

**From The DealsGuy,
 by Bob Click, Greater Or-
 lando Computer Users Group
 Any Takers?**

So far, nobody has answered my call to take over the Deals Column. I don't blame them because it's a demanding task. I can't say that it's a thankless job though because I receive many thanks everywhere I go. This may sound egotistical, but I would surely miss that. Some editors didn't print that part of my April column so perhaps that's part of the reason for no response. I'll keep it going for a short time, but I'm not sure how long. Maybe I'll have more time after all my company has gone next month. Actually, I've received several messages asking me NOT to stop because they just enjoy reading it. It's very gratifying to have people enjoying my work.

There are some discouraging things such as a couple of editors who were content to just print the name of the product, the price and where to buy it, until I asked them "please do not do it that way." They were compressing my two-page column to one paragraph. I think those editors are misinterpreting what makes the Deals Column

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**Why I am Against the
 Internet Freedom and
 Broadband Deployment
 Act By Dennis Courtney**

President, Capital PC User Group -
 Washington, DC

The Internet Freedom and Broadband Deployment Act (IFBDA), popularly known as the Tauzin-Dingell Bill, narrowly passed the House of Representatives last month and is now headed for the Senate. It faces more of a challenge in the Senate but its defeat is by no means assured. After you read this article I hope that you will join me by adding your voice to the chorus calling for the defeat of this bad piece of legislation.

A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

IFBDA supporters claim that the bill is intended to free the Baby Bells from the burden of regulation so that they can bring broadband access to their customers. The trouble is it frees the Baby Bells from all current regulation and prohibits the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and various states from ever regulating broadband. Specifically, it frees the Baby Bells from the requirement that they resell access to their service lines to other broadband providers and prohibits anyone from regulating them. This means that they can freeze out other broadband providers, charge you whatever they wish without any service level requirements while both the state and federal governments will be prohibited from doing anything about it! Instead of making broadband access competitive, IFBDA is very clearly anti-competitive.

The bill states that "the imposition of regulations by the Federal Communica-

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May 6, 2002

Stark Tech Main Auditorium

North Canton, Ohio

6:00 PM Financial Sites on the Web -

Murray Davis 7:30 PM Q&A

**8:00 PM QuickBooks for Small Business -
 Connie Millard**

The Deals Guy

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work. Many readers tell me that they rarely buy anything, but they just enjoy reading it. Maybe that's because I keep the readers broke. Anyway, we'll see how my time and the vendor responses go.

Great Conference

My wife and I had a GREAT time at the FACUG (Florida Association of Computer User Groups) Conference. Attendance was up considerably this year. There were 197 attendees from 24 user groups. Vendor participation was down this year with only thirteen, but that didn't hurt it a bit. The camaraderie was great. Door prizes were also less abundant this year, but I doubt anybody was surprised at that with the economy the way it is and vendors cutting back. If you missed the conference, you were the loser.

There was an impressive presentation for the new iMac by the Apple folks, and they even gave one away. They have become great supporters of FACUG. During the roundtables one RT during each session was by a vendor. I liked that. As usual, it was a tough decision choosing which RT to attend for each session. There were also many attending the conference for the first time and they were thrilled with it all. FACUG is alive and VERY well thanks to the hard work of its officers.

I think one of the things that makes it work well is that the meals can be catered in at cheaper prices, and the facility is more intimate for attendees. Hotels in the area are reasonably priced. Since it is not held at a convention type hotel, attendees don't have to stay in an expensive hotel room. FACUG is one of my favorite events during the year. As usual, there are still some changes I would like to see.

Still Good

The items through Gene & Linda Barlow are always good. To order, go to [<http://www.ugr.com/order/>]. Use the code UGDEALS02. The Alpha 5 software deal is still good. To order, call 1-800-451-1018 and mention "code 77." Tell them you belong to a user group. Visit [<http://www.alphasoftware.com/>] for a better description of the product.

When I commented on how I used to like the Prodigy message boards, Richard Rabin (CEO of Alpha Software) told me that they now have a message board on the Web site that is very active, and where their customers are incredibly

helpful to each other. In fact, he said there are about 50,000 posts on the board, which has a super fast search built-in.

Richard asked if I would like an updated version and I jumped at the chance since I still have the DOS version and can't get it to run on my latest computer. I installed my new Alpha 5 and it easily opened my old DOS .dbf files so I could work with them. Then when I closed the files, they were converted to the new format. I don't know why they didn't keep the .dbf format.

