

ACPCUG Newsletter

**Akron North Hill
Library**

October 3, 2005

***Back to old
Venue!!***

Starts at 6:00PM Sharp!
Introduction to Data-
bases by Palitto Con-
sulting + Q&A

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October 2005

Akron-Canton PC Users Group

We will be back at North Hill Library on Cuyahoga Falls Ave. for October 2005. We are "assured" to be at the Main Library in December thanks to Walt Ruthenburg.

Dues NOTICE

Effective January 1, 2006 there will be a change in membership fees and the time they will be due.

At the August membership meeting a presentation was made covering the changes in the membership fees and the time they will be due.

The membership made a motion to accept the new time and fee structure. It will become effective January 1, 2006

The membership dues will be \$12.00 per year for everyone. They will be collected during the month of January.

There will NOT, repeat there will NOT be an invoice sent to the membership as in the past. The members will be expected to send their checks, Made out to ACPCUG, to the club address/ PO Box. The address is:

ACPCUG
PO Box 2151
Akron, Ohio 44309

You may also turn your dues in at a club

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meeting. Mr. Rick Lubinski will be accepting the dues in my absence at the membership meeting in January.

All members who have paid for more than one year will receive a letter from the Treasurer. The letter will have information covering the extension of your payment. You will be given credit for 2006 and any future years that your payment may cover.

Membership fees are due in January, if they haven't been paid by the end of February the member will be delinquent and membership privileges will cease.

Respectfully,

Jim Albright
Treasurer jra823a@netscape.net

Tech News

By **Sue Crane**, Editor, Big Bear Computer Club

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Free services are being used to install malicious code

Cybercriminals are increasingly using blog sites, photo album sites, fan and greeting card sites and other free online services to install and spread software designed to steal personal information or hijack a victim's PC. In the first two weeks of July, security company Websense saw more than 500 incidents of such attacks. The free services are an anonymous and affordable way for attackers to store and spread their malicious code. Be careful what you click on!

Insect "extermination" via mini robots.

Scientists in Lausanne, Switzerland, have successfully infiltrated a colony of roaches with a micro robot according to a report published in the June issue of IEEE Robotics & Automation. Called InsBot, for "insect-like robot," the mechanical bug mimics the insects' smell and movements so the roaches have accepted it as their own.

Vector Capital purchases WinZip

WinZip, is one of the most popular shareware programs on the Web. More than 140 million people have downloaded the program, and it's downloaded for free about 500,000 times a week. Turnaround investor Vector Capital. will try to change that by reminding users a little more firmly that the software costs \$29 (after a free 30-day trial), as well as likely coming out with new features that only paying customers can download.

Better Eating Through Nanotech

Major food producers are using nanotechnology to improve the quality of their foods, although some warn that the technology may be misunderstood by consumers. At a Nano4food conference food scientists, material scientists and nanotechnicians met to discuss how the technology is being used to improve the consistency of yogurt or cheese, packaging technologies, and even how to "wall off" the most nutritional components of food in favor of tastier alternatives. However, as nanotechnology moves forward, consumers will have to be informed and educated about the possible benefits and hazards of using it.

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Microsoft Finalizes Genuine Advantage

Microsoft has gone live with the Windows Genuine Advantage program. The program, which has been available in an avoidable pilot version since late 2004, is now mandatory. Microsoft also noted that it has somewhat simplified the Windows Genuine Advantage validation process; for example, users are no longer required to enter a 25-character product key to validate their software. Users who try to validate software and discover that they're unwittingly (or otherwise) running illegitimate copies of Windows have a few options. According to Microsoft, qualifying customers who fill out a piracy report, provide proof of purchase, and send in their counterfeit CD-ROMs can receive a genuine copy of Windows XP Home Edition or XP Professional Edition (depending on which version they're using) at no cost. Customers who submit a piracy report can get XP Home for \$99 or XP Pro for \$149.

There is no "Superfetch"

Ed Bott, bestselling author and computer journalist advises: "The same yokels who insist on spreading the "clean out your Prefetch folder" BS are now spreading the word that there's a super-double-secret registry setting in Windows XP called SuperFetch that will reduce boot times dramatically. No, there isn't. And if you see any Web site that tries to insist that there's any benefit to cleaning out your Prefetch folder or enabling this latest bogus tweak, you should assume that any other advice they give you is worthless as well."

