

# ACPCUG Newsletter

**Akron Main  
Public Library  
April 3, 2006**

## **April Program:**

*Starts at 6:00 PM*

***Installing Your Own  
Wi-Fi Network by Rick  
Beech + Q&A + Wi-Fi  
Security by Art McRowe  
Inside:***

**Page 1—Deals Guy**

**Page 6—What Does Cache  
Do ...?** by Brian K. Lewis

**Page 10— Clear Reading  
with Cleartype** by Vinney  
La Bash

**Page 13— Online Coinci-  
dences & Lasting Trails**  
by Gabe Goldberg

**Page 16— Hard Disk Disas-  
ters** by Dick Maybach

**Page 19—Future of Broad-  
band Access** By Bob Hewitt

**Page 22—Identity Theft  
Phishing** by Ira Wilsker

**Page 25-Do It Your Way**  
by Lee Alexander

**Page 29—New Best &  
Worst** by Pim Borman

**Page 31—ACPCUG News &  
Dues Reminder!**

**April 2006**

**Akron-Canton PC Users Group**

## **From The DealsGuy for April 2006**

by Bob (The Cheapskate)  
Click, **Greater Orlando Com-  
puter Users Group**

As time goes forward, my health gets more complicated. I have been a Type II diabetic for a few years now and other than some swelling in the legs, my sugar control is pretty good, which I assume many of you can relate to. Problem is I started the sugar control too late and suffered serious heart damage. Now it seems that I have developed a large blood clot in my lower leg, I believe from a fall, and the doctor put me on Coumadin (Warfarin), better known as rat poison. It has a long list of drugs that cause interactions. I am already a walking pharmacy so now it gets complicated. This turn for the worse seems to bring other unexpected complications. I have started getting temporary spikes upward in my blood pressure for no apparent reason, which sometimes causes a nosebleed. I am afraid to go anyplace these days because I might get a nosebleed, although I can stop it now rather easily. My doctor has prescribed medication for my blood pressure as a solution to the changes and I sure hope it works.

*(Continued from page 1)*

Getting old sure gets complicated, but the alternative to getting old "really sucks." It looks like I will have five more months on the rat poison, if I survive. I have talked to many people also taking Caumadin who tell me even worse stories about bleeding where you don't want to and a lack of good control by their doctor.

Right now, I need a blood test at least once a week for my INR, (the clotting ability of the blood). The doctor says I can purchase a machine to do that test at home, but I checked on the Web and it would cost \$2495 (no decimal point). I'll let the clinic do the testing. Medicare only pays for that if you have valve problems in your heart. I'm still doing my best to continue cheating my wife out of the life insurance money. Whenever I start to slow down on exercise etc., I get a vision of my wife sitting on the beach of some south sea island with a stud sitting next to her, and she is writing a check on my insurance money for their next vacation. That little vision gets me right out of the chair to exercise.

### **\*How Secure is Your System?**

I read an article in Information Week magazine that was both amusing and interesting. It concerned a company whose CIO hired security investigators to test how good their system stood up to being infiltrated. The director of the network operations center was sure they couldn't break into the systems or facilities, but they very soon proved him wrong. Some of the weaknesses were so stupid that I had to chuckle, such as many of the passwords for work stations were written on a note taped to the machine or hidden under the keyboard. They gained access to limited access places just by calling the receptionist and telling them that some agents were coming in to do an audit and needed access, which was easily granted to the very people who made the call. Office keys were sometimes in the secretary's desk. You can find this article at <<http://www.informationweek.com/management/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=177100115>> and you'll find it enlightening.

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### **\*Leaky Capacitor Update**

A while back, I wrote about a leaky capacitor problem on motherboards that I read about in Ed Foster's Gripe Line, and gave you the URL to find out more. Since then, I received a message from Carey Holzman, author of Healthy PC, who tells me that is a four-year-old issue and that there has been "some" resolution in the matter. He says he has covered it since it first came up four years ago and more information is available on his Web site. <[www.careyholzman.com](http://www.careyholzman.com)>. Also a second URL: <[www.badcaps.net](http://www.badcaps.net)>.

### **\*Great, The Bundle is Back**

Colleen Toumayan from Executive Software sent a message letting me know that their "bundle" is back. For a limited time you can get both the award winning Diskeeper 10, Home Edition, and Undelete 5, Home Edition, products for just \$49.95 plus S&H. I have never heard anything but praise about these fine products. Mine is not the latest, but it always works well, and fast. Use this link to order: <<http://purchase.diskeeper.com/checkout/addtocart.aspx?Item=1382>>.

### **\*ExtraLabs Releases Version 3.4 of Feed Editor (an edited announcement)**

New RSS Editor Makes Anyone An RSS Guru!

ExtraLabs Software unveils Feed Editor 3.4, a full-fledged RSS editor that offers you an easy way to create and maintain RSS feeds and podcasts. Compared to other RSS editors in its category, Feed Editor combines an unprecedented number of features including support for various RSS formats, a podcasting support, a WYSIWYG HTML editor, an XML editor, an RSS Feed preview, an FTP upload and publishing, automatic date management and an ability to convert CSV or HTML to RSS, and back.

Feed Editor can create and maintain an unlimited number of RSS feeds and podcasts, thus letting you maintain and distribute multiple content streams simultaneously. To create a new RSS feed, you can use a New Feed Creation wizard that will guide you through the RSS setup process in a step-by-step fashion. Additional convenience comes with a built-in WYSIWYG HTML editor that allows you to edit a feed in much the same way as you would edit a word processing document. You can format the text, apply styling, and insert images and hyperlinks. Also, "Feed Editor" can generate a feed from a CSV and HTML file. Once a feed is ready, you can preview it

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and publish online using an FTP upload facility.

Read more about Feed Editor at <<http://www.extralabs.net/feed-editor.htm>>

Download an evaluation version to try it for free <<http://www.extralabs.net/FeedEditorSetup.exe>> (1.72 Mb.)

ExtraLabs Software is glad to offer the newest version of "Feed Editor" with 50% off the regular price making it just \$19.95. Also, ExtraLabs will offer all user group members an additional 5% discount on the purchase of the program during April and May. Follow this link for the extra discount: <<http://www.regsoft.net/purchase.php3?productid=74108&pc=312aY>>.

Feed Editor 3.4 runs under Windows 95/98/Me/2000/NT/XP/2003. Registered customers are entitled to free lifetime updates and premium technical support. Discounts for volume buyers are available.

