

ACPCUG

August 2002

From The DealsGuy , by Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

I posted two new user groups on my Web site's distribution page the other day, and checked a few URLs to see if they still worked. Sometimes a group changes their URL and its often tough trying to get the new one. I'm always intrigued when I access the user group URLs on that page, and I think you would enjoy them too. Check them to see creative minds at work. There's interesting information in those listings. Two have pop-ups I didn't like, but it's still entertaining to check them all out. Reading their activities is also interesting. One has "Club" in the name. The IRS often frowns on a 501(c)(3) organization called Club.

I don't have all the groups listed that carry my column and I'd love to get as many as I can to show vendors the column's value. Please find time to check and see if your group is listed, and while you're there, see if the information is right. Update me so I can correct it if any data is wrong. I'm also now uploading some new articles to my Web site again.

New user groups listed are The

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Windows XP: As Good as it Gets

Bass discovers few crashes, great performance, and a minimum of headaches with XP Pro By Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group

Kvetching about an operating system is therapeutic. Believe me, I've done lots, saving regular visits to my shrink. But my complaining has almost bottomed out since I made the full-time switch to Windows XP Pro.

You caught that, right? I said almost. The reason is that even though I'm wildly pleased with XP, there are still a few features--and loose ends--I don't like. I'll describe a few of them in this and subsequent columns, and show you how XP has built-in ways to make the changes. (Of course, that's one of my primary kvetches -- finding the spots to modify XP isn't obvious and requires digging.)

To play fair, I have to warn you that I'll also do some proselytizing. I'm going to do my best to win you over, so to speak, for your own good. That's because once you get over the hassle of Product Activation, and Microsoft's annoying single license policy, I really think your computing experience will increase substantially.

I need another soapbox minute or two. Many of the PC

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August 4, 2002

Taylor Memorial Library

Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

6 PM– WinKey Utility by Art McRowe

7:30 PM Q&A

8:00 PM Norton System Works by Jim Carter

The Deals Guy

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Boeing Employees Computing Society and the Coastal Area Users Group. The Boeing group is another that distributes nearly all their newsletters in electronic format. Many groups have gone to electronic distribution.

The Cheapskate Enjoys Life

My wife and I attended an Orlando Predators Arena Football game the other day (free tickets from the radio station) and they took lots of pictures. You can see ours at [<http://www.allnetphoto.com>] using the "216-111" password. We are posted at page 3, roll 1, frame 89 until at least July 22. I'm not a sports fan, but we enjoyed ourselves. People standing up in front of me during some plays didn't help though. We were in the "lower nosebleed" section. Perhaps you'll see somebody you know among all those pictures posted.

Unexpected developments prevented us from attending the APCUG Region 8 Computer & Technology Expo in Beaumont, TX. Ira Wilsker tells me there were 40+ registered for all the APCUG events, but the public participation for exhibits was great, something over 2000. It was unfortunate that some of the public attendees were user group members who shunned the \$20 to \$40 fee for the APCUG events in lieu of just a \$5 admission fee for the exhibits. I think those people were the losers by missing the camaraderie and other planned events. One free software could offset that fee. I hope the event survives.

Inkjet & Laserjet Cartridge Deal Continued.

The Marketing Manager from InkSell.com, Susie McLean, says she's received so many late inquiries about their products that she will extend the offer a while longer. Go to [<http://www.inksell.com>], place your order and continue to "check out" where there will be a blank to enter the discount coupon code "D0302." Discount is automatically calculated. Any questions, or need assistance, phone customer service at 1-800-255-0483, or send e-mail to [help@inksell.com].

I don't know if Dave Whittle has any MGI inventory left, but you can check by e-mailing him at [orders@webworkingservices.com].

Make Your Search Easier

I received an announcement for **Patrol-Search 1.6** and thought my readers would like what it is said to do. Here are the listed fea-

tures: Bring any search site to your desktop by just drag and drop. More than 120 search engines divided into 16+ categories. Create your own categories to include any engines you want. Results can be grouped by any criteria (title, URL, status or search info). Include an integrated result browser to heavily browse results. Fully customizable font and color for URL, title, summary, status or engine info.

I could never adequately describe the great features of this product so I recommend you go to their Web site and look it over fully. [<http://www.patrolsearch.com>] I have not tried it since I am not a Web surfer. It was interesting that by using their software, James, my contact, found my Web site at its "actual" URL, which currently is on the free space given me by Earthlink. If you go to dealsguy.com, you're going where my domain "name" is hosted, then are redirected to my actual Earthlink "free" space, so that impressed me.