Gobe Is Back

I received a message from Dave Johnson of gobeProductive the other day letting me know of another offer for this very interesting product. gobeProductive is currently at version 3.03, but they have some 3.0 CDs left over. He said this seems like a good time to make a special offer to sell these 3.0 versions to my readers, exclusively, for \$49.95 plus S&H. (Retail is \$124.95, but they're still offering a \$74.95 introductory price for the 3.03.) They will again use a special Web page for this DealsGuy offer and they will come in a CD mailer packaging instead of a full box. Users can still upgrade the 3.0 version for free to version 3.03 by downloading the upgrade installer. What a deal!

To purchase the gobeProductive 3.0 DealsGuy special, go to [<http://www.gobe.com/dealsguy.html>] and place your order.

A Quick Message From Herb Goodman

Herb offers magazine discounts to user group people only. He wants to make sure that even the small user groups know about the changes in the magazine line-up and the new prices. Editors can contact Herb at [HGOODMAN@prodigy.net] for the latest list to publish in their newsletter.

Get Your Files The Easy Way

Bonnie Mitchell from Casady & Greene was kind enough to send me this one just before I closed the column. The following is their description of InstaFiles!:

"View and Organize Documents, Applications, and Projects with One Click! InstaFiles! is the first visual Document and Project browser for your computer. Everyone who runs more than one program at a time on their PC will find that InstaFiles! will make their life easier. With InstaFiles! you will never lose track of an open window again.

"Browse for documents and projects InstaFiles! is a graphical browser for all currently open documents, applications and Web pages. InstaFiles! allows you to easily navigate between documents, etc.

"Simplify Windows using patent-pending tech-

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nology lets you see every open window as real-time oversized thumbnails, which allows for instant access to many different open documents, projects, applications or files-with one click!

"Improve your productivity and performance and save time by grouping related documents, files, and applications, to launch together later just by opening an InstaFiles! saved project!

"Instantly find your active files. Never again wonder "where did that file go?" InstaFiles! lays out all open windows, side-by-side, using graphical thumbnails."

Check this URL to order InstaFiles! or any of the Casady & Greene user group specials. [<http://ug.casadyg.com/?page=shop/win>]. The user group price for InstaFiles! is \$19.95, regular price, \$39.95. C & G offers both Mac and PC products.

Keep Track Of Your Hard Drive's Health

Bob Esche of the Dayton Microcomputer Association forwarded this DiskAlert offer by Executive Software to me. He liked their Diskeeper (r) defragger product and feels this is a good company. Their DiskAlert(tm) software gives you an inexpensive, automated early warning system, monitoring for imminent hard drive failures and dangerously low free space on all your servers, with or without RAID. And, DiskAlert protects stand-alone desktops and laptops running Windows NT(r)/2K/XP. There's more so check their Web site at [http://www.diskalert.com/purchase/online-store_da.asp?ad=dae1].

For a limited time, you can download a DiskAlert 1-disk license for just \$29.95, regular \$49.95, or a DiskAlert 2-disk license for \$49.95 instead of \$99.95. One license is only good for a single hard drive. For more questions, call 1-800-829-6468, extension 6012. I'm not sure I understand it all that good so do your homework on this one and check out their Web site information, but it sounds good to me.

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of products, no matter how enthused, or disgruntled, I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [Bobclick@dealsguy.com]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns. There are also interesting articles from user group newsletters on my "Articles of Interest" page for viewing or downloading.

Why I am Against the Internet Freedom and Broadband Deployment Act By Dennis Courtney

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tions Commission and the States has impeded the rapid delivery of high speed internet access services and Internet backbone services to the public, thereby reducing consumer choice and welfare." Giving the Bells carte blanche to avoid competition and charge any price without ensuring a minimum quality of service does nothing to increase consumer choice or welfare.

Unfulfilled Promises

Have you ever wondered what all those different taxes listed on your phone bill are for? At least some of them were supposedly earmarked to help build a nationwide fiber-optic system. Over half of America was supposed to have fiber-optic lines to their home or office by 2000. The Bells took massive write downs to replace their copper wire infrastructure and collected over \$53 billion (with a 'b') in fees earmarked for fiber-optic. But almost none of the infrastructure they promised has been delivered.

The New Jersey Ratepayer Advocate wrote about NJ Bell Atlantic "...low income and residential customers have paid for fiber-optic lines every month but have not yet benefited. Bell Atlantic-New Jersey has over-earned, under spent and inequitably deployed advanced telecommunications technology to business customers, while largely neglecting schools and libraries, low income and residential rate payers and consumers in Urban Enterprise Zones as well as urban and rural areas".

