

ACPCUG Newsletter

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- ***Mr. Excel (by popular demand) who is actually Bill Jelen of Uniontown***

September 2005

Akron-Canton PC Users Group

From The DealsGuy for October, 2005, by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

There isn't much trade show work in the summer so we always go north in July to visit our families. This year it was a challenge paying for the gas. Not only that, but at two stations (in different states), we felt we got short gallons. Our car calculates its gas mileage and tells you how much gas we have used so we know about how much gas the tank should hold when filling it up. It's pretty accurate and when you get near that number of gallons, the pump nozzle usually shuts off. When it continues to fill the tank for a gallon or more, it seems possible we are getting short gallons there. Yes we could try to report it to the state, but when we are on a trip with a destination and a time frame, it's easier to chalk it up to experience and don't stop there again. Gas prices are bad enough without a gas station clipping us at the same time.

Construction doesn't help either since signs are often scarce or hard to spot at construction areas. In all the years I have traveled I-75, there has always been plenty of construction, especially in some states. It's just as bad, if not worse, here in central Florida with ongoing construction all over for years, especially on I-4 where we often travel. That road is always a mess with ongoing stop-and-go conditions. I'm sure all of my readers can relate to construction and traffic problem in their own areas.

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***How About Designing or Remodeling Your Home**

If you plan to build or remodel a home, how tough is the job of getting the design just like you want it? You could browse through a ton of architectural designs, or read a lot of magazines and become completely confused. You might even have a conference with an architectural firm or builder and discuss the entire project; or you could purchase Super Home Suite by Punch! Software and experiment all you like right on your own computer to prepare. This package has everything you need to design or remodel your own home, as well as the landscaping, and you can use your own creative contribution to get what you like. In fact, you can move walls around and even adjust the studs to get the type structure that suits your fancy, not to mention even the landscaping design around the home.

This package contains seven powerful programs that work as one to help you in the design or remodeling plan. They are 3D Home Design, 3D Landscape, Home Estimator, AutoFraming, Floorplan Trace, Real Model and 3D Furniture Workshop. Besides that, you also get Ultimate Deck as a bonus. Comparing it with a competitive product shows many features in Super Home Suite not included in the other product. When I worked with it, I was impressed with the versatility of this product, and the many features that I found during my experience checking it out. I always need instructions so it also took some reading and experimenting from their 120-page manual, and checking the help section. I sure didn't get prolific in a day. Even the packaging was unique when I opened it.

A good example of the complete coverage and interaction in this product is the Home Estimator that automatically tallies your expenses and calculates total material costs as you design. You can add local costs and view information in an exportable spreadsheet format (which I did not do). It recognizes 2"x4", 2"x6" and custom studs; and keeps separate counts; also door and window schedules. You can list quantities of trees and other plantings, and square footage calculations are included. This product has so many features that I suggest you check their Web site [<http://www.punchsoftware.com>] for complete information. I loved working with this product even though I don't need a house right now. After a few days, I designed a new home with my favorite desires at my present income, but I'm working on a million dollar home to build after my wife's lottery ticket wins the thirty-five million this week. Of course there is just a slight chance she might not win! I love this new toy.

Punch! Software tells me there is a \$10 Manufacturer's rebate available on the Super Home Suite (MSRP \$49.99) making it just \$39.99. Sounds like a bargain to me. There should be a rebate sticker on the box and a form inside to send in on all their rebated products.

Punch! Software also offers several other products, some of which are more specialized for particular tasks. I will describe two others below and more products with a rebate next month:

Punch! Master Landscape and Home Design Professional. MSRP is \$79.99. Manufacturer's rebate is \$20, making it only \$59.99.

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This product is new, but here is partial information from a similar product on their Web site: “This package contains nine powerful garden and landscape design software tools, patent-pending PhotoView™ and their sortable PlantFinder™ database with over 2,000 landscape plants, and in one easy-to-use interface! In addition, you will receive Ultimate Deck, a Punch! deck design software completely integrated. PhotoView™ technology lets you combine real-world photos with your own landscape and garden designs to create a realistic image of your future outdoor living space. You can import a photo of your own home, add landscaping or a deck, then view it from any angle, with realistic 3D photo-quality perspective. Place a scanned photo of doors, windows, pets, even add your children into the backyard!”

I didn't see the new Pro version described on their Web site, but the basic version is there with plenty of description. It appears to be very powerful.

Punch! Professional Home Design Suite Platinum. MSRP is \$99.99. Manufacturer's rebate is \$20, making it just \$79.99.

This home design software package lets you design all of the critical components for your home. The powerful home design capability includes foundations, HVAC, electrical, plumbing, custom windows, custom roofs, and much, much more. You can turn layered drawings on and off for uncluttered viewing of your home design and you can combine as few, or as many, layers as you wish, and spot potentially costly design conflicts. Ordinary blueprints could never give you that level of insight into your home designs!