End of analog TV?

Millions of American television sets that receive only analog over-the-air broadcasts could go dark if not upgraded by Jan. 1, 2009. That deadline was suggested by members of the U.S. Senate's Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. The committee is readying legislation expected this year that would require all American televisions to run on digital signals by the end of 2008. That would free up the analog, or 700 MHz, spectrum for other uses. Under current law, analog television would be cut off on Dec. 31, 2006, or when 85 percent of households are capable of receiving digital signals, whichever comes sooner. Last month, the FCC proposed to move the date by which all televisions with screen sizes of 25 to 36 inches must contain digital tuners up to March 2006. All televisions, VCRs and DVD players would have to carry the technology by 2007.

New Media Center Device

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Microsoft will soon ship a wireless Media Center keyboard and remote control that will help people who have Media Centers in their living rooms interact with the machines. The device features beveled edges for easy two-handed holding, an integrated pointing stick, full Media Center remote-control functionality, a full-sized keyboard with special Media Center buttons, and even power buttons for the PC and TV.

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Screen Shots

By David Garcia, President, Little Blue PC Club, Northglenn, Colorado
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Have you ever wanted to print out what you see on your monitor screen? This is called a "Screenshot," and there are several software packages on the market that allow you to do just that with various degrees of sophistication. If you don't need that sophistication, you can easily use Windows to get a screenshot. Just follow these instructions:

- 1) Press the Print Screen Key (PrtScr) on the keyboard.
- 2) Click Start, then click Run.
- 3) Type "mspaint" (without the quotes) in the Run box and click OK.
- 4) In Paint, click Paste in the Edit menu
- 5) Click Print Preview in the File menu. If the screenshot is cut off, you may want to change the printer setting to print in Landscape mode.
- 6) Click Print and close Paint. You're done!

You can also save the file if you like:

- 1) Click "Save" in the File menu
- 2) Browse to the folder you want to save the file in so that the folder name is in the "Save In" box.
- 3) Type a file name for the screenshot; use JPG in the "Save as Type" box and click Save.

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Internet Explorer Tips and Tricks

by Richard O. Johnson, TUGNET
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Internet Explorer, despite inroads made by Firefox and other browsers, overwhelmingly remains users' browser of choice (perhaps because it comes bundled with all new Windows computers). The following pointers are designed to help you get the most out of your use of Internet Explorer. They're written with IE6 in mind, although most will apply to earlier versions, and some may apply to other browsers as well.

Use keyboard shortcuts

My regular readers will know that to increase efficiency I strongly encourage the use of keyboard shortcuts in preference to the use of the mouse. Here are my favorite IE keyboard shortcuts:

- Use Alt-Home to bring up your home page.

- Use Ctrl-H to open or close your history pane.

- Use Ctrl-I to open or close the Favorites pane.

- Use Ctrl-B to organize your Favorites

- Use Ctrl-N to duplicate the active page in a new window.

- Use Ctrl-F to find a word, partial word, or phrase on the current webpage.

- Use Backspace (or Alt-Left) instead of the IE Back button, to navigate back.

- Use Alt-Right to navigate forward.

- Use F11 to toggle full-screen mode.

- Use Alt-D to move to the address bar. (Or use Ctrl-O, and you won't need the address bar! See "Other" Tip 3, below, for details.)

Once in the address bar, use Enter to bring up the specified webpage or Ctrl-Enter to first surround what you've typed with "www." before and ".com" after, and then bring it up.

- Use F5 or Ctrl-F5 to refresh a page. It's a good idea when refreshing to routinely hold down Ctrl (whether you're using the keyboard or the mouse), to bypass the IE cache and give you a more effective refresh.

Optimize the toolbar

Unless you maintain only a dozen or so Favorites, you'll want to take full advantage of the Links option for the IE toolbar, which you activate with the right-click toolbar menu. Drag the Favorites you'll want to have most prominent into the Links section of the toolbar. Using the right-click Properties menu of each "Link," you'll probably want to assign it a unique icon

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and, to save space, rename it to a shorter form.

