

ACPCUG Newsletter

**Akron Main
Public Library
August 7, 2006
Aug. Program:
Starts at 6:00 PM**

***Internet via your cell
phone—Frank Ramsey***

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August 2006

Akron-Canton PC Users Group

**The DealsGuy For August
2006**

**by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click
Greater Orlando Computer Us-
ers Group**

Last month I published an announcement for a product that could copy DVDs. We included what we found about downloading an additional product that was necessary to accomplish certain tasks, and I was accused of encouraging illegal activities. Maybe I should have worded it differently, but the fact is, I simply published the announcement for a free product, along with our findings, and made the information available so an editor, or reader, could use it, or not use it, however they wished. I had two complaints (from the same UG) and that group chose not to make the column available to their members, which is their choice. This is not an apology because there has been tremendous interest in these products; I simply reported the facts and people are responsible for their own actions. I have read a number of articles in UG newsletters containing opinions concerning the law and the tactics of publishing companies. By the way, since last month's column, their product pricing and lineup has changed. There are also those who would argue that a gun shop encourages murder, and I could use other similar issues that might be said to imply illegal activity. Recently I published an announcement for a product that recovers



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passwords. That could also be used for an illegal activity if used on a stolen computer. With all the write-ups and notoriety about new and controversial copyright laws, I wouldn't even try to explain the legalities of anything. Is it legal, or illegal to make a backup copy? Do you know for sure? Also, Shrink2Five has other uses and we did not include a link for Machinist2.dll. My proof reader suggested that car companies must encourage a long list of illegal activities, including manslaughter, since they sell cars that can do such things.

Actually, I am not a fan of publishing companies' tactics and the UCITA or DCMA laws. If those officials have their way, you would not be able to give, or even lend, anything published after you have read or listened to it. From what I read, they want all used book stores shut down as well as all libraries, and you would even be arrested if you were caught lending a book or CD to a friend. Who knows where it all might end when it comes to the pockets of some corporate bigwigs. However, I have no interest in any of this copying stuff. I have no time and have not bought a music CD in years, nor do I rent videos or go to a movie. The performers and executives involved with that industry are grossly overpaid, but they don't make any money from me. I don't watch much TV now, but if they keep adding commercials, I'll shut that off too. While I'm on my soapbox; if I am paying for cable TV, why should I have to put up with all those commercials? People are much too tolerant of being taken advantage of, and about what they are paying for.

***Do Your Homework**

The announcements below have been edited to shorten them so be sure to check their Web sites for better information. Remember, I have not tried any of these so I have no knowledge about their reliability.

***Check That Malware, And For Free!**

Put an end to all types of Malware, at no cost: The a-squared Web Malware Scanner 2.0 hunts undesired Spyware modules and dangerous Trojans, Backdoors, Keyloggers, Worms, Dialers, Rootkits, Hacking Tools, Riskware and TrackingCookies; all from within the Web browser and no software must be installed. All users having Internet Explorer and a fast Internet connection, such as DSL, can make optimum use of the scanner.

The a-squared Web Malware Scanner 2.0 uses over 350,000 signatures and an ingenious heuristic algorithm for detecting pests on the local computer and this scanner can be used directly from the Web browser. The user can choose from four different scan functions depending on the time available for a scan. The quick test provides rapid results, while a detailed analysis of the entire computer can take a while. A Riskware recognition system can also be enabled that informs the user of programs that are usually harmless, but are often used by Malware for specific tasks. There is also a paid version that they recommend as quicker and better with a 30-day free trial.

a-squared Web Malware Scanner 2.0: <<http://malwarescan.emsisoft.com>>

a-squared Anti-Malware: <<http://www.emsisoft.com/en/software/personal>>

Product details Malware-IDS: <<http://www.emsisoft.com/en/software/ids>>

Order a-squared Anti-Malware: <<http://www.emsisoft.com/en/order/homeuser>>

Phone: +43-664-3446068 (German)

Fax: +43-6272-73083

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Email: <info@emsisoft.com>

Web: <www.emsisoft.com>

***Let's Compare Data**

ZsCompare allows users to efficiently synchronize computers, backup data, compare different versions of files, verify that CDs have been copied correctly, manage Zip files, review changes to source code, and more. Users can easily run comparisons on local directories, networked computers, or removable media, such as CDs, DVDs, and flash drives. zsCompare is highly customizable to meet a wide range of needs.