The normal price for PatrolSearch 1.6 is \$29.95, but you can purchase it for just \$19.95 (US funds) until Sept. 30, 2002 at the following private URL. [<https://secure.element5.com/shareit/checkout.html?productid=160800&quickbuy=1>].

How About Getting More Organized

This company quickly consented when I asked for a discount. I'm not a fan of PIMs, but they are popular these days. Duality Software has released **Calendarscope 1.4** for Windows 9x/ME/NT4/2000/XP. The Palm-enabled calendar also provides mobile time management. The following is their description.

"Calendarscope is a full-featured calendar program for planning, managing, and scheduling appointments, meetings, birthdays, vacations, important dates and special events. It allows you to view all your events in a daily, weekly, or monthly overview. Reminders have customizable fonts, colors and sounds, and may contain live Web URLs and e-mail addresses. Many of the main program features are accessible from a tray icon.

"Using Calendarscope, you can create single or recurring events, color-code different event types, set reminders for upcoming events, and more. A Drag and drop feature allows you to easily reschedule an event, or change its duration. You can synchronize your data with Palm OS handhelds or print your calendar to take it with you. You can also save it in HTML to publish it to the Web or to a company Intranet. The holidays of over 30 countries are available. Unauthorized access to your data is prevented with strong encryption algorithms. Read-Only mode is available for network users."

Check further at their Web site. [[\(Continued on page 3\)](http://www.</p></div><div data-bbox=)

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dualitysoft.com] Calendarscope is shareware offering a 30-day trial period. The regular price is \$29.95 (US funds), but if you purchase it at [<http://www.regsoft.net/purchase.php3?productid=38336&pc=i2M10>], (private site) DealsGuy readers will receive a 30% discount until October 1, 2002. If you prefer a CD, the extra price and S&H are listed there.

Problems - Check Your Registry

Here's another announcement I thought you'd be interested in. ElcomSoft Co. Ltd. announces the release of **Advanced Registry Tracer 1.58** for Windows 95/98/2000/NT/XP. They say it's a utility designed for analyzing the changes made in the Windows Registry by taking snapshots of it and keeping them in a browsable database. You can compare any two snapshots and get the list of keys/data that are new, deleted, or just changed. Moreover, you can create undo/redo files (for example, to roll-back the changes). It does not affect system performance by running in the background all the time. They say it's very useful for detecting Trojan viruses and eliminating some problems caused by software and hardware install/uninstall and compatibility issues.

It's shareware with a \$40 (US funds) price tag. The URL for more info on Advanced Registry Tracer 1.58 is [<http://www.elcomsoft.com/art.html>]. They're offering a 30% discount coupon for DealsGuy readers until Sept. 30, 2002. Near the bottom of the page, click on "Order fully licensed version of ART." Fill in name, address and other info, then click on "continue." Use "ELCO-TKIT" coupon code for 30% discount. 30% discount is also good on "any" of their other products. For a demo of using the coupon, see: [<http://www.elcomsoft.com/coupon.html>], which is somewhat different since it is for ordering any product with the coupon. I searched their Web site for a Brain Registry tracer since my brain doesn't work like it used to. There may be something wrong with its registry, if I have one ... brain registry, that is. Then there's the problem of how to install such a program. I know my wife has given me suggestions from time to time about where to put certain things we've talked about. Perhaps I should just practice the "don't ask, don't get told" policy. I found no such program anyway.

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 Cheap-skate) 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.

The Penguin

**(With apologies to Edgar Allan Poe)
Sent to us by Harold Crouch in response to our June 2002 newsletter, author unknown**

Once upon a Tuesday dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Installing the same version of Windows once more.
While I cursed the constant crashing, I made a fist and started bashing,
Started bashing the computer case and CD-ROM drive door.

"Piece of crap," I muttered, bashing the CD-ROM drive door,

"I will take this crap no more!"

Distinctly I do remember, when I bought my PC in December,

The marketing man said this software would crash no more.

Eagerly I wished to borrow a tool to inflict pain and sorrow

So that one day, perhaps tomorrow, I could go to my computer store

For the chance to make the salesman sell this crap no more.

Only this and nothing more.

So after wasting countless hours, I unplugged the beige mini-tower.

My day was looking very tragic like the old poetry of gothic lore,

But suddenly there came a tapping, rhythmic like the beats of rapping.

Actually, it sounded like flippers flapping, flapping at my apartment door.

"That is very odd," I muttered, "the time is nearly half past four,

Who is knocking on my door?"