Their Web site showed fourteen major features in this package, but I didn't see the new Platinum version posted there. However, check the Web site for more info. They say they have offered the #1 selling products in this field for the last five years, so take a look.

An Announcement I Received Back In June And Edited For publishing

Our company, XP-Web-Buttons, would like to announce the release of XP Web Buttons 3.15 for Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP/2003. We'd like to offer your members and subscribers a 25% discount off the regular price.

Design Website Buttons With Style

A large part of a website's appeal and navigability comes from the clever design of menus and buttons. XP Web Buttons is a nifty tool for creating stylish web buttons, navigation bars and menus with fully customizable features in a few clicks of the mouse. Web page designers have a complete palette of XP themes, font faces and styles, shadows, icons, targets and more to choose from. XP Web Buttons generates all images, JavaScript and HTML code automatically. These custom buttons react to mouse activity like rollover and clicking, and each button parameter, including size, color, alignment, word wrap and many more, can be easily adjusted and then previewed to test how each button will respond to mouse events. The latest release of XP Web Buttons sports a new interface, support for .ico files and clear-type fonts, revised help and

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tutorial functions and more icon selections in .gif and .ico formats. A host of sample projects for inspiration has been included.

Free demo version and product information is available at [<http://xp-web-buttons.com/>]. A personal license for XP Web Buttons costs USD \$29.95. Windows™ 95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP/2003 operating system is required. To get the UG discount, order at [<http://www.regsoft.net/purchase.php3?productid=62316&pc=GS198>].

Contact information:

Stephan Boas

XP-Web-Buttons

[www.xp-web-buttons.com]

E-mail: [support@xp-web-buttons.com]

Free trial version: [<http://xp-web-buttons.com/xpwebbuttons.exe>]

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 or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [bobclick@mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>].

Wireless Instant Messaging Makes Conversations Portable

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP Computers and Technology Web site

I love technology competition. Having multiple ways to meet a need gives consumers choices; it also encourages vendors to innovate, rather than offering take-it-or-leave-it products.

Being accustomed to PC-based instant messaging (IM), and not enjoying queuing up for Internet access, I was intrigued by wireless IM letting people communicate and have IM-fun without occupying prime family "real estate" -- the PC. Zipit and IMfree, taking different approaches to do this, may eliminate your family traffic jams. There's no monthly fee with either device.

Both handheld devices have almost-normal keyboard layouts but are too small for touch typing. They're good for thumbing or index-fingering and will be quickly comfortable for anyone used to cell phone text messaging. Multi-line displays, scrollable one line-at-a-time, are mostly very readable, except for the way that IMfree displays screen names with messages: hard-to-read white-on-black text with sender/receiver distinguished by upper and lower case letters.

On both devices, slightly odd shift keys allow entering capital letters and numbers/symbols (which don't appear on usual keys); it's all easy to get used to. IMfree sends twelve specific smileys (emoticons like ;-) for winking) with button combinations; Zipit allocates three buttons to specific smileys and allows setting three others to your choice of symbols -- though they're hard to distinguish. Or you can just enter characters to form smileys!

My wife called both devices "cute", liking Zipit because it has a lid protecting screen/keyboard and IMfree because it has a modern look.

More significant is how the units communicate. IMfree includes software and a base station which plugs into a PC USB port; handheld range is about 150 feet. Zipit uses a WiFi network with a range of about 300 feet. (If you don't know what WiFi is, you probably don't have it. It adds to Internet connectivity, typically cable or DSL. It's also available in "hot spots" like coffee shops.)

IMfree base stations can talk to seven handhelds at once and handhelds can move among base stations, and many Zipits can access a WiFi network at once, so they're both great for at-home IMfests or using IM when visiting or traveling. Unfortunately, IMfree handhelds aren't sold without base stations.

Both devices can carry on multiple conversations. You select IMfree conversations with instant button pushes; Zipit conversations are selected from a pop-up scrollable buddy list, slightly less convenient. If you're switching among conversations, be careful to send messages to the person you intend!

IMfree supports only AOL Instant Messenger (AIM); Zipit supports AIM, MSN, and Yahoo. IMfree supports chat rooms and has flexible/powerful parental controls; Zipit only supports in-

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stant messaging and lacks such controls. IMfree conversations are private, not shared with the base PC, unless the IM account is also logged on there. A screen name can't be logged on to Zipit and a PC at the same time so Zipit dialogues are private.

Both devices were impressively simple to install. Each has a clear manual, worth reading for learning features and many customization options (alert sounds, display settings, etc.). Neither screen is backlit; they're both reasonably easy to read in normal lighting. Zipit's lid-mounted screen is easy to angle for best viewing.

Both powerful units share and can modify buddy lists (but Zipit can't create a screen name; you must have or visit a PC for that). On both, idle buddies are flagged and you're notified by tone and visual indicator if a message arrives from a conversation not currently displayed.

Zipit comes in many tasty colors and promises automatic updates adding features such as streaming music.

There's a great bottom line to this story: I liked both these low-cost devices and they're different enough to fit a variety of needs. So have fun with your IM, wherever your keyboard and handheld may take you.