ZsCompare 3.0 adds many new file and freeform text comparison features, including the ability to compare text from Microsoft Word documents and PDF documents. Also, zsCompare provides additional control over how the comparison is performed with predefined options for common comparisons. Finally, the new version of zsCompare permits direct editing of the contents of a file from the results. ZsCompare 3.0 operates on Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux. It runs on the Java platform, a copy of which is included with the zsCompare installation. ZsCompare 3.0 is available in three editions: Professional (\$199.95), Standard (\$99.95), and Lite (\$35.00). For a 20% discount, my readers should enter the coupon code "DealsGuy" when purchasing a license at <<https://www.zizasoft.com/store/order.shtml>>. The Lite Edition contains basic comparison and synchronization functionality. With the Lite Edition, users can compare directories, zip files, text files, and freeform text. All versions include free lifetime upgrades and free technical support.

More information, including a complete list of enhancements and a fully functional 30 day trial version, is available at <<http://www.zizasoft.com/products/zsCompare/index.shtml>>.

Sales: <sales@zizasoft.com>

Telephone: 1 (303) 638-9235

Fax: 1 (720) 862-2089

***The Arnold Schwarzenegger Of Windows?**

Tame Windows with Actual Window Manager 4.01. Microsoft Windows is the most widely used operating system today and its window architecture is a brilliant invention. However, this architecture comes with a bit of baggage and a degree of frustration, especially when you work with several windows simultaneously. With many applications open at once Windows becomes heavily cluttered, which in its turn cuts down on your computational productivity. The more windows you open, the more time you spend to manage them and less focus is on the job. Monotonous clicking, window clutter in the taskbar, switching between windows, their positioning and resizing may double and even triple the time you need to concentrate on your job.

Upon installation, Actual Window Manager adds its buttons to each window in your system and allows you to navigate them in new ways. Instead of the taskbar, you will be able to minimize windows to the task tray or to the edge of the desktop or roll them up, or unroll, like blinds. If you need to multitask in several applications at once, you can simply pin all necessary windows on top without the need to bring up each one several times a day. In fact, you have over 40 other controls to automate routines related to windows. You can apply a predefined level of transparency to any window, automate positioning of windows, resize them and change priority

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from the title bar menu and more.

Over 450 suggestions were carefully considered and reflected in a more intuitive user interface. The customization of options has become much simpler, and the choice of options wider. In addition to subtle customization abilities, the program has a list of presets for most popular applications that allow you to use Actual Window Manager in the "install-and-go" style.

Read the complete description of features at <<http://www.ActualTools.com/windowmanager/>>

Download a no-cost evaluation copy from <<http://www.ActualTools.com/files/aimsetup.exe>>

Pricing and Availability

Actual Window Manager 4.0 runs under all Windows platforms and costs \$39.95 (USD) for a single-user license. Registered customers are entitled to the unlimited functionality, free updates and lifetime technical support. Additional information on Actual Window Manager, a collection of tutorial articles and success stories, as well as a 60-day evaluation copy is available from <<http://www.ActualTools.com/>>. UG members should visit our User Groups Support page <<http://www.actualtools.com/usergroups/>> and click the "Get 20% discount" Link, then follow the instructions.

E-mail: <info@actualtools.com>

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>>

How to know what's in a file or folder before you open it

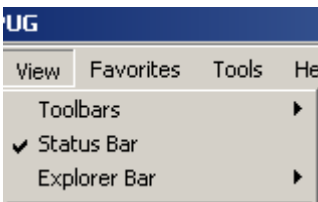
by Linda Gonse, Editor, Nibbles & Bytes, Orange County IBM PC Users' Group, California

Sometimes you just don't know what's in a file by the title alone. You may have created it so long ago, you've forgotten. Or, you received a file from someone who gave it a cryptic name. Most of the time, if you are like me, you bite the bullet and open the darned thing. This means waiting for an application to load before the file opens. If your attention doesn't wander, you'll spend exasperating seconds — maybe even a minute or more — drumming impatiently on the desk. Otherwise, you get distracted looking through papers or books in your To Read stack, and jerk to awareness 10 minutes after the file has opened.