Tip: You can save additional space by shortening the "Links" title on the toolbar. Unfortunately, simply renaming the "Links" folder won't work. You'll need to open the Registry Editor, by choosing Run from the Start menu and typing regedit. After pressing Enter, drill down to HKEY_CURRENT_USER > Software > Microsoft > Internet Explorer > Toolbar. On the right-hand side you'll see LinksFolderName="Links." Change the word within the quotation marks to a one-character name you'd like to use instead, perhaps "." or "+," and close the Editor. (Use extreme caution, as making a wrong entry in the Registry Editor can have dire consequences!)

You should unclutter the toolbar by instructing it to "Remove" nearly all the toolbar buttons. These not only occupy valuable space but can actually interfere with efficient browsing (by discouraging use of the keyboard shortcuts described above). You get to the Remove command via "Customize," on the right-click menu. Of the built-in IE toolbar buttons, the only ones I recommend displaying are those for Size and Back. All the other button functions can better be facilitated via the keyboard or by other means. (For a complete list of IE keyboard shortcuts, go to <http://snipurl.com/bskn>. The reason for keeping the Back button is its associated pull-down menu.)

Keep IE secure

It goes without saying that you need to keep IE fully patched, perhaps with the use of Windows Update or Microsoft Update. But what of the Internet Explorer security settings (accessible via Tools > Internet Options > Security)?

In the "Internet Zone"--the default zone for a webpage--it's prudent to be more rather than less restrictive. (Better safe than sorry!) The easiest way to go is simply to move the "Default Level" slider to High. Or you could use the "Custom Level" to make a determination for each setting. In that case you may want to consult a guide such as the one at www.techspot.com/tweaks/ie6/ie-5.shtml.

Remember that if your security restriction interferes with the proper viewing of a page, Windows will let you know--although most often you'll be able to view the page just fine notwithstanding what Windows says. To remove the restriction for a given page, you can add that page to your "Trusted" sites, against which the restriction won't ordinarily apply. (You may have to refresh the page after adding it.) To simplify moving webpages to your trusted list, a free program is available at www.geeksuperhero.com/zones.shtml.

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An alternative method does not require you to move all such sites to the Trusted zone. For this you'll need the laudable Push the Freakin' Button software, available at modest cost at www.tlhouse.co.uk/PTFB.shtml. With PTFB in place, use IE's Custom Level to choose "Prompt" instead of "Disable" for every feature except any that you're absolutely sure you'll never want to use. Then instruct PTFB to push the "No" (disallow) button when the prompt appears. Should you decide to permit the feature in question, you can with a double click disable PTFB, and just as easily re-enable it when done.

A good (free) test to assess your IE vulnerability may be found at <http://snipurl.com/ietest>.

Other tips

1. To execute a link in a new window, hold down Shift.
2. Is IE acting strangely? You can often fix it by using the IE Repair utility accessible via Add/Remove Programs (in the Windows Control Panel), upon selecting "Microsoft Internet Explorer" and then "Add/Remove."
3. You can dispense with the address bar, by using Ctrl-O to open a webpage or other location. You can then completely hide the address bar (using the IE toolbar's right-click Customize function) or shrink it down to its title only (having first "unlocked" the toolbar, also with the right-click menu). Losing the address bar will eliminate the temptation to go there with the (less efficient) mouse, and can free up space that may be better put to other use. On the downside, you'll also lose the functionality of the Ctrl-Enter address bar shortcut (see Keyboard Shortcuts, above).
4. You might be able to save considerable time if you bypass your home page (start page) when you don't need to see it. Here's how: Enter "about:blank" [without the quotes] in the IE address bar, to create a blank quasi-webpage. Then use Right Click + F to turn that page into a Favorite, and drag the new Favorite's icon into the Quick Launch section of your Windows task bar, before deleting the Favorite. You may want to assign a different icon to your new IE shortcut with the use of its right-click Properties menu. (You can use this same technique to set up a "secondary home page" instead of a blank page.)

Add-ons

Useful IE add-ons, free except as noted, include:

Google Toolbar, at toolbar.google.com, which enables too many useful features to even hint at here. Highly recommended.

Favorites Search, at www.dzsoft.com, which lets you speedily locate a

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Favorite, no matter how many you've stored.

Y!Q DemoBar, at yq.search.yahoo.com/splash/demobar.html, which enables context-based searching. This can easily be squeezed onto the same line as the IE address bar.

ieSpell, at www.iespell.com, which will quickly spellcheck all the text you've entered in any Web form.