Company: Motorola

Product: Motorola Personal Instant Messenger Mx240 (IMfree)

Price: \$50 or less online -- shop around!

URL: broadband.motorola.com/consumers/products/imfree/

Company: Aeronix Consumer Media Systems

Product: Zipit Wireless Messenger

Price: \$100

URL: www.zipitwireless.com

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Wi-Fi Wireless Internet and Network Availability

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX: Radio Show Host

WEBSITES:

<http://www.jiwire.com>

<http://intel.jiwire.com>

<http://www.wi-fihotspotlist.com>

Recently, one of my daughters called me from a major city, and asked me where she could find some free “hotspots” or wireless “Wi-Fi” locations where she could get free broadband wireless internet access. She gave me her street address, and within moments I found several nearby locations where she could access the internet for free using the wireless “802.11b” PCMCIA card she had with her notebook computer. She told me which hotspot she selected, and I gave her the “SSID”, or “Service Set Identifier”, a simple code, usually a name, that identifies a local hotspot.

I recently purchased a new notebook computer for another daughter, and this computer came with an Intel Centrino chipset, which provided integral wireless internet access, where ever available, whether at home or on the road. As she travels around town, at school, or away from home, she can likely access the internet at high speeds.

I travel extensively, and always take my notebook computer with me, as I often find it necessary to check my email, find restaurants, or locate other information on the internet. Through experience, I have found that many hotels, restaurants, airports, and other locations offer wireless broadband internet access either for a fee, or for free. Now before I leave home, I check a website www.jwire.com, or its twin sister site supported by Intel, intel.jwire.com, to determine what wireless access is available enroute, or at my destination.

Jwire.com is one of the leading interactive directories of publicly available wireless internet locations, typically using one of the industry standard 802.11 protocols. Standardization, as well as substantial downward compatibility, has ensured that almost all computers equipped with 802.11 type wireless internet hardware can effectively communicate at broadband speeds. As I type this, Jwire is listing almost 70,000 public access wireless hotspots around the world. The Intel companion site lists almost 30,000 wireless hotspots in the U.S., and about 40,000 international wireless hotspots. According to the Intel site, the top U.S. cities for public wireless are New York City with over 550 public access locations, followed by Chicago (434 public wireless locations), San Francisco (412), and Seattle (320). Texas is well represented in the top 10 most “unwired” cities with 309 public hotspots in Houston, 250 in Austin, and 192 in Dallas. California is listed by Intel as the state with the most public access with over 5000 locations, followed by Texas with almost 2000 hotspots, Florida with about 1800, and New York with over 1600 public hotspots. It should be emphasized that these numbers are only the wireless sites that al-

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low public access, either for free (sometimes with some strings attached) or for a fee, and does not include the millions of sites that are private wireless networks. The listing also does not include many of the hotel chains that offer free wireless access to registered guests.

Many of the free sites listed are local restaurants, some hotels, many airport terminals, RV parks, and other locations. All it takes to access these totally free and public sites is the SSID of the wireless host and appropriate hardware; the Jwire sites list the SSID's of the public sites. When the wireless access on the notebook computer is activated, the wireless networks within range can be identified, and if accessible, the SSID can be entered, and connections established. It is important that from a personal security standpoint, these public connections are not often encrypted, and can be "sniffed" or picked up by anyone with suitable equipment; sensitive information, passwords, banking, and other critical information should never be sent on an insecure public network.

In addition to the free sites, there are many thousands of publicly accessible but commercial (fee based) hotspots, often in coffee shops, restaurants, hotels, bookstores, some airport terminal areas, and other locations. These hotspots either require a subscription to a service, such as a cellular phone company or other third party, or a daily or hourly fee for access. Generally, since these pay services require some type of access code, they are slightly more secure than the free public sites, but are still usually accessible to a hacker with commonly available but illicit software. Again, it is a good practice not to type any sensitive personal information while on a publicly accessible wireless network. Some of the commercial hotspots offer "WEP", or wireless encryption protocol, which makes it more difficult for unwelcome third parties to listen in on internet communications, but the methods for cracking WEP have been widely published, and are now only considered to provide marginal security.

One warning about wireless internet access; it is illegal to access a wireless network without the consent of the owner, despite the fact that studies have indicated that about 80% of all private wireless networks, both workplace and home based, are not adequately protected, and can easily be picked up and accessed by anyone who wants access. A popular hacker method of gaining "free" broadband internet access is driving around town with a notebook computer with 802.11 hardware, and logging the wireless networks found, with those same networks often broadcasting the SSID necessary for access. This practice is called "wardriving". In major cities, marks are drawn on sidewalks and the outside walls of buildings in a similar escapade, "warchalking" where SSID's and other relevant information is written for all to see, and access. Locally, in a security demonstration, a security consultant drove around the business district of town, and logged hundreds of wireless networks, 80% of which were easily accessible, as they were not properly secured. These included such sensitive locations as banks, law offices, retail stores, medical facilities, and other choice locations for hackers to penetrate.