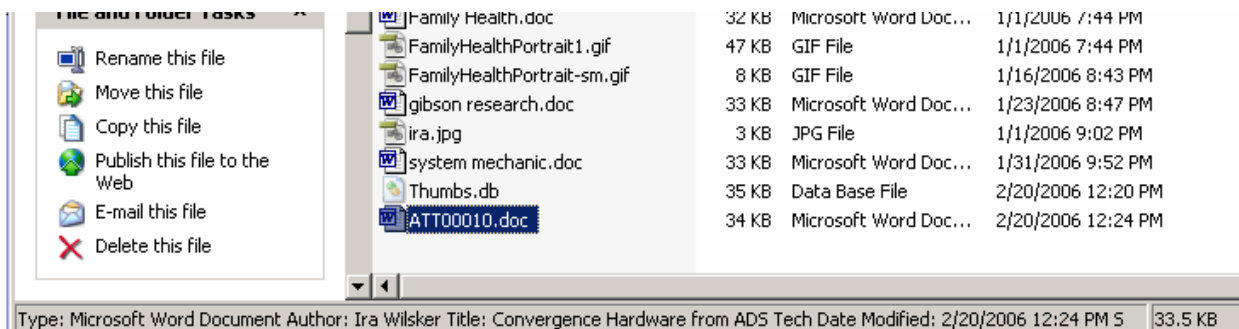
Either way, you don't get the information you need when you want it.

Call it secret, or just overlooked information, but there are ways to glimpse file information so you don't have to open the files or folders to see what they contain.

FILES — Stay with me while I open my ORCOPUG folder in the Details view and click on a subfolder titled Ira Wilsker. There's a list of files in the right window pane that I have saved Ira Wilsker's emails. But, now I'm not sure what they contain. So, I go to View on the menu bar and check to be sure that Status Bar has a check next to it. Next, I click on the file titled "ATT00010.doc."



To add the Status Bar to your folders, you have to select it under View.

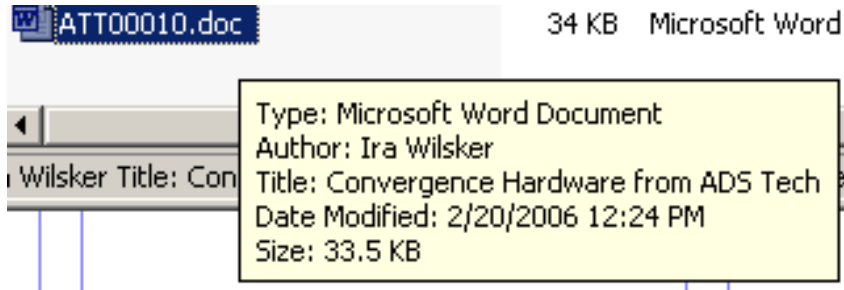


Information about a file shows up in the Status Bar at the bottom of an open folder.

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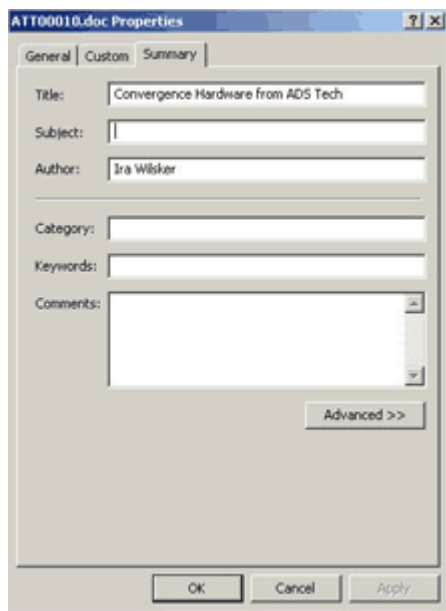
The author of the file, the actual title of the file, the date it was created and the size of the file all appear at the bottom of the pane in the status bar.