AddaButton, at www.harmonyhollow.net/aab.shtml, which will let you fit more buttons onto the IE toolbar. These buttons can open documents and applications (not just websites) and don't require space-consuming displayed names. Shareware, \$11.95

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Reading Product Manuals Online

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP Computers & Technology Website

I'm reasonably well-organized; my wife thinks I'm a packrat (she keeps trying to sneak my '70s shirts to the thrift shop). You'd think this would mean that I can find product manuals for every appliance, gadget, PC component and software, etc., I've ever bought. That's mostly true.

But sometimes my filing system fails me. Or I've forgotten to whom I loaned something. Or someone else in the house (but I'm not naming names) has moved it. What then?

Fortunately, manufacturers are increasingly making product literature and documentation available online. While this isn't entirely out of generosity -- it reduces their customer-support workload -- it's great for consumers who can find and read the material.

A good starting place is the manufacturer's Web site. For example, I'm writing this article using a Samsung SyncMaster 912n LCD video monitor. Suppose I need to know what its control buttons do but can't find its manual. Samsung's home page [www.samsung.com] offers a button, "Download Center: Download Drivers, Manuals, Software, and Firmware". I can either enter a product model number or name, or search via product group (audio/video, computers, etc.), then product type, then product sub-type, and model name.

Computers are very precise; searching took three tries, since it wanted only "912n", not "SyncMaster 912n". The manual was then available in any of 28 languages, from Bulgarian to Chinese. A PDF file (see below for explanation), it's just under three megabytes, dated about a month ago, complete, 83 pages including clickable Table of Contents. So a minute after deciding to look for it, I'm looking **at** it.

Another way to search is via Google [www.google.com] entering terms like 912n manual site:samsung.com which only searches the samsung.com Web site. This took me to the right neighborhood on the Web site but left me needing a few more clicks to hit the manual. Sometimes search engine results are better than navigating within a site, so consider both techniques.

Manufacturers often update online material as mistakes or shortcomings are found in printed versions, so for important products it's worth checking Web sites occasionally. Sadly, they also sometimes package only abbreviated versions with products, suggesting or expecting consumers to download full versions.

Either way, online manuals are also useful when considering purchases or comparing choices, since they give -- or should give! -- more complete and useful information than is printed on the box. If you're evaluating

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something pre-purchase, evaluate the manual's organization and quality -- Will you be able to find information you need? Will you understand it? If you're buying something used, online availability of a missing manual can make the acquisition much more pleasant.

Online manuals can be in many formats -- HTML (normal Web pages), Microsoft Word documents, PDF (Portable Document Format), and others. Each format has advantages and disadvantages. HTML is nearly universal; if you can view Web pages you can read HTML documentation. But it may be harder to download and save/organize all pieces of a large document. You'll need Microsoft Word software (or free reader) to read MS Word files. Flexible PDF is becoming the most popular online document format, but it too requires software, Adobe's Acrobat Reader, for viewing. Fortunately, this is free and easy to download/install; visit Adobe [<http://www.adobe.com/>] and click Get Adobe Reader.

Some manufacturers take a different approach, offering search tools and links within their Web sites for different material, such as overviews, tutorials, problem solving tips, even video clips illustrating usage.

Finally, LiveManuals [www.livemanuals.com] takes an interesting/interactive approach, providing interactive product demonstrations. Though it doesn't include every product -- office equipment and appliances aren't presently well-represented -- the Wish List page accepts nominations for items to add.

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Lessons Learned Too Late – Another Attack of the Killer Worms

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director;

WEBSITES:

<http://www.microsoft.com/malwareremove>

<http://vil.nai.com/vil/stinger>

<http://www.aladdin.com/esafe>

<http://www.microsoft.com/technet/security/bulletin/MS05-039.mspx>

<http://housecall.antivirus.com>

<http://www.bitdefender.com>

You may have recently heard reports in the media about some strange computer worms that attacked thousands of computer networks, effectively shutting them down. In a society that likes to place blame for every negative event, blame has been placed on a variety of places, such as Microsoft for creating vulnerable software, to the users who had not properly and immediately patched their operating systems, or updated their antivirus protection. As it is often typical in these circumstances, very little blame has been placed on the miscreants who created and released these computer worms.