The door was opened but it only revealed a penguin standing quite lonely,

Standing with a bag of CD-ROMs on the stoop before my apartment door.

I thought at first it was a delusion, for I was

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Window XP, As Good As It Gets

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World letters I receive complain, sometime bitterly, of a Microsoft conspiracy to force you into upgrading your system. Readers go on to say that in order to use XP, they'll need to replace some of their devices (printers seem to be the first one not to work), or stop using old, 16-bit programs written for Win 95.

I'll concede and agree with many of the readers that Microsoft should have done a better job with previous Windows versions, then we wouldn't be stuck in the corner having to upgrade.

But the reality is that if you want a slick operating system, one that's likely to make your computing day smoother and your workday more productive, you'll have to upgrade. [Set Soapbox to Off].

No More Stinkin' Crashes

You probably know that XP is a pretty interface hung on Windows 2000's architecture, so it resists crashes extraordinarily well. That's true for XP but not necessarily for programs that still plow headfirst into the bit bucket. For instance, Eudora, my e-mail program, locks up when I try embedding what it considers a too large image into a message. And Internet Explorer also has a way of choking and freezing on some sites, doing its best to imitate a deer in headlights.

With Win 9x, the Eudora and IE crash could bring the system down; even if it didn't, I'd reboot to clear out any leftover holes in memory. Win XP contains the crash and stops it from contaminating the rest of the system. Using Control - Alt - Delete, the three-finger, soft-boot salute, calls up Task manager, one of XP's shining lights. Click on the toasted app and it's history.

Crash Reports? No, Thanks

Of course, with Microsoft at the helm, nothing as cool as Task Manager's handling of a crash can be left alone. Microsoft insists

on meddling by sending itself the details of the crash. No doubt, the crash report does provide clues, often vital ones that you can review, to explain why a program crashes.

But once I've looked at a report -- say, Eudora's paige32.dll bug that Qualcomm won't fix -- I'm no longer interested in seeing it pop up. So I've turned parts of the feature off. (From Start, Control Panel, Advanced tab, Error Reporting.) This dialog gives me choices, and they're good ones. I can get the report but not send it, opt to hear only about programs or XP's errors, or even add specific programs to watch.

Zap, You're Restored

GoBack was the first successful utility to save snapshots of a PC's hard drive and let you restore the drive to a time when things were running well. It shouldn't surprise you to see a similar feature in Windows XP. (Roxio's GoBack, \$40, download at www.roxio.com.)

Quick aside: Many of Microsoft's niftier features are from the brain trusts of third-party companies. Woody, creator of dozens of Office, and specifically Word add-ons, said that to me in a private e-mail recently. More in another column.

XP's System Restore does just about everything does, just not as well. Nonetheless, it's an improvement over the way it worked in Windows ME, and a handy tool. I create a Restore point just before installing a new application. If the installation goes kablooey, I use System Restore to jump five minutes into the past and get my system going again.

I use it so often, I pinned it onto my Start Menu for easy access. Try it: Find System Restore in All Programs, Accessories, System Tools and right mouse click on the icon and choose Pin on Start menu. Easy, no?

System Restore's Problems

The problem? System Restore isn't perfect. While I haven't had a problem in the 25 times I've used it, some reports on the Internet talk about DLLs that should be gone af-

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ter a System Restore, are still on the system.

One thing Microsoft doesn't tell you is that each Restore Point (and system check-points, those restore points XP does automatically) takes up disk space.

You can dump all but the last system point by using XP's Disk Cleanup tool. Open Disk Cleanup, by clicking Start, choose All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, select Disk Cleanup, and choose the More Options tab. (Shortcut: From Start, Run, type cleanmgr.)

In the next series of columns, I'll show you other features built into XP that can keep you focused on productivity rather than rebooting two or three times a day or recovering from crashes.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He's also a founding member of AP-CUG.



The Penguin

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wrought with great confusion
Over the presence of a flightless Antarctic bird
at my apartment door.

So I stood there, looking quite the fool, with
my jaw down to the floor.

Then the bird said, "Pay no more!"

I thought to call the SPCA ... perhaps it es-
caped the zoo today.

But instead I brought the talking *Aptenodytes
forsteri* inside my door.

He looked around, he looked at me ... and
then he waddled to my PC.

I followed fast and I did see him place his disc
in my drive door.

His program booted and began to install soft-
ware I'd never seen before,

Then the bird said, "Pay No More!"

He brought me LINUX to install, said it
rarely crashed at all.

Then he showed me some books while the
software installed some more.