Follow the Money

Why would the House pass a bill so obviously pro-business and anti-consumer? One has to wonder when looking at the money spread around by the Bells in support of Tauzin-Dingell. According to the non-partisan campaign contribution reporting site www.opensecrets.org the Bells gave over \$19.4 million dollars from 1999 to 2001 in PAC,

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Trimming and Cutting for Dummies Like Me By Bruce Switalla, Coastal Area Users Group (CAUG)

Since it will be a while before I learn how to get my graphic printouts to line up correctly on pre-perforated paper, I decided to simply save money on mistakes and take matters into my own hands. So, for the Feb. graphics SIG, I briefly demonstrated how I make business cards, greeting cards, and photo prints without the perforated paper that I can't always figure out how to line up.

For now, I use Epson Matte Heavyweight paper (52-lb) for everything. It makes a thin but acceptable business card, and it doesn't stick to glass photo frames. As shown at the meeting, it yields rich, dark colors too. For business card software, I use Print Artist and can get it to print TWELVE cards per 8½ x11 sheet with hairline crop marks that get split in two and don't show. The pre-perforated business card sheets I've seen yield only ten and thus leave wasted paper.

For business cards, greeting cards, and photos alike, I use the following equipment. I place an 11x15 Good Cook Flexible Cutting Board (about \$2.95) from H-E-B's cooking utensils section down on my table surface. Yes, it gets cut marks in it, but that's what its for! I heard at the meeting that a fabric store has more costly cutting mats that "heal" after you cut into them thus preventing the knife from following a previous groove. To cut, I use an Exacto knife (from Hobby Lobby) and keep it covered with its plastic cap when not in use. For the projects without crop marks like photos, I use 2 sharp pencil marks to determine where to cut. I place the knife on the mark first, then slide a cork-backed metal ruler (available cheap at Office Depot) against the knife at my first point. Then, holding the ruler down with my finger out of the way of the cut, I place the knife-point in the other pencil mark, pivoting the ruler this time against the knife. I consistently keep the knife straight up while watching my fingers. I cut 2 or 3 times just past where I need to, so the side cuts will come apart when finished. I got a beautiful 5x7 mahogany-colored wood frame from Dollar General for \$2. And 8X10s are 3 and \$4. By

the way, if you go with glossy paper, you cannot let it touch the glass, so you will need to place a spacer, like a mat, around the photo (a job for the pro's).

Advanced Advice

If you can control how large your photo prints out, you may opt for 4½x6½ or so with white borders that you leave when you cut to 5x7, since a 5x7 wood frame will cover a quarter inch on all sides, and ink is expensive. Measure the frame's inside dimensions for white border (cutting purposes) and from the front of the frame measure for printing purposes but be sure no white will show after framing. Better to think this all out and practice on Crayola-colored notebook paper than mess up a print. "Measure twice..."

One thing I didn't cover at the meeting was folding greeting cards. I place two pencil marks down the center of where I need to fold. Then I put the ruler edge over the marks and use a pizza cutter roller to crease neatly the fold I need. Care is needed to avoid rolling away from the ruler's edge. The resulting fold looks professional!

E-mail Address:
bswit@usa.net



Why I am Against the Internet Freedom and Broadband Deployment Act By Dennis Courtney

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soft money and individual contributions. Opponents of Tauzin-Dingell gave just over \$8 million. Supporters of Tauzin-Dingell received more than 7 times as much money from the Bells than they did from the anti-Tauzin-Dingell groups. More than 180 House members got 10 times more money from the Bells - and they voted to approve the Bill by a 5:1 margin. Those who got equal amounts of money from both sides voted 2:1 against the Bill. Some 16 members of the House received no money from either side - they voted 13-3 against the Bill. The strong correlation between money and votes in the House make the defeat of the legislation in the Senate an uncertain conclusion. The Bells have 'deep pockets' and have shown that they are willing to invest in making sure that they have their Congressman's ear on this matter.

What Can You Do About It?

First you should educate yourself regarding the issue. This article is a good first step but there is plenty of information on the subject to be found on the Internet or through your local consumer watchdog organizations (the public utility commissions in 30 states, including Maryland, oppose the bill). Search at www.google.com and enter the key words "Tauzin" and "Dingell" to find information on the legislation. Second, contact both of your state's Senators and tell them what you think about Tauzin-Dingell. Although we don't know yet what the bill will be called when it reaches the Senate, they'll know what you mean. Many Senators will accept Email directly or through the Senate website at <http://www.senate.gov>. Whatever you think about this legislation, let your Senator know. If it passes in the Senate you can be assured it will be signed into law and you will be living with the consequences for a long time to come.