### **\* If You Like Games, Check This Announcement**

From the creators of "Zzed" comes a new game of Wonderlines by NevoSoft. Wonderlines is a remake of a popular game. Only balls and lines remind you of its predecessor here and the rest is covered with the charm of novelty. A player will see a new bonus system, a new intricate game play structure and a fresh interface design. The music and visuals are great.

Puzzle, Action, Zen Way modes are different, yet each requires special skills. Generally, the game stayed nearly the same yet now you match several balls of one color in a line, but also blow them up over certain brown squares. The challenge of the game is to remove all brown squares in each level. 70 levels of the game are very different one from another. Another merit of the game is new bonuses: the miraculous multicolor ball, dazzling diamond and clever hammer, triple or quadruple bomb and others, which help a lot while making your way through Wonderlines.

Wonderlines runs under Windows 98/ME/XP/2000 and costs \$19.95 (USD). NevoSoft offers a 30% discount to user group members if you use this link:

<<https://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?item=8323->

*(Continued on page 5)*

*(Continued from page 4)*

[16&ss\\_coupon=NEVO-GPCU](#)>. Registered customers are entitled to the unlocked game play and lifetime technical support. An evaluation version of the game, that offers 60 minutes of game play, is available as a free download at

<[http://www.nevosoft.com/wonderlines/wonderlines\\_demo.exe](http://www.nevosoft.com/wonderlines/wonderlines_demo.exe)>.

Be aware that this vendor has no privacy statement on their Web site about protecting your information.

For more information, visit us at <<http://www.nevosoft.com>>

Product page link: <<http://www.nevosoft.com/downloadable-game/en/games/wonderlines.html>>

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. Be sure to check the new announcement pages on my Web site. 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](mailto:bobclick@mindspring.com)>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>.

# What Does a Cache Do For a Computer?

By Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Member Sarasota PCUG, Florida

[www.spcug.org](http://www.spcug.org)

A cache (pronounced "cash") is a form of memory storage that generally operates faster than RAM memory or the time required to access a hard drive. The cache is smaller, faster memory that stores copies of the data from the most frequently used memory locations. Computer processors (CPUs) utilize both internal and external caches. You will also find references in the specifications of hard drives, CD & DVD drives to caches of various sizes. In order to see how these caches benefit computer operations we'll look at the operation of the internal caches on CPUs.

Before looking at the cache function, you need to have some understanding of the architecture of a CPU. Much of the internal structure of a CPU is composed of registers that hold small bits of information and also can be used in manipulating information. As one example, the Intel Pentium 4 processors have 128 registers. Some registers hold instructions, others hold data, others have memory addresses and others are arithmetic manipulators. The instructions are found in the program code and they tell the processor what to do with the data. The processor loads instructions from memory and then loads data that is manipulated based on the instructions. So the registers hold data to be processed, the results of calculations, or addresses pointing to the location of other data. The processor can act on data in registers almost instantaneously. However, the registers are far too small to hold all the data required. Instead, instructions and data have to be read from or written to RAM.

If the program code were always loaded directly from memory and all the data were written directly back to memory and then to the hard drive, the overall process would be quite slow compared to what we normally see. It is the use of caches that greatly speeds up the total process so the processor isn't stalled waiting for either instructions or data. The fastest cache is the one that is part of the processor and is referred to as the L1 cache. It can operate at the same speed as the processor. So if you have a 30-gigahertz (GHz) CPU, the L1 cache also operates at 30 GHz. Thus data can be accessed in one clock cycle. This cache is generally 128 kilobytes (KB) in size or smaller, although the Pentium 4 has an internal cache of 16 KB plus an internal Trace cache of 150 KB.

The following diagram displays the relative relationship of the RAM memory and the components of the caches in the CPU body:

*(Continued on page 7)*

*(Continued from page 6)*

## RAM Memory

The components within the box run at the same rate as the internal CPU clock. The next cache in distance from the processor is the L2 cache. In older CPUs this was totally external to the processor. In most cases, the L2 cache is now integrated on the CPU chip. The data path in these processors is 256 bits wide allowing for the transfer of more bits per clock cycle than the older processors that had 64 or 128 bit paths. The data path between the CPU and the external RAM is usually 64 bits or 128 bits wide. In a system with an 800 MHz bus, the real clock rate is 200 MHz, but transfer occurs in 4 blocks per clock cycle. This gives an effective transfer rate of 800 MHz or 6.4 GB/second. Still considerably slower than the transfer rate within the CPU.

The theory of using caches is that instructions and data in the cache will be the next set of information requested by the CPU for processing. If the requested information is in either the L1 or L2 cache, it will not be necessary to go to RAM. Thus it can be accessed at the internal clock rate. If it is present, it is referred to as a "hit"; otherwise it is a "miss". (Logical, right?) Now, the bigger the memory cache, the better the chances of finding the data required by the CPU. However, there is a catch to this. The bigger the cache, the more time that is required to find the data. This is referred to as the "latency" time. In an ideal setup you would have a single cache with a high hit rate and a low latency. This is very difficult to achieve in practice. Consequently, we have two caches, a small one with low latency and lower hit rate combined with a large cache with higher hit rate and high latency.

Now that we've reviewed the architecture, we need to see how all this works. Let's start with the Fetch unit that is used to load information from memory on demand from the processor. It first checks the caches to see if the required instructions or data are there. If not, it will load the information from system RAM. This information is then passed to the Decode unit. Note that when I refer to information it can either be instructions or data.

If the information is a program instruction, the Decode unit will figure out what that particular instruction does. It does that by consulting a ROM memory that exists inside the CPU called microcode. Each instruction that a given CPU understands has its own microcode. The microcode will "teach" the CPU what to do. It is like a step-by-step guide to every instruction. If the instruction loaded is, for example, add a+b, its microcode will tell the decode unit that it needs two parameters, a and b. The Decode unit will then request the Fetch unit to grab the data present in the next two mem-

*(Continued on page 8)*

*(Continued from page 7)*

ory positions, which fit the values for a and b. After the Decode unit has “translated” the instruction and grabbed all the data required to execute the instruction, it will pass the data and the “step-by-step cookbook” on how to execute that instruction to the Execute unit. There is an exception to this in the newest Pentium 4 processors. In these processors the L1 Instruction Cache has been relocated to after the Decode unit. It now contains the translated instructions and is referred to as the Trace cache.

The Execute unit will finally execute the instruction. On modern CPUs you will find more than one execution unit working in parallel. This is done in order to increase the processor performance. For example, a Pentium 4 CPU with six execution units can execute six instructions per clock cycle. In theory it could achieve the same performance as six processors with just one execution unit. After the processing is over, the result is sent to the L1 Memory cache. From there it can be written to RAM or sent elsewhere.

