. You can also use it to compare computers. This tool is not perfect, but it does give you a fairly accurate assessment. While you will still have to compare things like the amount of memory, hard drive size, and cost, you won't have to understand as much about the processors and other components. And best of all, you won't have to rely as much on the salesman in the store.

Although I still feel that computers could be made easier to use, the Windows Experience Index is one example of how the newer operating systems are at least making computers easier to understand.

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What are RSS Feeds?

by Constance Brown, President, Canton Alliance Massillon Users Group. OH. The Memory Map, September 2009, camug.apcug.org

What are RSS Feeds? According to the Wikipedia, “RSS (most commonly translated as ‘Really Simple Syndication’ but sometimes ‘Rich Site Summary’) is a family of web-feed formats used to publish frequently updated works such as blog entries, news headlines, audio, and video in a standardized format.”

Let’s see whether we can translate that into everyday language. Most of us have favorite sites or blogs we visit regularly—perhaps news, genealogy, weather, or other types of sites that are updated regularly. Instead of having to click on bookmarks to navigate between sites, or typing the URL of each site, it is much faster to have one location that posts links to the latest updated information. That is done by subscribing to an RSS Reader. Both Yahoo & Google offer readers, and there are other choices as well.

I subscribed to the Google Reader by visiting www.google.com/reader. Because I already had a Gmail account, I was able to log in immediately and add subscriptions. That is done in one of two ways: clicking on an icon, or copying code by clicking on the URL of the feed and pasting it in *Add Subscription* on your Google Reader home page.

Let’s walk through two examples. We’ll start by clicking on *Add Subscription*. A search bar opens that allows us to search for an RSS Feed. I will type “The Repository” and click *Add*. Links pop up on the right side of the screen, one of them titled “The Repository.” Next I will click the + sign by *Subscribe*. I am then given the option of adding the link to a folder. I want to create a new folder

titled *News*, so I will click *Add to a Folder* and select *New Folder*. A screen pops up that allows me to name the folder. Super simple!

Let’s look at a different example. In this case we want to add a link to “The Christian Law Association” at www.christianlaw.org/cla/. While browsing their website, we find an orange broadcast symbol that stands for *link to an RSS Feed*. When we click on it, a page of code pops up! No need to panic! We will click on the URL and copy it (I use Ctrl+C), open the Google Reader, click on *Add Subscription*, paste the URL in the search box, and click *Add*.

Some sites let us add a subscription by simply checking an icon that says Google Reader. We click the link and a window pops up that allows us to log in to our account and add the link.

It is simple to go to www.google.com/reader, log in, and view updates. We can indicate that we want all messages older than one day to be marked as Read. Now only today’s unread links are bold. We can organize links into folders. Yes, we can unsubscribe and we can add new subscriptions, change the folders in which they are stored, view the links as lists, share, search within links, and more.

Why not try using this technology. You will get the latest information in one easily accessible place, thus maximizing precious time.

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Tech Talk

by Lizz Russell

Most of you are running Windows Update or Microsoft Update to keep your Windows and other Microsoft programs as secure as possible, but what about all the other programs on your computer that are not made by Microsoft? Many other programs also have vulnerabilities that have been found, such as in Adobe Acrobat (Adobe Acrobat is used to read many documents and fill in many forms on the internet). Many of these programs do not update automatically.

There is a free program that you can use to scan your computer for needed updates for these other programs. It is called Secunia Software Inspector: secunia.com/vulnerability_scanning.

For home users, you can either just have your computer scanned online at the click of a button, or you can download the Personal Software Inspector.

For business users, you can either have your computer scanned online, or you can scan your entire network with the Corporate Software Inspector.

What is really nice about this program is that it goes out to the update site and gets the update for you. You don’t have to go searching to find out how to get the updates.

It doesn’t take too long—it took only around 10 minutes to run on my own computer. If you download the program, it schedules itself to look for updates once a week.

If you run it online, you might want to check your computer at least once a month.

Windows 7 Upgrade – My Experience

by Sandy Berger, CompuKiss. www.compukiss.com

Those of you who follow me know that I really like Windows 7 and have no qualms about recommending it. This is not a program that you have to wait to purchase until the problems have cleared. I have been successfully using it for months and have just installed it on my everyday computer.

So if you are ready to buy a new computer, go right ahead and buy one with Windows 7. However, if you are going to upgrade an older computer, there are a few things you should know.

First, I don't recommend upgrading an older computer running Windows XP. Although Windows 7 may run on your old XP computer, XP is more capable for computers with limited memory and outdated graphics. Also, if you upgrade from XP to 7, you have to do a clean install. (More on that later.)

Even if you are upgrading to Windows 7 from Vista, there are a few things that you should know. My recent upgrade experience may help.

Last week I got an advance copy of Windows 7 and decided to upgrade my Vista computer.

There are two possible ways to upgrade: An in-place upgrade or a clean install. A clean install is preferable, but it means that all your data and your programs are wiped out. This is good because it puts your computer into a like-new status. However, a clean install requires a lot of work. It entails backing up everything, reinstalling all of the programs, transferring the data from a backup back to the computer after

the upgrade, and readjusting any programs that you had previously customized. After listing the number of programs that I had installed on my computer, I decided that after a clean install it would probably take me at least 2 days to get my computer back to where it was. With time at a premium, I opted for an in-place upgrade. I had already installed all of the updates and service packs, so my computer was ready to be upgraded.

The first thing that I did (and that everyone should do before upgrading), was to back up my data. I chose to use a program called True image by Acronis to make a complete backup of everything on my computer. I put the backup on a portable hard drive. It was 350GB, so I expected this upgrade to take a long time.