The interface, it looked like UNIX ... but 'twas
much cheaper than QNX.

In fact, the code was open, so the source of
bugs was hidden no more

It made wonder about the penguin's disc, be-
hind my CD drive door ...

And why the bird said, "Pay No More."

So I tried this new installation, at first
with fear and trepidation,

But soon I found it more stable than the OS I
used before.

The files were in different places, and I put
Linux through its paces

And very rarely made odd faces ... it didn't
crash like Windows did before.

For this fat penguin made me see a way to
use my computer as never before.

Then the bird said, "Pay No More!"

So once upon a morning sunny, I installed
Linux for no money,

With the CD-ROM brought by a penguin to my
apartment door.

After cursing the old installation, I reduced my
overall frustration

And with a bit of determination I removed the
software I used before.

Now I read Linux books and Web sites to use
my free operating system more.

Quoth the penguin, "Pay No More."

Choosing A New Computer for the Kids Part 1

By Ira Wilsker

One of the most frequently asked questions recently by both readers of this column and from listeners to my weekly radio shows was about purchasing computers for their children. Generally, the "kids" fall into two broad categories; college bound, and middle or high school students. As I reply when asked by anyone about recommendations for buying a computer, I ask back "what is it going to be used for?" The reply to that query will often have a significant influence on my recommendations.

First, a brief overview of processors, often referred to as "CPU chips"; the two major competitors are Intel and AMD, both of whom produce a variety of chips. The premium chips are Intel's Pentium, and AMD's Athlon. Both are generally satisfactory, and the rule of thumb is the faster, the better, but faster often means more expensive. For many modern computers the CPU chip, often not much larger than a postage stamp, is the most expensive component. Generally, the AMD Athlon chips with the same performance rating as Intel Pentium chips, are less expensive. According to side-by-side comparisons published by several of the major computer magazines, Athlon chips also generally outperform comparable Pentium chips of the same clock speed when used in real-world applications. Pentium chips are typically named with their rated clock speed, or how fast they can operate internally. The new Athlon chips are named not by their real clock speed, but how they compare to an Intel Pentium chip. For example an Athlon XP 1800 chip, while actually having a clock speed of 1.53GHZ, has about the same actual performance of a Pentium 1.8GHZ chip, but has a price (just for the chip) of about 1/3 to « less than the Pentium 1.8GHZ chip, according to the listings at pricewatch.com. Both AMD and Intel also manufacture a budget line of CPU chips. These chips are the Intel Celeron and the AMD Duron, currently being phased out by AMD. These budget chips, costing about « again less than their premium counterparts, have a lower degree of performance, even with the same clock speed, because they lack some of the more advanced features of their higher priced counterparts, such as less on-board cache memory, and less sophisticated video and multimedia support. "Putting my money where my mouth is", all of the computers I have built or purchased for my family in recent years have had AMD chips in them. While not all computer manufacturers offer a choice of chip-makers, recently I have almost always recom-

mended Athlon chips over Pentium, based on both their price and performance advantage. For kids' computers, purchased today, I would not recommend either Celeron or Duron chips, as today's kids are more likely to make extensive use of multimedia and graphics intensive applications, such as video games, and MP3 and DVD players. It is these applications specifically that Celerons and Durons generally lack the enhanced capability of their premium big brothers. For a child's computer today, I would pick an Athlon CPU chip over a comparable Pentium chip, if available.

As the speeds of CPU chips on the market increase, the marginal benefit of those increased speeds to the "kid" user decreases, as the cost increases. The latest "gee whiz" speeds may be impressive to friends, but using that increased CPU's additional cost for other features, rather than the highest speeds, may increase the functionality of the computer.

Memory, almost as much as chip speed, is a major contributor to computer performance. In recent years, the price of memory has plunged. While there have been some up-and-down price fluctuations, memory is often one of the less expensive components. Rule of thumb is the more memory, the better, up to reasonable limits. 128 megabytes of memory is about the minimum for new computers, with 256 megs becoming more common on new computers. Many new computers currently on local store shelves have 512 megs of memory, or more. There are different memory formats and speeds being used by different manufacturers. The type of memory used is often listed in the computer specifications. DDR memory is generally faster than the more common and less expensive PC133, but the difference in price is usually not very much. The computer I am using to type this has 256 megs of memory, which with my Windows 98 has been adequate. The computer I built last winter for my youngest daughter has 384 megs (3 - 128 meg sticks of PC133 speed memory), along with an Athlon 1.33 GHZ (266 "Front Side Bus") CPU chip. Memory sticks, of most major types, are fairly inexpensive and readily available from most computer, electronics and office supply stores. If the kids want more memory at a later date, it is usually an easy "do-it-yourself" project. Two of my four daughters have added memory to their computers, all by themselves.