Use the Jwire sites to find wireless access, as I do, but be totally aware of the risk and security implications of broadcasting critical information. There are a variety of hardware and software utilities that can be utilized to harden wireless access, and some of those will be discussed in a future column.

Beware of File Sharing

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont TX; Radio Show Host

WEBSITE:

<http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/speeches/2005/063005operationsitedown.htm>

Most of us have heard about the popular “Peer to Peer” or “P2P” file sharing networks. Countless millions of computer users around the world routinely download copyrighted music, software, videos, and games on these computer networks, as well as from “alt.binaries” newsgroups where users upload complete commercial computer programs, and other intellectual property. Ethicists have long bemoaned such behavior, and representatives of intellectual property right owners have long tried to shut down such activities with lawsuits and other forms of pressure. Such pirates are alleged to have deprived the rightful owners of billions of dollars of revenue. Legal challenges to such practices have met with some success, but the recent US Supreme Court ruling of *MGM vs. Grockster* has now opened up another avenue. In a statement by US Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, “. . . that those who actively induce or encourage the theft of copyrighted works may be held liable for their actions. . . . Our objective in this operation was to find and dismantle large-scale criminal enterprises that illegally obtain, copy, distribute, and trade in copyrighted software, music, movies, and video games.”

Recently, Attorney General Gonzales announced “Operation Site Down”, a coordinated international legal and criminal attack on cyber pirates, with law enforcement agencies from the US (the FBI), Canada, France, Belgium, Israel, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Denmark, the Netherlands, Australia, and Germany participating in raids on computer file sharing networks, and arresting individuals allegedly engaging in such intellectual property theft. It is noteworthy that two countries, reportedly the major centers of piracy, Russia and China, were not participating in the crackdown.

Operation Site Down, in its first series of internationally coordinated raids, shutdown or crippled several of the popular file sharing networks, and websites offering pirated materials referred to in cyber circles as “warez” (pronounced “wares”). Among the networks and sites raided were RiSCISO, Myth, TDA, LND, Goodfellaz, Hoodlum, Vengeance, Centropy, Wasted Time, Paranoid, Corrupt, Gamerz, AdmitONE, Hellbound, KGS, BBX, KHG, NOX, NFR, CDZ, TUN, and BHP. Over 70 search warrants were executed in the US, with several arrests reported, while additional raids and arrests were reported in the other cooperating nations. These services were alleged to have been “first providers” who posted the first copies of pirated works, often cracking any copy protection or registration schemes integral with such products. Once these services made material available, it tended to show up on warez sites around the world, where millions could then download the material using P2P networks, websites, FTP sites, and other online resources. It is hoped that by raiding these primary sources of illicit intellectual property, that much of the supply of pirated content will be reduced. Attorney General Gonzales stated, “By dismantling these networks, the Department is striking at the top of the copyright piracy supply chain - a distribution chain that provides the vast majority of the

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illegal digital content now available online.”

A variety of online resources have stated that the principles of many of the sites raided were directly behind the cracking and distribution of popular and expensive software such as products from Adobe, AutoCAD, Microsoft and other software publishers, as well as the distribution of recent movies, including “Mr. and Mrs. Smith”, and “Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith”.

"And by penetrating this illegal world of high-technology and intellectual property theft, we have shown that law enforcement can and will find -- and we will prosecute -- those who try to use the Internet to create piracy networks beyond the reach of law enforcement.", so said Attorney General Gonzales.

There is more to file sharing than just the legal, moral, and ethical considerations; P2P file sharing has also been a major source of computer problems, as they also often install spyware, viruses, and Trojans on unsuspecting computers. KaZaA, Morpheus, and Grockster, three of the major P2P file sharing networks (there are actually thousands of such pirate networks), have frequently been cited as the vector utilized to infect computers, both with their requisite software, and by the content downloaded from third party participants. Warez sites are also notorious for installing spyware that includes pop-ups with pornographic content, key loggers that can steal identities, dialers that connect to outrageously expensive international locations, and other forms of threatening malware. Websites offering such content are often loaded with active-x based, Java enabled, or other content capable of installing unwanted software on the victim computer, hijacking browsers, redirecting searches and purchases, and other nasty processes.

Operation Site Down, and the MGM vs. Grockster case should put all of us on notice that behaviors that may have been common place in the past should now be halted, lest “we” become civilly and criminally liable for our online actions. I know that many computer users rationalize such actions with excuses such as “(big name software publisher) is rich and won’t miss it”, or “(big name software publisher) has been ripping us off for so long that it is time for some pay-back.” Just because a file is available in a newsgroup or a website to download does not mean that it is a legitimate “shareware” or “freeware” copy. Most downloaders of such software, music, games, and videos are all too aware that the content is pirated, yet they participate in great numbers.