Modern processors have another feature called the “pipeline”. This is the capability of having several different instructions at different stages of processing in the CPU at the same time. On Pentium III processors the pipeline was 11 stages – each a unit of the CPU. The latest Pentium 4 processors have 31 stages. With the greater number of stages, fewer transistors are required per stage, resulting in a higher clock rate. O.K, so what's the value of stages in the pipeline? After the Fetch unit sends an instruction for decoding, it grabs the next instruction. This can be sent on as soon as the first instruction is sent to the Execution unit. If an instruction has to be processed by all 11 (or 31) stages, it takes the most time, while other instructions might require fewer stages. Only when the first instruction is finished processing can it be sent out, but others that required processing by fewer stages might immediately follow. The consequence of this is that multiple instructions can be processed simultaneously. This greatly increases the overall processing throughput.

Other caches found in computers are not associated with the processor. One such type of cache that you use frequently, probably without being aware of it, is the web page cache managed by your web browser. When you visit a web page, it is downloaded to your computer. If you visit that same page within a few days, your browser pulls the page from its temporary cache, compares it with the current page on the web server and updates only the changed portions. This speeds up the appearance of the page on your computer. For example, my home page is Yahoo.com. The major part of this page doesn't change from day to day, so the downloading of the page is limited to those parts that have actually changed. This allows

*(Continued on page 9)*

*(Continued from page 8)*

the page to appear on my screen quite rapidly.

So in CPU processing, the use of caches has greatly increased the speed of data handling. The same is true of caches used elsewhere in the computer. In all cases they are short-time storage of information. Luckily, you don't have to have a complete understanding of caches to use your computer. Let the computer do the work!

Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail: bwsail at yahoo.com.

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## **Clear Reading With ClearType**

**by Vinny La Bash**, vlabash(at)home.com

Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida  
www.spcug.org

My students know why LCD displays are superior to CRT monitors. When one of them complained to me that he found text difficult to read on his new 21 inch LCD Monitor, I told him it was probably because the screen resolution made the text too small to read easily. He didn't think so because his teen age granddaughter also thought the text wasn't clear. His comment made me think.

Flat panel LCD Monitors are designed to display information at a specific resolution known as the "native resolution". Manufacturers refer to them as "fixed-pixel displays" because they are limited to displaying only one resolution. If they receive an image signal that is either higher or lower than the native resolution, they convert or scale the image automatically to fit the native resolution.

If the incoming source has more pixels than the display's native resolution, you will lose some visible detail and sharpness. Very often you will need to carefully compare the images side by side to see any difference. Only the most exacting applications will suffer from this small constraint.

If the incoming source has fewer pixels than the native resolution, there is no benefit from the higher resolution. Extra pixels will not improve the appearance of a lower-resolution source.

Converting images from either a higher or lower resolution to the LCD's native resolution hardly affects the quality of graphic or video images, but it can make text appear blurry. Early LCD displays had no ready solution for this problem. All one could do was experiment with various font styles and sizes until an acceptable compromise was reached.

Microsoft didn't want to keep its customers waiting while it found an answer so it licensed TrueType fonts from Apple. The advantage of TrueType fonts was that text could be made larger or smaller with little distortion. Text became easier to read, and Microsoft made some improvements to the technology, but TrueType proved to be an interim response.

While Microsoft was working on Windows XP, it was also developing a new software technology designed to enhance text readability on flat panel LCD

*(Continued on page 11)*

*(Continued from page 10)*

monitors, laptops, PDAs, Pocket PCs, indeed any device that used an LCD screen, no matter how big or small.

Microsoft claims that its development people spent two years studying typography and the psychology of reading to create ClearType. Instead of affecting individual pixels which are either treated as "on" or "off", ClearType works with a different type of pixel that is constructed of three individual pieces tinted with red, blue, and green stripes. The technology varies the brightness of the sub-pixels, making the screen characters appear smooth, clean, and sharp around the edges.

Now that you know what it is, how can you use it? You have three ways to turn on or "enable" ClearType for your LCD display. Let's start with the easiest way.

Go to <http://www.microsoft.com/typography/cleartype/tuner/Step1.aspx>  
Follow the online directions to enable ClearType on your system.

Another way is to download the PowerToy version of the online tuner. This lets you do the same thing that the above procedure does, but you do it by accessing the Control Panel and activating the ClearType settings from there.

Go to <http://www.microsoft.com/typography/ClearTypePowerToy.msp>  
Follow the online directions to download, install, and use. It's easy.  
Finally, for the propeller heads and bit twiddlers in the audience, you can access the Registry. To enable ClearType for all users of your system:

From the Start button, select Run and type Regedit in the Text box. (As if you didn't know).

Navigate to HKEY\_USERS/.DEFAULT/Control Panel/Desktop.

Create or Modify the Data Type and Value Name as detailed below.

Data Type: String Value

Value Name: FontSmoothing

Setting for Value Data: [Set Value to 2]

Data Type: Dword

Value Name: FontSmoothingType

Setting for Value Data: [Change Value to 2]

Exit Registry and Reboot

Enabling ClearType only for the current user instead of all users is identical to the above procedure except that instead of HKEY\_USERS, work with HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER instead.

*(Continued on page 12)*

*(Continued from page 11)*

When you're finished, check the Desktop and examine the icon titles. Open the Start menu while you're at it and observe the readability of the text. You may find the text too small to read even though it is sharp and clear. If this is the case:

Right click on the Desktop

Choose Properties from the popup menu.

Click the Appearance tab.

Click the Advanced button and make changes there.

Decide which technique is best for you, and enjoy text that is clear, crisp and sharp. :

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## Being Online Brings Coincidences and Lasting Trails

**By Gabriel Goldberg, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP Computer & Technology Website, [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)**

A song written by Peter Mayer, a great singer I've just discovered, is titled "Earth Town Square." Describing how technology and travel have shrunk the world, Peter lyrically observes "Now it's feeling like a small town, with six billion people downtown, at a little sidewalk fair, in Earth Town Square". Even though all six billion of us aren't (yet!) online, the Internet as a meeting place is certainly one of the engines making the Earth seem smaller. While it was once exotic — or alarming — to have a long distance telephone conversation, chatting electronically with people half a world away doesn't raise my pulse.