While the financial damage done by these worms, commonly called by the names Zotob, PnP-worm, Rbot, and several other monikers, was less than some of the more disastrous worm and virus attacks, it was still substantial. Media reports account for thousands of computer networks and systems shut down for various periods of time while IT staff attempted to identify and repair the damage. Typical of the damage reported, caused by these computer worms, was the 50,000 employees of 13 Daimler-Chrysler assembly plants in Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, Ohio, Delaware and Michigan, who were idled for nearly an hour while technicians restored the computers which control the plants. Up to fifty thousand lost man-hours of auto production can easily amount to significant production losses. Other victims of this same series of computer worm attacks, as reported by the national media were SBC Communications, Associated Press, ABC and CNN networks, the New York Times, Caterpillar, U. S. Customs, and many others. SBC reported that the computer utilized by its customer service employees kept rebooting as a result of the worm infections. U. S. Customs Service reported long delays in processing international passengers as its computer center in Virginia was effectively shut down for about five hours, resulting in major delays at locations as diverse as Miami and New York as Customs agents utilized printed lists or backup computer systems. The county wide 911 emergency phone system in Jefferson County, Washing-

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ton, was disrupted for about 10 hours. These are but a few of the examples of the damage and inconvenience caused by a recent attack of computer worms.

What these worms all have in common is that they all rely on a recently disclosed vulnerability in several Windows operating systems, and exploit a security hole in Windows' "PnP" or "Plug and Play" service, a feature intended to detect new hardware installed on Windows computers, and automate the configuration process. An August patch (MS05-039) intended to close the vulnerability, which Microsoft labeled as "critical", was released on August 9, shortly before the worm attacks, but the time between the release of the patch and the attacks was so short, that countless organizations had not yet installed the patch on their computer systems. The concept and crude code of a computer worm that could exploit the vulnerability was posted to a security website often read by hackers and crackers on a Wednesday evening, and by Saturday morning the first variant of the Zotob worm, named Zotob.A appeared in the wild and started its attack. Within a matter of a few days, several other variants of Zotob have appeared, along with a slew of similar worms, such as the Rbot, and began wreaking their havoc.

Some commercial computer networks using sophisticated antivirus software that depends heavily on "heuristics" or software behavioral patterns, rather than the digital signatures commonly utilized by most of the retail antivirus products intended for home use, escaped damage, because they work proactively before an attack can take place, rather than reactively, after attacks have been reported. One of the examples of such commercial software that protected companies from attack proactively was Esafe, from Aladdin Software (www.aladdin.com/esafe).

Acknowledging that there are still Windows computers that are infected with the major forms of malware, Microsoft released a free utility that can remove Zotob along with its variants, and several other major viruses and worms. This utility can be downloaded for free at www.microsoft.com/malwareremove. It should be noted that this Microsoft utility will only remove a few dozen of the most common worms and viruses and their variants, such as Bagel, Sober, and Netsky, but is not a substitute for a properly updated antivirus program. The antivirus software publisher McAfee also had a similar free downloadable utility at vil.nai.com/vil/stinger. The free online antivirus scans, referenced in a previous column here, such as those from Trend Micro (housecall.antivirus.com), BitDefender (www.bitdefender.com), Panda (www.pandasoftware.com), and others, can detect and remove much more malware than the limited downloadable utilities.

Sadly, pain is an excellent teacher, and hopefully we have learned our

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lesson. It is now more imperative than ever that security patches be promptly and properly installed both on our home computers as well as distributed throughout our vast commercial computer networks. It is also imperative that appropriate protective software, such as antivirus, firewall, and anti-spyware software be installed and updated constantly.

With proper and timely protection, we can do much to protect our systems from more devastating computer virus and worm future attacks which are sure to come.

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Tips for Adding Audio and Video (for Free) to Your User Group Web Site

By Phil Shapiro, member of the Capital PC User Group, Virginia Macintosh Users Group, Washington Apple Pi, Young Hackers and Scholars Libre Users Group

When people visit your user group web site, almost all of them want to know the answer to two questions:

Who are these people?

What do they care about?