New computers will also usually show the speed and type of video installed. Many manufacturers, in order to keep the cost down, use an on-board video chip that uses "shared" memory; this

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Choosing A New Kid's Computer

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means that the video card is also using the computer's regular memory. This reduces the memory available for applications, and reduces performance. A separate video card, preferably referred to as an AGP card, will have its own video processor and memory. Again, the faster the video card, and the more memory on the card, the better the video performance, but the more expensive the computer becomes. If the kid wants to do a lot of intensive gaming, or play DVDs on the computer, the better video may be worth the extra money. The computer I recently built for my youngest daughter has a very fast AGP 4x video card, with 64 megs of its own memory.

Next week, in the Examiner, this column will discuss choices for hard drives, CD-RW, DVD, and other accessories, as well as try and answer the notebook vs. desktop argument often made by our children.

So You Want a New Computer Upgrade!

By Art McRowe, ACPCUG

What to do, what to do? If you have an older computer you want to upgrade or need to buy a whole new one. Two different questions: A new one for your kids is addressed in another column. But for yourself, that is the question! (Pardon Shakespeare!). Seriously, consider a new motherboard, CPU and memory! (Is this an upgrade?) If you're going that far, consider waiting. Why?

If you have a really old computer with just the AT power supply connector, buy a whole new system!

The cost of a lot of new components to get the ATX power supply system, with its newer amenities such as power off with power down, wake up on a network, etc. is well worth the newer systems.

Well, memory chips are upgrading themselves as this is writing. But more interesting is the USB 2.0 situation. Today, USB 2.0 is only available as a separate chip or PCI card. That's fine, it works well! But it costs board manufacturers about \$10 to incorporate the NEC chip. According to PCWorld, this necessitates about a \$50 retail increase! The interesting cost break appears on the horizon about 4Qr02 the incorporation of USB 2.0

the main chipset by Intel and possibly SIS (for AMD). This will make USB 2.0 essentially free! But it is in the future.

What other things do you get in upgrading motherboards? Well, one thing is the choice of 3 EIDE channels instead of just 2. The 3 are on better grades of MB's for only a modest premium, NOW. The 3 EIDE channels handling a total of 6 devices is likely to be plenty in the next iteration of computers.

The next choice is of on-board RAID 0 and 1. Without getting longwinded, RAID 0 gets you redundancy with mirroring two identical drives. One drive goes bad; the other has got everything you need. You delete valuable file on one drive, it's deleted on the other, too! But outside of the extra drive price (low today!), you have protection when a drive decides to go south or belly-up.

RAID 1 is about getting us faster drive response by stripping information over two different drives. Higher forms of RAID do more of this to give servers better response, etc. The cheaper PROMISE chipset MB manufactures (such as ASUS and ABIT) use only offer RAID 0 and 1. Your choice at a moderate price! You don't get to mix the two ideas, one or the other!

PCMagazine at its website, www.extremetech.com has tested these choices for us. Their copyrighted article says there is no speed penalty for RAID 0 duplication on a second disk. But there is very little speedup on disk response in RAID 1 using stripping on two identical drives. I am glad for these tests, because I have been intrigued in upgrading to something for faster disk response. Seems like RAID 1 is not worth it. But check it out for yourself!

I am entranced with the newest compaction of the old-fashioned workbench computer! www.tomshardware.com previews a typical business PC with a heat-pump and fewer fans for a desktop unit one-third the size of the standard mini-tower. It accomplishes this with a simple AMD motherboard (s), but presently uses only a simple on-board video card (OK for business use), but will soon accept modern AGP cards for gamers and other video needs. We'll see, but I really expect more from this technology, as we really don't need a whole lot more room inside the computer anymore. And quiet is better!

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**Next Meeting - Aug 6th,
 Taylor Memorial Library
 Cuyahoga Falls, OH**

First Class Mail

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Future Events	
Sun., Aug. 18th, 2002	Peter Trapp Computer Show at Tadmor Temple off I-77 to Arlington Road, Akron, OH (Exit 120)
Sat., Aug. 24th, 2002	Dayton Computerfest, Hara Exhibition Center, Dayton, OH 9AM-6PM, Discounted tickets at www.computerfest.com
Sun., Aug. 25th, 2002	As above, 10AM-4PM