A decade ago, early in my use of the Internet, I was astonished by its ability to create coincidences. This is a true story. I was consulting for an online service that gave me an e-mail address used only for their work. I received a note at that address with the intriguing subject, "I am you" from another Gabriel Goldberg. Nowadays, that's the sort of spoofed e-mail I'd likely delete without reading. He had checked his entry in the service's directory and found my entry next to his. We exchanged pleasantries, described ourselves, shared wonder at having found each other, and he mentioned that he was a music student in Boston.

Later that week, I received another note at my regular e-mail address, from a woman who said that she'd known a Gabe Goldberg years earlier, the last she'd heard from him he was going to Boston to study music, and was I that person. I replied to her, copying the other Gabe, that either they were playing a joke on me or we had a mighty powerful coincidence. Truth is stranger than joke — they were former high school sweethearts who had drifted apart. In the same week they both found my name and two different e-mail addresses, and for very different reasons, they contacted me. I later heard from her mother, who thanked me for reuniting them! Remarking on the coincidence of names, the other Gabe wondered "how do guys named Jim Smith handle all the coincidences."

Participating in mailing lists, newsgroups, and Web sites leaves online footprints and makes us visible. The bad news is that's one of the ways spammers find targets, but the good news is that being visible makes it easier for lost friends to track us down. Soon after 9/11 I heard a voice on the phone I hadn't heard for nearly 30 years: my college girlfriend. She'd

*(Continued on page 14)*

*(Continued from page 13)*

searched Google (often called "Googling") for me, found me, and called. We've stayed in touch since, have gotten together several times, and shared news of our respective families. And just recently I used Google to contact an elementary school friend after hearing of her taking a new job in San Francisco.

Amidst the fun of unanticipated connections and reestablished friendships, there's a cautionary note: information online has a long memory. Web sites like Google cache (retain) Web pages even after they're deleted from their original Web locations. Postings to mailing lists, Web forums, newsgroups, and other online venues are usually retained indefinitely. It can be unnerving to discover that items posted in the heat of the moment or as youthful indiscretions can be retrieved years later by potential employers or new acquaintances, or just be someone snooping for unpleasant reasons.

Just as it's worth checking your credit report periodically, it's a good idea to occasionally check out what online trails you've left. My current favorite surfing tool is Google, so I search for "Gabe Goldberg" and "Gabriel Goldberg." The quote marks bind the first and last names together so that only Web pages having the exact full name are found. I search on Gabe and Gabriel because I've used both names. If your name is closer to Jim Smith's — offering 56,000 hits rather than the more manageable 182 for my name — you can tighten the search by adding terms such as a middle initial, state of residence, hobby, employer, etc. But don't make the search too narrow or you may miss genuine references.

It's tedious to erase tracks from an online history. It requires contacting each site that hosts material you'd like to delete, perhaps following instructions and filling out forms. Some mailing list sites refuse as a matter of policy to delete list postings, reasoning that doing so would distort a list's historical record. The government has made serious efforts to sanitize the Web by removing content deemed dangerous, such as plans for water and power system. Even when successful, scrubbing data off Web sites often doesn't really make it unavailable, it just slows people from finding it. It's much better to avoid saying anything online that might return to haunt you, than try to clear the record after the fact.

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*(Continued on page 15)*

Please e-mail Gabe Goldberg at [gabe\(at\)gabegold.com](mailto:gabe(at)gabegold.com) when you use it, or for permission to excerpt or condense.

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## Hard Disk Disasters

**By Dick Maybach**, member Brookdale Computer User Group, New Jersey [http://www.bcug.com/N2nd\(at\)att.net](http://www.bcug.com/N2nd(at)att.net)

Hard disk failure is the most serious PC problem, because it jeopardizes all your data. Even if everything else in your PC dies, if your hard disk is good, you can just move it to a new machine and be back in business as though nothing had happened.

The first problem is to recognize hard disk failure. Look for one or more of the following symptoms.

- A squealing or clicking noise – you will have to open your system case to find where the noise is coming from. Diskette and CD-ROM drives and fans can produce similar noises.
- A longer than usual time to boot up.
- A longer than usual time to open a folder or file.
- Spontaneous file or folder name changes.
- Frequent error messages.
- Missing or corrupted files or folders.
- Frequent “blue screens of death”.

If these begin to appear, immediately copy your data files (most likely your *My Documents* folder) to another device, preferably one with removable media, such as a CD-ROM or a DVD. Do not turn off your PC and do not spend time trying to diagnose the problem before saving your data. Every second you delay increases the likelihood that more data will be lost.

Clearly, the best defense is to back up your data before you have a problem. However, few people do this, and even if you do, it may have been some time since your last backup.

If your hard disk fails before you can save your data, all is not lost. If your data is very valuable, for example if it's customer data, you can send your disk to a commercial firm that specializes in data recovery. This service will cost from several hundred to several thousand dollars, but usually there is no fee unless they are at least partially successful. If you decide to do this, shut off your PC immediately and contact the firm for instructions. If your data is worth less than this amount, there are two things you can try that may work.

- Remove the hard drive from the system unit and give it a light tap by

*(Continued on page 17)*

(Continued from page 16)

holding a screwdriver by its blade and tapping the unit with the handle. Reinstall the hard drive and reboot.

- Remove the drive and place it in a freezer for several minutes, until it is cold to the touch. Reinstall and reboot.

If either of these works, move your data to a safe place immediately.

If you have only a partial disk failure, save as much data as you can; then try the following.

- Restart your PC, but before Windows boots get into the BIOS setup utility. If you watch the screen carefully, you should see directions on how to do this. Often you will press F2 or F10. Look for an area called Utilities or something similar and run any drive diagnostics available.
- Run CHKDSK. (Click on *Start*, then on *Run...*, and at the prompt type "chkdsk x: /r", where x: is the drive in difficulty. If c: is problem drive, you will probably see a message that chkdsk can't check the drive now, but will offer to check it the next time you restart. Answer "y" and reboot.
- Run diagnostics supplied by your drive manufacturer, or if you don't have one, use Western Digital's Data Lifeguard Diagnostics, available free from <http://westerndigital.com>. Versions are available for both Windows and DOS.

You can take some simple steps to prolong the life of all your PC components.

- Keep the system unit clean, especially if it sits on the floor. Once every month or two open the system case and remove any dust and debris with a vacuum. I prefer this to compressed air, which just moves the dirt to a new resting place.
- Don't move your PC while it's operating; especially, don't jar it.
- Use a power surge protector or preferably an uninterruptible power supply (UPS). The latter are widely available for \$100 or so. Besides reducing stress on your components, one of these will save your data if the power fails. I always had a UPS at work, and every so often I would see the lights blink and hear streams of profanity from other offices whose occupants did not have one.