Hover your cursor over a file for a popup box with the file information in it.

Or, I could just hover the mouse over the file name for a second or two and a popup will show me the file information. If you don't see a popup when you hover your mouse over a file, in an open folder go to Tools > Folder Options > View. Then, scroll almost to the bottom of the list and check the box next to "Show pop-up description for folder and desktop items."

The third option for checking on file innards is to right click on the file name, and go to Properties in the drop down list. Left click on Properties and go to the Summary tab. The author's name and the title of the document will be there.

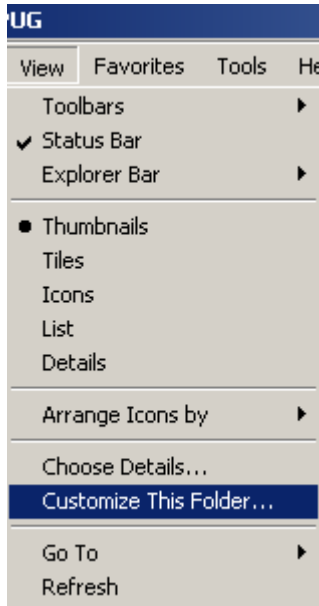


The Properties box defaults to author and title. Other information can be added to this file, also, at the time the document is created or modified.

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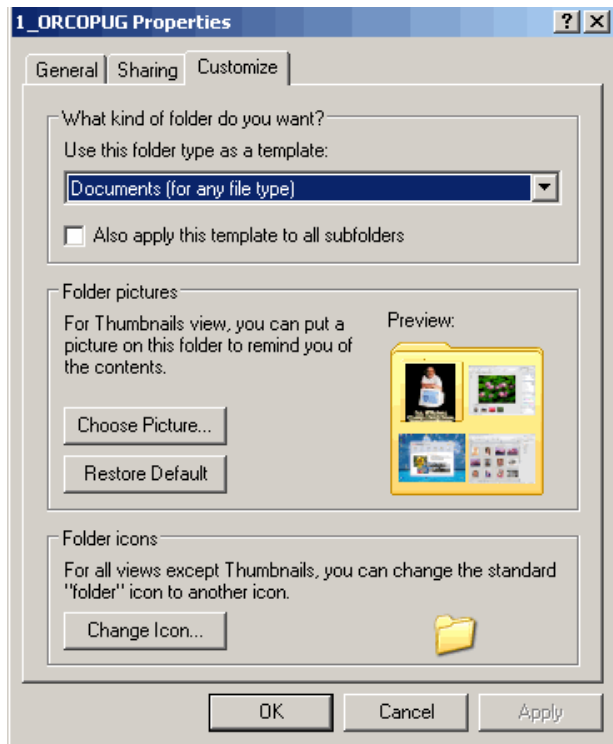
FOLDERS—You can make searching through folders easier (and even more fun) by using a custom picture to remind you of the contents. Or, you could assign a custom icon for the folder so it will stand out from the rest of the folders.



Go to the settings under the View menu in an open folder. First select Thumbnails. Then, go back into the list and click on Customize this Folder.

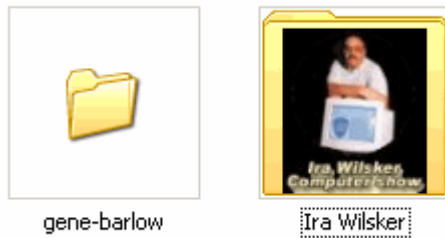
Click on the Customize tab and then the “Choose Picture” button. Find a picture in the folder (or in any other folder) that will remind you of what types of files are in this folder. For example, my folders are filled with articles for the newsletter from various writers. One folder contains articles by Ira Wilsker and images for his articles, so it makes sense to put Ira’s photo on the folder. I browse to his picture, select it, click Open, then click Apply and OK.