To the pirates reading this column, or to the parents of children illicitly downloading copyrighted music and other intellectual property, you have been warned. The feds may be looking over your shoulder, and may not like what they can see. All internet users leave an electronic trail that is easy to track; please, do not become a target of a federal investigation and prosecution.

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Add a New Dimension To Your Browsing

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP Computers and Technology Web site

It's hard to imagine a different world. A great early science fiction book Flatland [www.eldritchpress.org/ea/FL.HTM] describes life in a two-dimensional world, with creatures unable to imagine the third dimension we take for granted. And modern physics' "string theory" [www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/elegant/] speculates that our world really has eleven dimensions.

While I can't imagine those extra dimensions, we spend time in a two-dimensional world every day -- it's how most people browse the Web. But even that has changed, as browsers have evolved from displaying one site per window to more flexible tabbed browsing, displaying many Web pages in a single window.

So now it's interesting and fun to take three-dimensional browsing out for a cruise, surfing the Internet, courtesy of Browse3D. This visual-browsing style lets you see forward and backward, where you've been and where you're going. It's great for browsing that involves a lot of forward-and-backward navigation, or that requires following many Web links.

When first started, Browse3D offers abundant helpful tips for use. These can be scrolled all at once or browsed each time the program runs. And built-in Help provides a comprehensive tutorial highlighting features and capabilities.

This tool wraps around Internet Explorer -- the vendor calls it a "reverse plug-in" -- to display Web pages on multiple walls, shown three dimensionally on our two-dimensional monitors. The main straight-ahead wall is the home view, a browser window controlled by a tool bar. It can be zoomed to occupy the full screen, momentarily hiding the side walls. The left wall shows your browsing history, pages you've visited. It's much easier navigating to these pages visually vs. the usual cryptic browser back button: simply right click a page to bring it back to the home view.

The right wall is a multi-talented workhorse. It can be automatically filled with pages linked from the current home view, avoiding interrupting current attention while allowing instant jumps to linked pages. A handy use for this is pre-loading top entries in search engine results lists. The right wall can also be used like a corkboard, loaded with pages to be kept handy for quick reference; this is called making it "sticky". And it can be put in "4-live" mode which displays four active browser windows with clickable pages. This allows quick site viewing and comparing, or monitoring multiple auto-updating pages simultaneously, such as saving/tracking multiple auction items through the sale process. Right-wall pages can be rearranged, scrolled, flipped between Auto Crawl and sticky. And right-wall and sticky contents are separately cleared.

Pop-up window behavior -- normally an annoyance -- is customizable: ignore, open in new window, open on right wall, open in current browser, or ask for instructions.

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An elegant "rooms" feature extends browser bookmarks/favorites, allowing saving and sharing collections of Web pages as single files. Any selected pages can be grouped; you might gather family, recipe, financial, or technical pages. Rooms can hold static pages (content when pages were collected) or dynamic pages (links to pages as they are when the room is viewed). Opening a room displays pages as they were positioned when the room was saved.

Browse3D is easily purchased online and downloaded/installed/registered; a free version lacking a few features is also available. The software requires a relatively powerful PC; it checks operation when installing. But most relatively current PCs should be adequate. Because of how it uses screen space, Browse3D is most impressive on larger monitors.

Company: Browse3D Corporation

Product: Browse3D

Price: Free or \$29.95

URL: www.browse3d.com

Telephone: (888) 444-3200

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Maintaining Your Downloads

By David Garcia, President, Little Blue PC Club, Northglenn, Colorado
petitbleu@comcast.net

Having trouble keeping track of your downloaded files? Here's a couple of easy procedures to help you maintain, identify, and document your downloads.

1. Create a "Downloads" Folder & Sub-folders

When downloading files, (for example, you buy some software online, and download it instead of having it mailed) it is a good idea to place all your downloads into a specific folder so that you can always find them when you need them. If you don't already have a folder called "Downloads," or "My Downloads," then you should create one on your hard drive (normally the "C:" drive).

To create a folder on the "C:" drive right-click the Start button on the desktop, then click "Explore" in the popup menu. This will open the Windows Explorer. Left-click the "Local Disk (C:)" icon to highlight it. Then click "File" on the Menu Bar and point to "New." When the fly-out menu opens, click "Folder." A "New Folder" is created on the C: drive. Rename it to "Downloads" or "My Downloads" as you prefer. To rename it just right-click it and select Rename from the popup menu.

Prior to downloading a given file it would also be good, for identification and documentation purposes, to create a sub-folder within the "Downloads" folder that identifies the origin of the download. Give the sub-folder a short name that identifies its origin. For example, if you download some anti-virus software from Symantec, you might name the sub-folder "Symantec." Then when you download the file place it into the Symantec sub-folder within the "Downloads" folder. Any subsequent downloads from Symantec should also be placed into this folder.