Modern PC components are quite reliable, and the chances are that you will replace your computer before anything fails. However, you should have a plan in case there is a problem. Similarly, the chances are that you will re-

(Continued on page 18)

*(Continued from page 17)*

place your car without ever having an accident yet you still wear a seatbelt, and carry insurance.

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## **The Future of Broadband Access**

**By Bob Hewitt, Editor**

**The Journal of The Computer Club, Inc., Sun City Center, Florida**

<http://suncitycentercomputerclub.com/>

[rsh1916\(at\)juno.com](mailto:rsh1916(at)juno.com)

This may end up to be a case of who gets there fastest with the mostest.

The goal is Broadband. Just about all computer owners want it. Many cannot afford it. But every provider wants to get the biggest share of the pie.

The telecommunications industry was in the driver's seat first with dial-up. Then came cable as a carrier and telecom countered with DSL. Up rose Wi-Fi, Broadband Wireless Mesh, and finally BPL (Broadband over Power Line).

Pew Internet and American Life Project released a survey finding that about 55 per cent of internet-using Americans enjoy a broadband connection at home or at work.

Since computers have overwhelmed the marketplace, it may be somewhat misleading to lump them together.

The goal of computer mavens is the most speed per dollar expressed in Kbps (Kilobits per second), Mbps (Megabits per second), or preferably MBps (Megabytes per second). The latter conforms to the standard measurement of file size and gives an operator an instant impression of the time involved in achieving a download or a transfer, depending on the speed of his CPU or internet connection.

Because their infrastructure was already in place, the telephone and cable industries became the leaders in delivering internet resources to their subscribers at \$10 to \$50 per month depending on speed. But then came the advent of wireless transmission, commonly called Wi-Fi, with its short range signal providing access principally to portable (laptop) PC's—a significant advantage to travelers who were charged a small amount for access.

Almost paralleling the transition from fixed telephone to cell phone, Wi-Fi evolved into wireless mesh internet which has sparked a huge demand for municipal

wireless broadband. Fifty four localities, including major cities, are in the process of establishing or already have established such services.

Tempe, Arizona established a wireless access network last November, cov-

*(Continued on page 20)*

*(Continued from page 19)*

ering 40 square miles, with an access cost of \$30 a month per subscriber or \$3.95 per hour.

Manassas, Virginia became the first citywide Broadband-Over-Powerline site last October when it opened a 10 square mile site available to all at \$29 per month.

Philadelphia has contracted with Earthlink to cover its 135 square miles with wireless internet service---the cost to Earthlink an estimated 10-million dollars and a cost to residents an estimated \$20 per month for service. It's assumed that Earthlink will amortize its investment by income from advertising.

The excitement over wireless broadband is heightened by a comparison of download speeds available. The fastest of the three Wi-Fi formats now in use (the 802.11g) is 54 Mbps (megabits per second) or 7 Megabytes per second which is 18 times faster than the cable modems of today. Further is the recent approval of the IEEE

(Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) for the new 802.11n Wi-Fi format which may be two years before activation but could achieve data processing speeds of 600Mbps; an almost incomprehensible 75 Megabytes per second—200 times today's cable modem speed.

At that rate, one could download 80 minutes of music in 10 seconds or an entire opera in 30.

The wired communications industries are not unaware. Witness the fact that they have spent millions of dollars lobbying state legislatures to kill off community internet. Over the past few years, no less than 14 states have enacted legislation that bans or places limits on municipalities from building community internet projects. Florida Governor Jeb Bush signed a law last June that prevents cities from offering broadband if there are competing private services.

There are anti-competitive issues at the federal level, also. Republican Representative Pete Sessions of Texas introduced an anti-community internet bill which would prevent any city in the country from providing internet access if a private company offers internet services nearby—even if the private company serves as little as 10 per cent of the residents.

Republican Senator John Ensign of Nevada introduced the Broadband Investment and Consumer Choice Act which would severely hamper cities'

*(Continued on page 21)*

*(Continued from page 20)*

ability to build and manage wireless networks.

In response to Ensign's bill, Republican Senator John McCain and Democrat Frank Lautenberg introduced legislation that gives municipalities free rein to offer broadband and would overturn state laws banning such activities.

Now that President Bush has lent his support to a broad set of proposals to get every corner of the country access to broadband connectivity by 2007, it will be interesting to watch both sides welcome that goal as supporting their particular positions.

The big question for the public is cost. There have been no definitive publicly-available figures on installation and maintenance of the cutting-edge WiFi mesh application.

Jupiter Research has estimated that the average cost of building and maintaining a wireless network is \$150,000 per square mile over five years. Bert Williams, vice president of marketing for Tropos Networks, which has successfully provided mesh based WiFi hardware in several locations around the world, says, "We usually talk in terms of \$75,000 per square mile for our gear." Adding the ongoing costs for backhaul and system management, he believes the total to be closer to \$100,000 per square mile, while Sky Pilot Networks quotes \$50,000.

A long and vigorous battle is ahead involving the established vs the un-established. But one thing is certain. Everyone is going to end up with a piece of the pie. For this is still early in the digital age and there is plenty to go around.

muniwireless.com  
zdnet.com  
jupitermedia.com  
eetimes.com  
slate.com  
mistershape.com

informationweek.com  
vnunet.com  
arstechnica.com  
mercurynews.com  
eweek.com  
S. Derek Turner

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## **Identity Theft Phishing Scams Abound**

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

WEBSITES:

<http://www.websensesecuritylabs.com/alerts>

<http://www.antiphishing.org>

I have been busy compiling information so I can complete my 1040 for this year. I have also been actively searching for bargains on EBay, typically paying for my purchases utilizing my PayPal account. I frequently use the online bill paying service offered by my credit union. Much to my chagrin, according to a series of emails I received, my EBay account is being suspended, as well as my PayPal account, or somehow I added another email address to my PayPal account that I did not recognize.