You can try answering these questions with words and pictures. That sort of works. Or you can add audio and video to your user group web site, completely free of charge using the Internet Archive (<http://www.archive.org>), and bring your club to life in whole new ways.

I've been experimenting with this in the Virginia Macintosh Users Group and have learned some things worth passing along. You can view the video I uploaded at <http://www.archive.org/details/vmugtestimonials2> . Now I'll explain how I created and uploaded it.

A few years ago I carried my digital camcorder, tripod and some lighting to a VMUG meeting. We meet in the large library of a middle school, so I set up my camcorder in a side area of the library. During the meeting I discretely went around the room asking folks if they wanted to say a few words on camera in support of the club. This was entirely spontaneous and unrehearsed, so the club could best collect people's genuine sentiments.

It didn't take much time or effort to gather these short testimonials. I then edited these testimonials together in iMovie and created an MPEG-1 file from them via the Share option in the File menu of iMovie. (To create an MPEG-1 file you need to have Roxio Toast, a commercial program, installed on your Mac.) It's useful to note that the file name suffix of MPEG-1

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is .mpg

MPEG-1 files can be viewed by Macintosh, Windows and Linux users. These files are admittedly a bit on the large size in terms of megabytes per minute of video. Each minute of MPEG-1 video is 10 megabytes. But their universal viewability is a great attribute.

I uploaded this 9-minute (87 megabyte) file to the Internet Archive. The process of uploading video to the Internet Archive is fairly simple, but let me explain the steps anyway. First you need to create an account for yourself on the Internet Archive. It's free and takes just a few steps.

Then you need to upload your video file or files. I used the popular Fetch FTP (file transfer protocol) program for Macintosh computers. Cyber-Duck (free) works equally well. On the Windows side of things, SmartFTP is the best free FTP programs I know of.

After logging in to your Internet Archive account, the first step is to create a folder (subdirectory) for each video (or audio) file. The folder name needs to be almost identical to the file name. So if you want to upload the file named `vmugtestimonials2.mpg` your folder name should be `vmugtestimonials2`. (without the period at the end). Next you open the folder you've created (by double clicking on it) and drop the file you want to upload into that folder. The upload process can take a while, even if you have a high speed Internet connection. A rough rule of thumb is that you can upload about 1 to 3 megabytes per minute with most DSL and cable modem accounts. Using a Verizon FIOS (fiber optic) account, you can upload about 12 to 15 megabytes/min.

After the file has been uploaded, you need to wait about 6 to 8 hours before the file is "released." (There are people at the Internet Archive that check to make sure the file was safely received at their side and is not inappropriate.)

The final step is to "Import" the file into the Internet Archive, giving it a detailed file description and including other relevant information, such as who produced it and what the duration of the file is.

You can also choose which Creative Commons license you would like for this file, or whether you'd like to donate your file to the public domain. While Creative Commons licenses are a wonderful invention, donating your file to the public domain might be the most sensible (and least complicated) way to proceed.

After you've imported your file into the Internet Archive, you need to wait just a bit longer (usually just a few hours -- or less), and then your file will be available for any and all to view -- in perpetuity. (Roughly until when the sun blows up.)

Here's the part you're going to like a lot. If you upload MPEG-1 files to the Internet Archive, and if the file has a suffix of `.mpg`, then the Internet Archive automatically creates 2 smaller file size versions of this video in

Chasing the Internet

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP Computers & Technology Website

A long-ago famous and favorite I Love Lucy episode [www.tvtome.com/tvtome/servlet/GuidePageServlet/showid-1038/epid-15119/] showed Lucille Ball and sidekick Ethel facing an ever-faster conveyor belt delivering chocolates for them to wrap: they couldn't keep up. The Internet sometimes makes me feel as though I'm at the wrong end of that conveyor belt.

I confess that I don't always reduce online interruptions and information coming at me. I'm not yet a recovering info-junkie, so this article is definitely "do what I say, not what I do" advice.

The Internet is like the accelerating candy conveyor belt. There's more content (online newspapers, portals, Web rings, etc.) and more forms of content (e-mail initially, then Web sites, mailing lists, blogs, streaming audio/video, downloadable music, Web cameras, etc.)

But even with today's pace of change, whether we do it deliberately or just let it happen, we create our own online experiences. So we can make it fit our needs and change it when necessary. I've sometimes resisted dropping e-mail lists because I once liked them. That's silly: my and your most precious resource is time.