Creating the sub-folder is similar to creating the "Downloads" folder. To create the sub-folder you left-click the Downloads folder, click "File" on the Menu Bar, point to "New," click "Folder," and rename it. You should now have a sub-folder within the Downloads folder. The hierarchy should look like this:

```
Local Disc (C:)
  Downloads (or My Downloads)
    Sub-folder (Whatever you name it)
```

2. Documenting the Download

When a file is downloaded it usually has a cryptic name like "Abc4205.exe" To further document my downloads, I create a text file within the sub-folder that identifies the download. Within the text file I give a description of what the download is, when I downloaded it, and when I installed it. I give the text file the same name as the downloaded file except for the extension. For example, if I downloaded a file called "Abc4205.exe" from Symantec using the procedure #1 above, it would be in the "Downloads" folder in the "Symantec" sub-folder. I

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would then create a text file called “Abc4205.txt,” and also place it in the “Symantec” sub-folder. In this example, I would have two files within my “Symantec” sub-folder: Abc4205.exe which is the downloaded file and Abc4205.txt which is my description of the downloaded file.

To create the text file left-click the sub-folder name (e.g. “Symantec”) once. Click “File” on the Menu Bar and then point to “New.” When the fly-out menu opens, click “Text File.” A “New Text Document.txt” file will be placed into the subfolder. Rename the file to the download file name (without the “exe” extension). Now double-click the renamed text file to open it with Notepad. Type in your description of the download and save it.

Using the above two procedures gives you an orderly method of maintaining, identifying, and documenting your downloads.

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Figuring Out How Spammers Get E-Mail Addresses

By Dave Gerber, Dave's Bits & Bytes, A Periodic Newsletter for the Members of the Sarasota PC User Group and the World!!

Director, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

www.spcug.org

Spammers employ a variety of methods to acquire e-mail addresses. Some methods take advantage of the e-mail addresses readily available on the Internet, whereas others employ different levels of trickery, from harvesting to outright stealing.

Harvesting from the Internet

Spammers (and their assistants) utilize a technique called harvesting to acquire e-mail addresses. While harvesting requires a lot of bandwidth, it is ingeniously simple: Simply download the right pages from select Web sites and extract the e-mail addresses that are there for the picking. Some of the tools and sources employed in harvesting e-mail addresses from the Web include the following:

Web spiders: Spammers employ Web crawlers and spiders that harvest e-mail addresses from Web sites. It's common for Web sites to include `mailto: URLs` as well as unlinked `user@domain` addresses. Put your e-mail address on a Web site, and you're spam bait. These spiders are not unlike the spiders and Web crawlers used by Yahoo, Google, and others that scan the Internet's Web sites in order to keep Web search indexes fresh. Except that e-mail address harvesting spiders are up to no good. And where do these spiders get domain names? With over 90 million .com domains in existence, it's easy enough to just guess domain names in order to come up with quite a few.

Newsgroups: It's a straightforward task to harvest e-mail addresses from Usenet newsgroups: Just pull in a big news feed and extract the e-mail addresses with a simple shell or Perl script. Newsgroup volumes are still increasing exponentially — at a rate of at least several gigabytes per day. This means lots of e-mail addresses are there for the taking. Any spammer with enough bandwidth can slurp up all those bits and just sift out the e-mail addresses.

Groups, blogs, and discussion boards: Yahoo! and Google have their groups and mailing lists, many of which make their members' e-mail addresses available. There are thousands of blogs and discussion boards out there, too, that contain easily acquired e-mail addresses.

Test messages: In this method, spammers send test e-mails to recipients whose addresses they simply guess — so-called test e-mail messages sent to addresses like `service@`, `info@`, `test@`, `marketing@`, `security@`. Spammers at one time could reliably conclude that, if they receive no "bounce-o-gram" back from the domain, that the e-mail address must be legit. This is because e-mail servers used to routinely send nondelivery receipts (NDRs) back to the sender of a message sent to a nonexistent address. But that ain't necessarily so any more: More servers are opting to stop sending NDRs.

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Unsubscribe links: Many spam messages include an opt-out or unsubscribe link so that the recipient can request not to receive more spam. However, often the real purpose of unsubscribe links is to confirm a valid, active e-mail address.

Malware: Spammers sometimes use Trojan horses, viruses, and worms to extract e-mail addresses from individual users' computers. If mass-mailing worms can extract the contents of a user's e-mail address book for the purpose of propagating spam, then it's going to be easy to perform the same extraction and simply send the list back to the hacker's lair. This would probably be easier, in fact, because this activity is far less likely to be detected than a mass-mailing worm.

Unsubscribe requests: A good number of spam messages contain "unsubscribe me" links that a user clicks to opt out. However, many spam operators actually continue to send spam to e-mail addresses submitted to "unsubscribe me" links. When a user submits such a request, the spammer knows that the address being sent is a valid e-mail address. Do you think they'll actually stop sending spam to a known valid address? Not on your life!

Buying and stealing addresses

Among spammers and e-mail address brokers, e-mail addresses are a traded and sold commodity. If you know where to look, you can purchase CDs and downloads containing e-mail addresses by the hundreds of thousands or millions.