I did receive some good news by email from tax-refunds@irs.gov; I have an unclaimed refund at the IRS! Here is what that good news email says: "Subject: Refund notice; You filed your tax return and you're expecting a refund. You have just one question and you want the answer now - Where's My Refund? Access this secure Web site to find out if the IRS received your return and whether your refund was processed and sent to you.\*\*New program enhancements\*\* allow you to begin a refund trace online if you have not received your check within 28 days from the original IRS mailing date. Some of you will also be able to correct or change your mailing address within this application if your check was returned to us as undelivered by the U.S. Postal Service. "Where's My Refund?" will prompt you when these features are available for your situation. To get to your refund status, you'll need to provide the following information as shown on your return: \* Your first and last name \* Your Social Security Number (or IRS Individual Taxpayer Identification Number) \* Your Credit Card Information (for the successful complete <sic> of the process)." It seemed too good to be true; all I needed to do was to connect to the government website listed in the email, GovBenefits.gov, enter my name, social security number, email address, credit card number and expiration date, CVV2 security code on the back of my credit card, and my ATM PIN number, and within 28 days an unexpected \$571 tax refund will be deposited to my account. I think that is just wonderful.

I am very concerned that my EBay privileges may be compromised, as there have been some discrepancies in my EBay account, so I claimed an email I received from EBay. All I need to do to is verify and reactivate my EBay account by clicking on the link in the email, entering my username

*(Continued on page 23)*

*(Continued from page 22)*

and password, and then verifying my identity with either my PayPal address or password, or reentering my credit card number, security code, and expiration date. That is quick and simple, so I will do it to preserve my EBay account.

I buy a lot of "stuff" on EBay, and pay for it from my PayPal account. I was shocked when I received that email from PayPal verifying that I had added another email address to my PayPal account. I did not recognize that email address, so I clicked on the PayPal link in the email, and entered my PayPal email address, password, credit card number, expiration date, and security code. Now that I have verified my identity to PayPal, I can safely remove that unknown email address from my PayPal account.

In another recent email from the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA), I was utterly shocked to learn that my credit union account and ATM card would be suspended within five days due to suspicious activity unless I connected to the website listed and confirmed my identity, and re-authorized my account. In a panic, I immediately did so, entering my account number, ATM card number, PIN number, and the routing number from one of my checks. A reassuring "Thank You" from the website relieved me of the anxiety I had about my credit union account, and now I feel better.

All of the emails above are real, but my responses to those emails are not. These types of emails present a very real and growing threat to our financial privacy and security. They are representative of a rapidly growing and dangerous trend of "phishing", a popular method of identity theft. By simply responding to the emails by clicking on the authentic looking link, the user is directed to an authentic looking but counterfeit website which solicits the victims' personal information. Once that information is entered, it has been documented that credit cards can be illicitly charged within seconds, and bank accounts drained via the use of the ATM and PIN numbers.

The Anti Phishing Work Group ([www.antiphishing.org](http://www.antiphishing.org)) is a trade group with over 2000 members including the major credit card companies, banks, credit unions, EBay, and financial service companies, who tracks phishing attacks. The most recent figures available as I type this indicate that in the month of November 2005, there were 16,882 individual phishing attacks, each possibly consisting of millions of fraudulent emails sent to people like us. The rate of phishing attacks, and the number of phishing emails has doubled since November 2004, and the numbers still appear to be increasing as it has become an easy method to defraud victims out of their money.

*(Continued on page 24)*

*(Continued from page 23)*

These attacks connected to 4630 fraudulent websites, triple the number for the same month in the previous year. The scam sites are short lived, being shutdown either forcibly, or voluntarily, within an average of 5.5 days, with some being active for as long as 30 days. Eighty percent of phishing scams illicitly use the name of just six legitimate companies, such as PayPal and EBay, and the other 20 percent of scams misrepresent 87 companies. While the majority of these websites are hosted in the US, they are actually owned and operated predominately by foreign nationals, often in Eastern Europe, and southeast and central Asia. Criminal prosecutions and recovery of lost money are scarce, making it a high gain – low risk crime, which helps account for its rapid and malicious spread.

A comprehensive list of current phishing scams, predominantly directed against the customers of major financial institutions may be found at [www.websensesecuritylabs.com/alerts](http://www.websensesecuritylabs.com/alerts). Some of the most recent listed financial institutions targeted are Greater Texas Federal Credit Union, Day Air Credit Union, First Bank, The Farmers Bank, Town North Bank, and many others.

As users start to implement updated software of various types, phishing may become more difficult. Newer versions of email programs, such as Outlook, Mailwasher, Eudora, and others show if a link redirects to another address, other than the one listed. The new version of Internet Explorer offers an anti-phishing option which will check internet addresses against suspicious or known phishing sites. Trend Micro's PC-Cillin Internet Security Suite 2006 offers an anti-phishing toolbar for Internet Explorer that shows if a link is being redirected to a suspicious site. Recent versions of the Firefox browser offer some protection against phishing by indicating the real, rather than the apparent web address in the address bar, which should notify the user of a potential scam. In order to bypass many of the new protections offered, some phishers are registering close variations of legitimate domain names in an attempt to trick users into accepting their false authenticity. Another trick is "pharming", which illicitly redirects correct internet addresses to bogus websites for the purpose of tricking the victim into entering sensitive data.

Never click on a link in an email warning about some dire financial risk or reward, as reputable agencies will not utilize that tactic in the event of a problem. A quick call to a known 800 number to verify any such problem will quickly indicate that the email is bogus. Better safe than sorry.

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## Why Settle, Do It Your Way

by **Lee Alexander**, Member of the Macon Users Group, Franklin, NC  
<http://www.maconusersgroup.org/>  
[sawdust21@verizon.net](mailto:sawdust21@verizon.net)

### Icons

You can make your PC more colorful and distinguish folders by using icons other than the ubiquitous manila folder. Right-click a folder and select properties; under the Customize tab, click the Change icon button and you will see more than 250 icons to choose from. Actually, the file, Shell32.dll, contains 1484 icons on my system. A good many of these are duplicates in different sizes and color depths. Sizes range from 16 x 16 pixels through 96 x 96 pixels; color depths can be 16, 256, or True colors (24-bit for a range of 16,777,216 hues).

Using one of my favorite free utilities, IrfanView, you can view and do minor editing such as changing size, color depth, and rotating the image.

TIP: Open an IrfanView window and Drag the file Shell32.dll into it. You can then see previews of the icons, one by one. If you want to do extensive editing of folder icons, create a shortcut to shell32.dll on your desktop. Then right-click on it and choose "Open With" - Irfanview.

I have created an Excel spreadsheet with a brief description of about 100 selected icons – Shell32Icons.xls.

### Acrobat Reader

This free utility is much in demand of late as many program manuals are now written in the .pdf (Portable Document Format) format. A few handy keyboard shortcuts are:

Adobe uses <Ctrl> L (instead of F11 as in Microsoft products) to toggle full screen view.

Toggle the toolbars with F8.