Dennis Courtney is the President of the Capital PC User Group in Washington, DC and can be contacted at president@cpcug.org

Top 20 Reasons Dogs Don't Use Computers

20. Can't stick their heads out of Windows '95.
19. Fetch command not available on all platforms.
18. Hard to read the monitor with your head cocked to one side.
17. Too difficult to "mark" every website they visit.
16. Can't help attacking the screen when they hear "You've Got Mail."
15. Fire hydrant icon simply frustrating.
14. Involuntary tail wagging is dead giveaway they're browsing www.pethouse.com instead of working.
13. Keep bruising noses trying to catch that MPEG Frisbee.
12. Not at all fooled by Chuck wagon Screen Saver.
11. Still trying to come up with an "emotion" that signifies tail-wagging.
10. Oh, but they WILL... with the introduction of the Microsoft Opposable Thumb.
9. Three words: Carpal Paw Syndrome
8. 'Cause dogs ain't GEEKS! Now, cats, on the other hand...
7. Barking in next cubical keeps activating YOUR voice recognition software.
6. SmellU-SmellMe(tm) still in beta test.
5. SIT and STAY were hard enough, GREP and AWK are out of the question!
4. Saliva-coated mouse gets mighty difficult to maneuver.
3. Annoyed by lack of newsgroup, alt.pictures.master's.leg.
2. Butt-sniffing more direct and less deceiving than online chat rooms.

and the Number 1 Reason Dogs Don't Use Computers...

1. TrO{gO DsA[M,bN HyAqR4tDc TgrOo TgYPmE

Revisiting USB 2.0 by Art

McRowe, ACPCUG

Everyone salivating over USB 2.0? I am! After my article two months ago about this upgrade path to simple, high-speed communications outside your PC box, we thought that everything was going to jump into place. Didn't you? Well, of course, nothing ever happens that easy!

First of all, you need a PCI card with the NEC chip that gives you USB 2.0 capabilities. Preferably, look for one with four external and one internal ports. (You can use the internal port to put a USB connection on the front of your PC, using either an external slot (both 3.5 inch and 5 inch plates are available). Be careful, though, most of these you see in shows are only rated from USB 1.1, and the weakest link will kill your USB 2.0 speed. Many new cases are coming with a place for USB outlets, and you can use the internal USB port for that.

Decent USB 1.1 cables are completely compatible with the USB 2.0 standard (both have a 15 foot maximum total length). So don't be fooled into having to buy a whole new set of cables. And the new shouldn't cost any more than the old.

There is less convenience with USB 2.0, however. The higher frequency capability of USB 2.0 (comes along with being able to pump more bits of info per second) makes it far more persnickety. Just as anyone who



"Don't try using your computer, it's just a plastic display model. We'll get you a real one when things start to pick up around here."

has run TV cabling knows, the higher frequency of UHF (channel 13-100) makes it trickier than the older VHF (channels 3-12). Picture ghosts and random noise was far worse in UHF than VHF. That's one of the reasons everyone wanted VHF channels. Cable TV has helped us a lot that way!

Well, the upshot of the USB 2.0 higher frequencies is that it is much better plug it directly into you card or machines direct outlet. In fact, I have read that there is no device certified to give those handy one line turned into 2, 4, and 7 outlets that are so nice using USB 1.1. (I have not seen it in a store, yet,

(Continued on page 7)

Is Windows a Virus?

No, Windows is not a virus. Here's what viruses do:

- They replicate quickly - okay, Windows does that.
- Viruses use up valuable system resources, slowing down the system as they do so - okay, Windows does that.
- Viruses will, from time to time, trash your hard disk - okay, Windows does that too.
- Viruses are usually carried, unknown to the user, along with valuable programs and systems. Sigh... Windows does that, too.
- Viruses will occasionally make the user suspect their system is too slow (see 2) and the user will buy new hardware. Yup, that's with Windows, too.

Until now it seems Windows is a virus but there are fundamental differences: Viruses are well supported by their authors, are running on most systems, their program code is fast, compact and efficient and they tend to become more sophisticated as they mature.

So Windows is not a virus. It's a bug.

What Caused that Error Message?

what caused that error message?
i'm sure it wasn't me.
now there is another one -
and i didn't touch a key!
i bought a brand new program,
hope it didn't have a bug.
i think it's much more likely
it was caused by a mug.
the screen is black, the cursor's gone,
someone must have hid it.
aha, now it's back again -
but i don't know how i did it!
i'm sure that this computer
has a mind of its own,
so until i find an expert
better leave the thing alone!
well, now i'm on the internet,
i wish i had been told -
that all my little problems
would increase a thousand-fold!
i dialed up my home page,
just to have a look around
at anything of interest -
but the server can't be found.
finally it's working,
i access many sites,
got lots of information -
downloaded megabytes.
but how many bugs and cookies?
and they now know where i am,
so they'll use their planted spyware
to send me lots of spam.
i've had to quickly shut down,
'cos something froze the screen
and when i turned it on again
everything was green!
now having trouble starting up,
must be worse than it looks.
is it a virus or a worm?
oh well, back to reading books!