So I'll share time savers:

Tell people what you're interested in; if they scan online and offline resources for you, you don't have to.

Tell people what you don't want! If you don't want jokes, motivational sayings, political news, etc., cancel your subscriptions by asking people to stop sending it. I like jokes, I like technology, I'm interested in politics. But some people just aren't on my wavelength.

When you send e-mail or reply, don't send unnecessary copies. Encourage people to not copy you unless you need to know or do something about the topic.

When replying, trim what you quote to essential matter and (especially) encourage others to do the same for you. Bloated and repetitive reply-reply-reply notes waste time while you look for what's new!

If you send common replies or send periodic e-mail such as club meeting notices, use templates (stored copies of pre-formatted e-mail) so you can just fill in details but needn't enter text repeatedly.

Use e-mail and spam filtering. Most e-mail software can automatically route spam to a special folder (and, of course, I'd like to route spammers to a special place). Some spam filters learn what's spam based on what you flag, so their accuracy improves over time. My spam is increasingly filtered, and no real e-mail is filtered. You can also set rules for routing e-mail into

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folders for easier reading and management. Based on rules I've defined (special keywords in e-mail subject and sender fields), my e-mail is put in folders such as AARP, Lists, To-Read, and Travel. This lets me organize e-mail time, prioritize my reading and answering, and sometimes catch up by deleting an e-mail category I don't really need to read. And the best part is that I avoid interruptions of each note arriving, since routing takes place silently and invisibly.

Set discussion mailing list subscriptions to "digest mode". This groups list e-mail into fewer/larger notes, sent occasionally, sometimes once/daily. This has two benefits: it eliminates many interruptions, and it greatly reduces the temptation to answer list notes, since by the time you see something someone else has likely already answered it.

Pick times during the day to handle e-mail, read favorite Web sites, use instant messaging, etc.; ignore it all at other times. This allows focusing on tasks at hand, reduces frenzied multi-tasking (trying to do many things at once), and lets you actually finish things you start!

Don't be trapped by time-wasting habits. Use technology that matches your needs; change it for yourself, not because people urge you to (there's peer pressure at all ages!); adopt changes such as broadband Internet that save you time but be selective in what it brings you.

Recognize that the conveyor belt always wins the race and focus on what really matters -- most of which, after all, isn't even online.

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OPEN LETTER to user group newsletter editors and columnists

from Linda Gonse, ORCOPUG (Orange County IBM PC Users' Group)

Nibbles & Bits editor

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If you read my past Notepad articles in this newsletter, you know how I feel about spyware. This month, I was reading a paid online newsletter by Brian Livingston, when I ran across an article which is excerpted below.

This news is really outrageous. Consumers actually seem only to be pawns in this spyware assault that benefits those who have committed themselves to making profits using unethical methods.

I'd like to enlist the aid of other newsletter editors and newsletter columnists, to alert members and others to this insidious menace. We shouldn't "get used" to it. And, we shouldn't be silent about it. We deserve better.

In fact, as citizens, we should protest this blatant invasion of our privacy, and the vandalism of our personal property.

Update Windows Media Player to avoid surprises

Late in 2004, computer experts noticed that a popular Windows Media Player video file was actually a silent delivery mechanism infecting millions of PC users with spyware.

On Jan. 3, 2005, security researcher Ben Edelman, www.benedelman.org/news/010205-1.html, revealed what was happening to people who played this video file in WMP. After clicking the OK button on a single, legitimate-looking "browser update" dialog box, "My computer quickly became contaminated with the most spyware programs I had ever received in a single sitting," he said.

Edelman counted an amazing total of 31 programs that had silently been installed, without even displaying a license agreement. These included adware from 180solutions, CoolWebSearch, Ezula, ISTbar, and many other adware companies, he said. (A July 14 report by Brian Livingston, coauthor of Windows 2000 Secrets, and Windows Me Secrets, said that Microsoft's AntiSpyware beta program stopped recommending the removal of programs by 180solutions, Ezula, and some other adware companies to the dismay of spyware experts.)

Microsoft initially said the misleading dialog boxes were using a "by-design feature" of WMP, which wouldn't be changed. The company then reversed course, telling eWeek <http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,1895,1752247,00.asp> in January that a patch would be available by mid-February.