Use the right/left arrow keys to advance/go back a page.

### Adobe Photoshop, Etc.

You can hide the floating palettes in Adobe products (such as Elements), by hitting the <Tab> key. It is a toggle; hit it again to bring them back.

### Word Toolbars

*(Continued from page 25)*

You can create a toolbar button for easily inserting a symbol into a document. Right-click a toolbar and select Customize and the Commands tab. In the categories pane scroll down and click on All Commands . In the right pane, Commands, click on Symbol: and drag it to a toolbar. This will open the Symbol dialog box. Click the symbol to be attached to the button and click OK.

The toolbar button now displays the font name (Symbol) followed by the symbol number. Since this is not very friendly information, we can change the button's appearance. With the Customize dialog box opened, right-click the button and choose Name: . To make the button resemble the symbol it's attached to, use the <Alt> key and the four digits on the number pad for that symbol. You can add a graphic to the button by clicking on Edit Button Image. You're then presented with a simple grid and color palette upon which you can draw simple shapes.

Tips on Digital Photography and a PC Windows Picture and Fax Viewer  
This versatile (for photos) utility is often overlooked in the availability of photo editors. As it is included with the Windows Operating System it is a "freebie" readily at hand. Typically, unless you have set file associations otherwise, double clicking on a photo will open it in the Viewer. The toolbar at the bottom has some handy features that are not immediately intuitive. The Previous and Next buttons allow you to view all the images in the folder of the first photo you selected. The Screen icon will start an automatic slide show; the Zoom, Rotation, and Delete are self explanatory. However, the Print icon can surprise you – it opens the Photo Printing Wizard. As you step through the Wizard, the Layout Selection provides a variety of print configurations from 8.5 X 11 to a 35 print "contact sheet."

If you have set a file association to open your photos in an editor, you can create a shortcut to the Picture and Fax Viewer on your Desktop or in the Quick Launch Tray. Right-click in the area you want the shortcut and choose New | Shortcut. In the Shortcut wizard, enter C:\Windows\system32\shimgvw.dll (assuming your Operating System is on the C: drive). Name the shortcut and click Finish. On the first use you will have to choose the program, Picture and Fax Viewer, and check the box to "Always use selected program ..."

Note that if you right-click and choose Edit, you will open the Paint program. The next-to-last button closes the viewer and opens the photo editing program associated with the file type.

*(Continued on page 27)*

*(Continued from page 26)*

### Harry's Filters

Harry's Filters 3.0 is a Photoshop-compatible plug-in which can be used in dozens of different image editing applications e.g. Photoshop, Paint Shop Pro, Corel Photo-Paint and many other. It includes 69 effect filters, an Animation feature, options for saving and opening presets and an instant preview feature.

Harry's Filters 3.0 is freeware. You can use them for whatever you like, but you aren't allowed to distribute them without the author's permission.

Be sure to read the instructions about extracting the zipped file to the folder containing your photo editor.

At this point, the website link I had entered is no longer valid. This brings up a salient point – rather than hold on to old links (the dynamic nature of the World Wide Web is in constant flux, always changing) it is better to Google the topic or subject to get the latest information.

### LCD Usage with a Digital Camera

The disadvantage of using the LCD, as opposed to the optical viewfinder, the camera is not braced against a body part (your head). It is difficult to avoid camera shake when the camera is held at arms length. Try tucking your elbows into your sides and exhale before pressing the shutter release - don't punch it.

### Flash as a fill-in.

Using flash as a fill-in in outdoor shots, such as when the subject is backlit, can reduce the shutter speed. If your camera has the ability, check the shutter speed and aperture after such a shot. When flash is forced, digital cameras typically compensate by lowering the shutter speed and/or increasing the aperture.

### White Balance.

If your photos have an overall cast of color it could be a function of the White Balance. In a photo editor, find a patch of near-neutral gray and check the RGB color levels. They should be nearly equal in value. A free utility, Pixie, can check this for you. You can download the program from [www.nattyware.com](http://www.nattyware.com).

### Color Management Schemes

Color schemes can conflict, if you use more than one of them. Select the color profile of either the printer or the photo editing software, not both.

*(Continued on page 28)*

*(Continued from page 27)*

With inkjets, a greenish tone could indicate that no color scheme has been applied; a reddish hue may indicate two color schemes have been applied.

**See More Thumbnails in Win Explorer**

Hold down the <Shift> key when selecting the Thumbnail view to eliminate file labels = more pics per screen.

**Auto-reduce Photo File Sizes**

Windows XP has a neat feature to adjust the file size of photos for transmission over the internet. Select the photo(s) and right-click on one. From the pop-up menu, choose Send to and Mail Recipient. This will bring up a dialog box, Send Pictures via E-Mail. The radio button Make all my pictures smaller is selected by default. Click on Show more options to see 3 degrees of reduction.

Although it creates a message with the reduced file size photos as attachments, you do not have to send the message. You can right-click on an attachment and from the pop-up menu select Save as or Copy to put it on the Clipboard. You then simply delete the message without sending it.

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# The New, the Best, and the Worst

Collected by Pim Borman

SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc.

<http://swipcug.apcug.org/>

[swipcug\(at\)sigecom.net](mailto:swipcug(at)sigecom.net)

## Rants

It is a dark, dreary, drizzly day in mid-January as I write this, perfect for contesting a will (as they say in my native Holland) or protesting the peccability of PC peddlers.

**Rant #1** concerns the software Dell installs on new computers, whether you want it or not. James Derk, computer columnist for Scripps Howard News Service, wrote recently about the effort it required to remove all the extraneous junk from someone's new Dell system: *"Dell is on the list this year for adding so much junk to their new PCs that it takes a trained technician to remove most of them. Their "starter" edition of QuickBooks is the most annoying...even popping up reminders to try the program long after you've deleted it. I know Dell sells 80 percent of its PCs to businesses but there's no reason to have such an invasive product and selling tactic. Most large businesses don't use QuickBooks, most small businesses already have it and consumers don't want it. Editing the Windows Registry should not be needed to remove it. (Dell gets an honorable mention for charging \$25 for a USB cable to connect their "free" printers to their computers.)"* (<http://snipurl.com/derkcolumn2>). Elsewhere he mentions the desirability of removing the pre-installed temporary version of McAfee anti-virus. He wrote: *"If you have McAfee preinstalled on your new PC, I would uninstall it immediately and install a free product. It's not just a bias...in my computer repair business I have seen dozens of PCs with McAfee installed that are riddled with viri. Something either about McAfee's online-only product or the configuration just lets viruses pass through"* (<http://snipurl.com/derkcolumn>).