All items in the *Humor* category were sent to us by friends and visitors like yourself, and are considered public domain. If you believe there to be any copyright infringements, please let us know.

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but at least one reputable accessories company has a device listed on several Internet sales sites.) So I would be very careful in planning to use these handy devices for my highest speed requirements. Obviously, we all have many USB 1.1 devices like mice and keyboards, etc. that can work just fine with these branching devices. My advice is to reserve one USB outlet for them, alone (or your old USB 1.1 outlets). Then the remaining USB 2.0 outlets are free for your high-speed requirements.

So being careful about mixing up USB 2.0 with 1.1 devices, just how good are the new USB 2.0 capable devices we see added on. Well, it's a mixed bag. All USB 2.0 devices are faster plugged into USB 2.0 cards! But do we get anything like the 40-fold increase promised by USB 2.0? What do you think?

In recent copyrighted articles in both PCWorld and PCMagazine some devices were only marginally faster. I can only summarize the results here, but the data is completely available at their web sites: www.pcworld.com and www.pcmag.com. In retrospect, it makes sense. USB 2.0 scanners and USB 2.0 CD-RW burners were "only" 2 to 4-fold faster on USB 2.0 than on USB 1.1. A fast IBM 7200 rpm hard drive was nearly 30-fold faster! Well, dah! A faster device will be faster than a slow one. The fairer question is with an external USB 2.0 CD-RW burner is as fast as the same burner inside the case? Or a hard drive or a ZIP drive?

The answer is yes, at least with a good setup for a good hard drive! In a copyrighted article online at www.tomshardware.com they tested a particular fast HD available for both EIDE and USB 2.0. And the USB 2.0 device was 99% the speed of the EIDE! You need to read the articles yourself. As usual, Tomshardware is very detailed and technical. My impression is that this article points out that you have to have a good PCI USB 2.0 card first. But then getting the right one will give you very satisfactory results.

My own son is "addicted" to laptops. You never get enough stuff in a minimized laptop! He dearly wants a CD burner! As yet, there are not yet PCCard USB 2.0 adapters! They're in the works! That'll be the day! Yes, we are all waiting for the "day"; speed, convenience and cost-effectiveness! It will come!

Akron-Canton PC Users Group
PO Box 2151
Akron Oh 44309-2151

**Next Meeting - May 6th,
 Stark Tech Auditorium
 North Canton, OH**

First Class Mail

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Mailing Label Address Goes Here

Published by: Akron-Canton PC Users Group 1996 thru present.

Box 2151, Akron, Oh 44309-2151

www.acpcug.org

* Membership - 1st year \$25, renewals \$20 per year

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Bachelor of Science in Business Administration-Major Accounting-Cleveland State University

Past Work Experience:

Job Costing, Cost Analysis

Coordinator of 2 year Small Business Management Program

Teaching Quickbooks for Adult Ed. Programs

**Bio of our Quicken Speaker:
Debbie Czech**

**President: Ackerman-Czech Corporation
 Set-up, Training and Support of Accounting Programs: Specializing in Quickbooks since 1995**

Quickbooks SIG Leader through GCPCUG:

Club Officers			
President	Murray Davis (2003)	440-248-0021	murray5050@yahoo.com
Vice President	Frank Ramsey (2004)	330-699-4711	aframsey@yahoo.com
Club Outreach	Rick Lubinski (2002)	330-928-7179	lubinski@bright.net
Secretary	Walt Ruthenburg (2003)	330-283-7867	wruthenburg@usa.net
Program Director			
Treasurer	Joe Krause (2002)	330-484-2338	Joek4646@yahoo.com
Newsletter Editor	Art McRowe	330-666-3189	amcrowe@bright.net
Software Review	Jim Carter (2004)	330-882-4222	jwcarter@bright.net

Future Events	
Sun., Jun. 16th, 2002	Peter Trapp Computer Show at Tadmor Temple off I-77 to Arlington Road, Akron, OH (Exit 120)
May 17-19, 2002	Dayton Hamvention, Hara Conference Center, 1001 Shiloh Springs Road, Dayton, OH
No May Peter Trapp Show in OHIO	