And of course, everyone has heard the stories of Web sites that collect your e-mail address and promise not to sell it (ha!). But they sell, trade, or give away e-mail addresses anyway, even when their privacy policy says they won't. A few high-profile companies have been prosecuted and/or fined for this practice.

Business and service provider e-mail lists are also stolen and sold to spammers. In mid-2004, a former AOL employee was charged with stealing 90 million screen names and 30 million e-mail addresses from AOL and selling them to a spammer for \$100,000. This is not an isolated case, but it is a noteworthy one because of the size of the heist. So much for privacy, eh?

Listen to Dave's Bits & Bytes radio show archives at www.davebytes.com; subscribe to his newsletter by sending an e-mail to dave_bytes@comcast.net.

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29 Useful Bookmarks

By Richard Johnson, TUGNET

www.tugnet.org

The Web is a marvelous resource, and most of us come nowhere near tapping its full potential. I've attempted here to list 29 websites that without any necessary downloading provide exceedingly useful free non-specialized services and tools, that require no particular knowledge except how to navigate the World Wide Web.

1. Time Cave www.timecave.com

2. Memo to Me www.memotome.com

Using these two email reminder services you'll never forget another upcoming activity or event. Time Cave allows you to schedule incoming messages by interval (so many hours, days, weeks, months, or even years away) as well as by date and time. Memo to Me allows editing of content and date. With Time Cave you can choose your own subject line and send reminders to others, but Memo to Me will charge you for those features. On the other hand, Time Cave charges for the ability to repeat messages (monthly, weekly, etc.), standard with Memo to Me.

3. Way Back Machine www.archive.org/web/web.php

Is a website you're seeking no longer around? If it was active as late as 1996, you'll probably find it easily in this huge archive.

4. Centerwatch Clinical Trials www.centerwatch.com

Gives information on more than 41,000 active clinical trials in which you could participate. (Some compensate you handsomely for helping, along with free medical monitoring.) Includes a notification service, for trials in areas of your interest. Also describes the newest drug therapies.

5. Objectgraph Dictionary www.objectgraph.com/dictionary

A combination standard dictionary, technical dictionary, and thesaurus. (There's also a dictionary of chemical elements, of rather limited interest). A unique feature is the site's ability to "read your mind" if you're not sure of the word you're thinking of -- or its spelling -- or if you just want to save typing.

6. Myway email www.myway.com

An excellent Web-based email provider with an exceptionally clean interface (no banner ads or pop-ups). Unlike the case with competitors like Yahoo mail, Myway will respond to support inquiries. (It also has a terrific weather page -- see link #7 following.) [If you prefer Gmail, equally clean-appearing, I can get you an invitation -- see my article in the March Keywords.]

7. Myway weather weather.myway.com

The best weather page on the Web. Even though its weather information is from weather.com, you'll see when you use it that the interface is much cleaner (and loading therefore faster) than

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if you were to bring up either weather.com or one of its competitors. You can personalize the weather according to your home town or zip code; the page you'll want to bookmark is that personalized page

8. Past Weather www.weather.com/activities/other/other/weather/yesterday.html

Use this site to compare today's forecast with yesterday's weather. There's also interesting historical data and a graph showing the weather for the past seven days. The past weather information can easily be compared with the forecast from Myway weather (link #7), which derives its data from the same source.

9. Furl www.furl.net

Bookmarking is useful, but what do you do when you find that a bookmarked page has disappeared (left the Web)? Or maybe it's still there, but -- as with many newspaper sites -- you can't read it without going to a paid archive. This won't be an issue if you've Furl'd the page. Furl allows you to create a set of special bookmarks that can be easily searched or browsed -- or shared with others -- but whose contents are permanently stored on your hard drive. (If you feel the need to save parts of a page, try Net Snippets Free at www.netsnippets.com/basic. This does require a download.)

10. Gold Star Events <http://snipurl.com/bl9o>

Gold Star enables admissions to a large variety of live California productions at 50% off or better. After your (free) registration, you'll receive regular email notices of well-described shows in the zip code areas of your preference. There's a small per-ticket service fee, usually between \$3 and \$7.

11. Password Generator <http://mistupid.com/computers/passwordgen.htm>

Random characters compose the safest passwords. This tool will create a password with random characters according to your specifications. On your instructions, will even avoid ambiguous characters [o and 0, 1 and I].

12. Zap2it www.zap2it.com

With Zap2it you can check out both TV and movie schedules. Various options let you permanently personalize each set of listings, to give you just the information you need, in the format you prefer.

13. Acronym Finder www.acronymfinder.com

Don't be baffled by acronyms and abbreviations you encounter on the Web and elsewhere. This site offers definitions for over 398,000 such terms. Optional downloading of any of a number of search tools (for various browsers) will allow you to view a definition almost instantly.

14. Restaurant health ratings (LA County) <http://lapublichealth.org/rating>

Avoid traveling to an appealing restaurant only to find that its health rating is below the level with which you're comfortable.