Then I surfed over to the Microsoft website to check out their compatibility upgrade advisor for Windows 7. I installed this Microsoft program on my computer and ran it. It told me that my Belkin wireless network needed a new driver for Windows 7, and that my Logitech webcam might not work properly with Windows 7. I surfed over to both manufacturers' websites and found that they had no specific drivers listed for Windows 7. Since I already had the most current Vista drivers, I decided to just go ahead with the upgrade.

I put the Windows 7 disk in the computer and clicked on "Install." I made a few choices, like choosing between an in-place and a clean install. To my surprise, the install program told me that I had quite a

few incompatibility problems. In addition to the two devices that I had been warned about, it listed a printer that I had previously uninstalled and several games that also had been previously removed. However, it also listed iTunes as incompatible. I use iTunes every day to sync my iPhone, so this could have been a deal-killer. Yet, I knew that I had the latest version of iTunes, so I just crossed my fingers and clicked "Next" to go on.

After that, the installation was easy. The computer pretty much did all the work, including rebooting several times. While a clean install can be accomplished in about ½ hour, my in-place install over 350 GB of programs and data on a pretty speedy computer took 3 hours.

Once the update was complete, I found myself at the Windows 7 desktop. There was a new desktop background and the taskbar had much larger icons (something that I like about Windows 7), but other than that, all of my icons were there and my desktop looked pretty normal.

To my surprise, the Belkin wireless card that I had been warned about worked seamlessly. The Logitech Quick Cam, however, gave me an error. On a hunch, I reinstalled the webcam driver. Although this was the same driver that I had been using with Vista, Windows 7 now seemed to like it. It also functioned perfectly. Oh, and the iTunes program that I had been warned about also worked perfectly, except that I had to reauthorize the computer, which was a simple process.

(see *Windows 7* on page 11)

(Deals Guy—continued from page 4)

The most popular feature, besides greeting card templates, is probably Effects & Filters that allow adding natural phenomena (such as stars, clouds, rain, snow and lightning). You can also add noise and blur, stylize a picture (ancient photo effect, pencil drawing, lithograph, etc.), adjust brightness and saturation, and make complex combinations. You can adjust the transparency of the effects and set the area to be processed (the top, bottom, center, borders, etc.). There are a variety of picture frames.

Home Photo Studio Deluxe edition costs a bit more than Standard Edition, but is rich with extra features. It is the right variant for those who want to create 3D compositions, get automatically created collages, use plastic effects, and import PNG/PhotoShop templates. Deluxe edition is also remarkable for its over 100 professionally designed frames and greeting card templates.

Working with Home Photo Studio is usually trouble-free thanks to the intuitive interface. But if the user still

faces a problem while mastering the program, the detailed Help system is ready to explain how to deal with it.

Home Photo Studio runs under Windows 2000/XP/Vista/7. The Standard edition costs \$39 and the Deluxe edition costs \$59. Here's a special offer for user group members. Order the Standard Edition, and then write to support@ams-soft.com. The message must include the order ID and the text "DealsGuy Special Offer." AMS Software will then ship the Deluxe Edition with 100 extra templates and extended functions. Further product information, as well as its free trial version, is available at home-photo-studio.com.

Some Popular Sites With Low Prices

Some of you probably know about these, but some may not. Here are some URLs for great deals that are popular with the local user group members, and something I check frequently. One is www.1saleaday.com where the sale is good for 24 hours only. The price might even be *free*, with the only cost being the shipping. I've bought a few items there and some were fantastic deals while others were good, but the item wasn't quite as I expected.

Another very popular one is www.giveawayoftheday.com where the item is absolutely free by download for just 24 hours. Some of these free items are reputable ones that normally have a retail price and are rated good software. When it's free, I sometimes download it even though I have no use for it at the time, but I take the attitude that "you never know." I think that men can change their minds, too.

www.software-dod.com is another interesting site where you might find a bargain, but I've only found one I wanted so far, and I'm not sure I really needed it.

If you find something that interests you, I suggest you read it thoroughly because I had something I thought I wanted on 1saleaday, but ended up not getting what I thought I was ordering. Read the description over thoroughly to avoid that.

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.

(Roots—continued from page 5)

Ancestry.com looks for possible connections to other uploaded ancestral files and places a leaf by the name on your family tree that may be connected to a name on another family tree. This feature allows you to expand your tree much more quickly than doing all the research yourself. Caution: Make sure the information you connect to your tree is as accurate as your own!

Another of my favorite sites is found at tribalpages.com. Here you can upload your tree, add pictures, create slide shows, add family memories, and connect with others. This is a wonderful place to host the wealth of family memories. It is free

until you have more than 50 pictures. At the highest hosting charge, you get 5,000 pictures and pay less than \$60 per year. The site is amazingly inexpensive, simple to use, and very well designed!

Do you need ship lists? Here are a few sites to check:

- Ellis Island free records of ship lists, www.ellisland.org
- www.Olivetree.com
- Cindi's List: www.cyndislist.com

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(Windows 7—continued from page 10)

I am not sure if Microsoft was a little too harsh in their assessments of incompatibilities, or if I was just lucky. Since I did my upgrade before the actual launch of the Windows 7 product, Microsoft's Windows 7 Capability Center was not yet available. As you read this, however, it should be open. Just type "Windows 7 Compatibility Center" in the search box at the Microsoft website and you should be able to check the compatibility of most software and hardware.

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December Door Prize Winners