Take a look at the folder now (below) in *Thumbnail* view. There’s no way you can miss this folder, or forget what is inside of it!



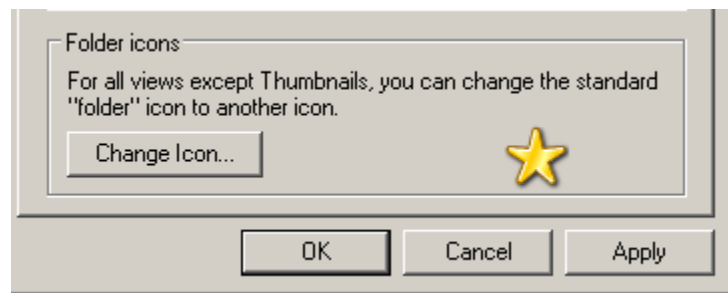
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In other views, such as Icon view, you won't be able to see a picture on the folder. But, you can still make the folder stand out from the rest. Or, if you have a group of folders that are similar, you can change all the folder icons so they will stand out as a group and be easier to locate.



To change a folder's icon, go back to View and Customize This Folder. At the bottom of the dialog box, click on the Change Icon button, and select an icon. Click Apply and OK, and go take a look at the folders in icon view.

It's hard to miss the special icon, isn't it?



Try it yourself and discover how easy it can be to identify the folders you need, instantly and without guesswork.

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Tweaking Windows' Taskbar

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP Computer & Technology Website, www.aarp.org

It's easy to use a key part of Windows' screen real estate, the taskbar, without really noticing it. Like a car's dashboard, taskbar components summarize what's happening on your computer and access running software. But unlike your car's dashboard, the taskbar can be customized for individual needs and preferences.

www.aarp.org/learntech/computers/howto/tweaking_windows_taskbar.html

Fun with Windows' Taskbar

I've read reports that most people can't accurately draw their car's dashboard, no matter how many hours or years they've stared at it. Similarly, many of us look at and use a key part of Windows' screen real estate -- the taskbar -- without paying much attention to it.

Like a car's dashboard, taskbar components -- Start button at one end, notification area icons at the other, and application buttons in between -- summarize what's happening on your PC and give quick access to running software. But the taskbar is more interesting than a car dashboard: you can customize it for your individual needs and preferences.

This article describes Windows XP's taskbar; other Windows versions have mostly similar facilities. People sometimes worry when their taskbar disappears or suddenly looks odd -- or moves to an unfamiliar place on the screen. We'll see how such glitches are easily fixed.

Right-clicking a blank taskbar area displays Windows' familiar context menu, showing available options. Clicking Toolbars lets you display or hide built-in toolbars (groups of icons representing programs, folders, or files) or create your own. My favorite toolbars are Desktop (a handy pop-up list which duplicates desktop icons) and Quick Launch (which holds the few key icons I always want immediately available). Other standard toolbars are Address and Links.

Cascade and Tile options specify arrangement of open application windows: fanned like playing cards or arranged in a grid.

A key option -- Lock the Taskbar -- controls whether you can change the taskbar. When the taskbar is unlocked, you can change its size by dragging its edge away from or towards the screen's edge. You can move individual toolbars by grabbing their handles (perforated line near each one) and move the taskbar by grabbing a blank area.

Clicking Properties brings up a detailed options dialogue box. It's safe to experiment but only change one thing at a time until you learn your way through all the choices.

The Taskbar tab customizes the taskbar itself and its notification area. You can auto-hide the taskbar -- handy on small monitors to reclaim space for application windows. When it hides, moving the mouse near it makes it visible. You can always keep the taskbar on top of other applications, or allow it to be covered. If it's hidden, pressing ctrl-esc displays it.

Similar task bar buttons -- for example, representing multiple Word documents -- can be grouped to save taskbar space, or spread out. If they're grouped, left-clicking the group displays all open files, and right-clicking lets you manipulate the files simultaneously.