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15. Translation Wizard www.faganfinder.com/translate

The Translation Wizard uses other sites' services to ease the process of finding a translation -- that otherwise might require visiting ten or more sites to find the language of interest! It also has a neat button to identify a mystery language.

16. Anybirthday <http://anybirthday.com>

A fun site that can divulge your friend's birthday or even tell you where to mail the card.

17. TrackEngine www.trackengine.com

Notifies you via email of changes in Web pages that you select. You can preview the changes or view the whole page via email, with changes highlighted. Choose the Web address of a neighborhood theater, to see what plays are coming up. Or see every new installment of a favorite newspaper column, without having to buy the paper.

18. GovBenefits.gov <http://govbenefits.gov>

A source of information on over 400 government-funded programs that extend benefits for which you may qualify, including compensated volunteering. Features a confidential questionnaire designed to point you to the most likely matches.

19. AddALL www.addall.com

Use this site to find the very best price for a book you want to buy. Unlike most other comparison sites, it figures in shipping costs for your location. Links will take you to pages for magazine subs, music CDs, and videos.

20. jux2 www.jux2.com

Jux2 lets you receive and compare search results from two or three different search engines, or see what you're missing from your regular search results. (According to the site, competing search engines typically share fewer than 4 out their 10 top results.) Still in development, it's currently limited to Google, Yahoo, and Ask Jeeves.

21. Medem Medical Library www.medem.com/medlb/medlib_entry.cfm

Searchable and browsable medical library, organizing contributions from 45 medical societies. Features a complexity indicator for each article, from "introductory" to "professional."

22. Metacritic www.metacritic.com/film

23. Kids-in-mind www.kids-in-mind.com Metacritic is an excellent source for movie critiques. For each film, it arranges its large variety of reviews from most to least favorable, and then tabulates the opinions, for an overall "metascore." (Additional Metacritic pages cover videos, music, and games.) For evaluating movies for children, or if you have a concern about violence, sex, or profanity, Kids-in-mind will rate and describe each film's content in those three areas.

24. CardRatings <http://cardratings.com>

This site maintains information on over 700 credit cards, and will suggest the best cards in a variety of categories --low or no credit, no annual fee, low interest, rewards/rebates, etc.

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25. The California Patient's Guide www.calpatientguide.org

A well-organized extensive guide to Californians' health care rights, and what you can do if they're compromised. Assembled by medical, legal, and consumer experts, and published by the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights.

26 CheckFree www.checkfree.com

There are a host of good reasons for paying your bills online. It saves time, saves the cost of stamps, reduces the chance of late payment, extends the time in which you can use your money, cuts down clutter, eliminates the danger of checks lost in the mail, and facilitates tracking. With CheckFree you'll be able to pay many or most of your bills online, and the service is free to the payers.

27. Bug Me Not www.bugmenot.com

This site and the one following save you time and trouble while helping you cut down on spam. Bug Me Not keeps on hand log-in data (passwords with user names) for a huge number of sites that require registration. If you want access to such a site (like latimes.com), but don't want to bother registering, just visit the Bug Me Not site and log in easily.

28. Spam Bob <http://evil-wire.luvfeed.org/cache/1269>

Spam Bob offers a choice of three email addresses that you create, to protect your privacy. Anything@spambob.org is a phantom address, messages to which disappear into the ether. Use anything@spambob.com if you'll want to check on a reply message. (This is handy for registrations that require confirmation.) And you may want to use anything@spambob.net for all your correspondents. Mail from each such "net" address can be forwarded to you, and if it starts generating spam, just cancel the forwarding order!

29. Google Maps <http://maps.google.com>

Head and shoulders above the competition, these maps are much larger and far easier to configure. Zooming in and out is quick as a bunny, and re-centering is instantaneous. You can locate by category businesses in the map area, along with their phone numbers. Note that (at least as of this writing) these maps are not implemented in the regular Google search results, which will still point you only to Yahoo and MapQuest maps.

Richard Johnson is a writer and editor, and founder/administrator of FREE FOR ALL The Skills Pool, a 29-year-old membership organization (<http://theskillspool.org>). He is a volunteer with TUGNET HelpContact for assistance with Internet Explorer, Outlook Express, and Gmail. You may reach him at rj@theskillspool.org.

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Note: Meeting Place:
 North Canton Public Library
 185 North Main Street
 North Canton, OH 44720
 I-77 Exit (Portage) turn *EAST*.

From Rt.77, take the Canal Fulton/North Canton Exit (Portage St.)

Head east on Portage St. (If traveling north, you will turn right. If traveling south, you will turn left.)
 Follow Portage for approximately 1 1/4 miles to a sign that reads: "All thru traffic bear left."

Do not bear left. Continue straight on Portage until it dead-ends at Ream St.

Turn left on Ream. The Library is the 2nd building on your right. Small amount parking alongside and more across the street at rear of building.

Upcoming Computer Shows:

Peter Trapp: **NO SHOWS** scheduled yet (Ohio nor N.Y.) for year 2005

Contact ACPCUG Newsletter Editor:

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