As luck would have it, my neighbors asked me soon thereafter for help with the installation of their new Dell computer. The recently retired professional couple had been using a MacIntosh computer for the past eight years and were unfamiliar with MS Windows. Remembering Derk's comment, I suggested we remove the McAfee program and install Norton Internet Security. Tough luck! As I attempted to remove McAfee via the Control Panel's Add/Remove feature, I kept getting error messages that part of the program was running and could not be removed. I did everything I could think of to stop/disable McAfee, but nothing managed to kill it dead. I did a Google

*(Continued on page 30)*

(Continued from page 29)

search later on and found that usually there is no simple way to get rid of it. A "help" page on the McAfee page provides pages of procedures to "try," all of them obscure and non-intuitive. An unwanted program that can not simply be uninstalled is **malware** in my opinion. If Dell is unwilling to sell computers without all the junk, the best solution may be to reformat the hard drive and reinstall the desired programs only. Or choose another vendor. It is hardly an attractive option for new Windows users.

**Rant #2** Sony BMG recently got caught using rootkits to provide copy protection on CDs they sold. Rootkits are programs that hide on your hard drive, out of sight of Windows. They are an open invitation for virus writers to invade your system and are hard to remove without damaging Windows. Sony was forced to apologize for its error, recalled the CDs involved, and published a patch to remove the rootkits from the customers' computers.

According to an article in *eweek.com*, the rootkit trick is being used by other companies also (<http://snipurl.com/lis7>, thanks to Jim Geiser). Norton SystemWorks is specifically mentioned. Symantec explained that they used the rootkit to prevent users from accidentally removing the file, but offered to relocate it with a program update. According to *eweek.com* there are other instances of rootkits being used, but no specifics were mentioned.

My Norton Internet Security subscription is about to expire. I already had planned to try the ZoneAlarm Security Suite, based on a recommendation in *PC Magazine* (12/27/05) that included it in their list of Best of the Year Products (but that also included McAfee anti-virus!). But then Linda Gonse, editor/webmaster of the Orange County IBM PC Users' Group, wrote that the ZoneAlarm Security Suite interfered with her ftp program and mangled the files she uploaded to her Web site. She had a dickens of a time trying to uninstall the program. However she never had a problem with the plain, free ZoneAlarm firewall. I concluded that my best bet was to use free ZoneAlarm as the firewall.

I chose a separate anti-virus program, **f-prot** from Frisk software (<http://www.f-prot.com/products/>). I used that program years ago in the DOS days, and more recently I have been using it on my Linux computers. Their technical support is outstanding, as I mentioned in a previous column (*P-See Urgent*, December 2005). F-prot, based in Iceland, was one of the first to spot the rootkits and to provide an uninstallation patch. They update their database as soon as they add new data, usually several times a week. The Windows version costs \$29 per year, but a trial version is available to make sure the product fills your needs.

(Continued on page 31)

*(Continued from page 30)*

As expected, replacing Norton Internet Security with ZoneAlarm and f-prot was not without problems. I downloaded the trial version of f-prot without difficulty and stored it, ready for use. Getting the free version of ZoneAlarm was a different story.

**Rant #3** If you make a free, limited version of your software available for download, don't play silly games trying to hide the download button hoping that the prospective customer will finally give up, or make an error, and order your paid-for version. It may work sometimes, but you lose every last bit of goodwill you may have worked years to earn. Is that worth it? After struggling with ZoneAlarm for 20 minutes trying to download the free program, I simply copied an older setup version that was still on my other Windows computer and installed that. ZoneAlarm then promptly offered to update that version and I was in business. Installation of f-prot went without a hitch.

Although I had uninstalled Norton Internet Security with the Control Panel-Add/Remove route, it was evidently not quite dead yet. ZoneAlarm started telling me that Norton was still trying to access various parts of my computer, which I blocked. Soon thereafter everything froze and I got the Blue Screen of Death. It took two cold restarts to get everything back up and running, and my first action was to have ZoneAlarm block everything with the Norton label. That seems to work thus far.

As every successful business, from Wal-Mart to General Electric, knows, your most important asset is customer goodwill. A happy customer is a return customer. Over the years Dell has built up an excellent reputation for product quality, price, and service. They stand to lose all that for a few bucks they make as "partners" with the likes of McAfee and Quicken Books. It isn't worth it. The same goes for Norton, known since DOS days for its reliability and excellence of technology. Avoid exasperating your customers and they'll keep coming back.

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## ACPCUG Club News

**Nice to be back!** AKRON MAIN Library

Maps & Description on ACPCUG Website, [www.acpcug.org](http://www.acpcug.org)

**NOTE TIME is back to 6:00PM!** This is because while free parking starts after 6:00 PM, you get your parking ticket stamped by security and the first hour is free anytime. **This is a policy change**, and for the better! So meetings again start at 6:00 PM. Just don't forget to have your ticket punched (..err stamped).

FROM North or South on Rt. 8 freeway: Exit *West* on Perkins Street going down the hill to a third light on **High Street (one-way going South, left)**.

Cross E. Market and *immediately* look for parking building entrance on your right. Go down to lower level for indoor connection to library.

**Dues Reminder: 2006 dues are due! \$12/year on January 1. Adjustments for recent payments, etc. made. See Asst. Treas. Rick Beech**

Club Officers area code 330, unless noted otherwise			
<b>President</b>	Frank Ramsey (2007)	699-4711	<a href="mailto:aframsey@yahoo.com">aframsey@yahoo.com</a>
<b>Special Projects</b>	Stu Barnes (2008)	864-9338	<a href="mailto:picture_professor@hotmail.com">picture_professor@hotmail.com</a>
<b>Secretary</b>	Walt Ruthenburg (2006)	283-7867	<a href="mailto:wruthenburg@usa.net">wruthenburg@usa.net</a>
<b>Assistant Treasurer</b>	Rick Beech (2006)	620-3461	<a href="mailto:rpbeech@hotmail.com">rpbeech@hotmail.com</a>
<b>Treasurer</b>	Jim Albright (2008)	923-8686	<a href="mailto:jra823a@usa.com">jra823a@usa.com</a>
<b>Newsletter Editor</b>	Art McRowe	666-3189	<a href="mailto:acpcugnews@yahoo.com">acpcugnews@yahoo.com</a>
<b>VP</b>	Dave Bohm (2007)	762-6745	<a href="mailto:bohm320@aol.com">bohm320@aol.com</a>