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Playing a video file in Windows Media Player can launch a dialog box that looks official but installs spyware.

I'm not pointing to Microsoft as THE one to blame for spyware. But rather saying even a legitimate company's product can be the source of spyware. There is profit in allowing spyware to be distributed with a desirable product.

Ben Edelman also noted on his website that, "As in my prior video of spyware installing through security holes, www.benedelman.org/news/111804-1.html my records make it possible to track down who's behind the installations — just follow the money trail, as captured by the "partner IDs" within the various software installation procedures. When one program installs another, the second generally pays the first a commission, using a partner ID number to track who to pay. These numbers make it possible to figure out who's profiting from the unwanted installations and, ultimately, where the money is going."

So, who can you trust? Don't say the antispyware makers. Several are on the payroll of companies who struck deals to be delisted as spyware!

Apparently, many businesses can't resist the opportunity to make easy cash. It is up to the customers—US, YOU and I — to resist being harvested as a money crop.

Make no mistake, we are the only ones who care about customer rights or privacy.

I've been reminded that keeping Windows updated may help to prevent spyware installations.

But, this is the real world. Not everyone drives with a seat belt fastened, stays alert while standing at an ATM, or keeps Windows updated.

Even if we only write a paragraph a month about any new spyware advance, program, or experience, etc., it will be good. We need to keep reminding our members, our vendors, and our lawmakers that this is some-

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thing we DO NOT want.

If enough ruckus had been raised at the beginning, spyware might have been stopped in its tracks. Don't make this mistake twice. Raise a ruckus now! And, keep raising it until spyware is declared dead—dead wrong!

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Bryon Palitto

- Male
- Born on 7-22-68 in Akron, OH
- 20years of Programming / IT / Project Management Experience
- Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, May 1991

Bryon started of his career in Technology working for the University of Akron troubleshooting programming problems while going to school. Also during college, he Co-opted for the North East Ohio Regional Sever District, doing data capturing and analysis to provide justification of remediation projects.

After graduating, he we to Harper Rose in Akron, OH as their Data Processing Manager. He worked as the Data Entry Supervisor, System Analyst, Programmer and Tech Support person.

Gaining lots of experience here in a wide array of hardware, software and programming languages, his career was catapulted to the next level as he went to work for Curtis Research, Inc. in Akron, OH as a Software Engineer. He was responsible for all new Medical Billing software product design and development, using several complex and powerful programming languages. He also had the oversight to support and maintain all products as last resource; train the technical support team that successfully completed 120 installations. Bryon was looked to as their Communications and Network Specialist as well.

Wanting to round off his IT and programming knowledge, he took an opportunity to get some sales experience, and went to work for Ciber, Inc. in Independence, OH. As an Account Manager, Bryon added over \$1.5 million in new business within a year and a half. He was given responsibility for their top three accounts, and developed 100% vertical growth within them. He assisted in every aspect of the business; from accounting to network and telephone system support and maintenance.

Recognizing his tremendous ability in the Information Technology world, coupled with his amazing sales ability and a good understanding of business, in 1996 Bryon decided to start his own company, Palitto Consulting Services, Inc. Today, his team of 17 people provide services to over 400 businesses in the state of OH and in several other states as well. Bryon and his team are proficient in over 30 programming languages, Database design, Analysis, Tuning, and Programming Design / Development. Also providing the entire spectrum of Local Area and Wide Area Networking services.

Managing multiple resources both inside and outside to accomplish project goal on time and within budget is what PCS strives for and delivers. Not industry specific, PCS has done work in many environments, with many languages in many industries.

Bryon lives in Wadsworth, OH with his wife and 4 children.

ACPCUG Club News

OLDER VENUE! AKRON North Hill Library

Maps & Description on ACPCUG Website, www.acpcug.org

NOTE TIME is 6:00PM Sharp! This is because we get kicked out at 8:30 PM.

FROM North or South on Rt. 8 freeway: Exit *West* on Cuyhoga Falls Avenue. Head west ca. 2/3 mile, library on right side (north). Take street east side of library and turn left into parking lot. (If you hit Main St., come back 200+ft).

Upcoming Computer Shows:

No Peter Trapp Shows in 2005 announced yet.

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