You can add and delete Quick Launch toolbar icons by dragging them on or off the toolbar. I

trimmed mine to two icons: Show Desktop and Windows Explorer. From a Windows keyboard, these are available by pressing Win-D and Win-E, respectively.

The notification area (called the "tray" in earlier Windows versions) shows icons for small applications or utilities that are running, plus your clock. Mousing over an icon pops up its name. You can control which icons are displayed and whether inactive icons (representing programs you haven't used for a while) are hidden. Each program running consumes PC resources so it's worth monitoring these icons and pruning any which aren't necessary. Right-click an icon to display options. Closing some applications prevents them from automatically starting at system boot, while others offer an explicit option.

Continuing our tour through taskbar properties, the Start Menu tab lets you specify Start Menu appearance and operation. You can pick large or small icons and determine how many shortcuts are saved in it for recently used programs. Key programs can be "pinned" to the Start menu by right-clicking a desktop icon or dragging an icon to the Start button and placing it in the permanent top area. The Advanced tab determines Start menu behavior and lets you select modern or "classic" Start menu format.

Finally, when the Taskbar is unlocked, three extra toolbar right-click options are available: View, Show text, and Show title, for fine tuning your PC's "dashboard".

While Windows operates just fine as it's installed, tweaking taskbar settings and other options can make it faster and more pleasant to use. And since there are usually multiple ways to accomplish tasks in Windows, it's worth exploring -- for example, right-clicking to explore context menus and clicking various options/customize/advanced buttons to see what's available. Don't be afraid to tinker, but remember what you change so you can undo it!

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Managing Device Drivers

By Vinny La Bash, Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida
[labash\(at\)spcug.org](mailto:labash(at)spcug.org)
www.spcug.org

Windows is the most widely used operating system (OS) in the personal computer world.

For each piece of hardware that's connected to a Windows based computer, somebody somewhere has written a piece of software to make the device work with a computer. This piece of software is called a "Device Driver." One of the most useful features of a well-written device driver is making itself all but invisible to whoever is using the computer. You create a document, send it to your printer, and somehow the document prints. Your device driver takes care of all the little details necessary for the printing operation to occur.

Drivers are one of the three most important broad categories of software in computers. The first is the operating system, the second is whatever applications are installed, including communications, and the third is device drivers. Drivers are important for two reasons. First, your peripherals won't work without them, and second, corrupted or out-of-date device drivers are responsible for most system crashes.

There are other reasons why it's important to keep your device drivers up-to-date. Sometimes a manufacturer will become aware of some kind of defect or glitch in the driver software and issue a fix. You will need it. A different manufacturer may have a driver for its own device that will cause a conflict with an out-of-date driver on your device. Over time, updates for Windows may eventually cause problems with an out-of-date driver.

Proper device driver management is essential to keeping your computer crash proof. If device driver management is unfamiliar territory, please pay attention. You'll be glad you did. Microsoft introduced the concept of Signed Drivers with Windows 2000 and continued with Windows XP. If a device driver is "signed" by Microsoft, it means that the driver has been subjected to meticulous, painstaking, extensive testing to ensure compatibility with your Windows operating system.

Anytime you install a signed driver, Windows checks it by default and also guarantees it has not been altered or changed in any way. If the driver is not signed, Windows alerts you with a strong message that the driver has not passed Microsoft's rigorous certification tests.

Windows will also ask if you want to install the driver anyway, and will do so if you give it permission. Keeping your computer safe from unstable software is always a good idea. Fortunately, changing the Windows default is relatively easy, but you need Administrator privileges.

Right-click the My Computer icon on the desktop, then select Properties. Click the Hardware tab and then the Driver Signing button. Choose Block to let this be the new default, and you're done. Windows will now block any device drivers that it does not recognize as signed.

Not all manufacturers send their drivers to Microsoft for testing. For small firms this can be an expensive proposition. Does this mean you should never install an unsigned driver? No, but you should do some checking of your own to ensure that the company has a good reputation in the industry. Sometimes a new device driver will prove unstable for various reasons. Windows XP has the ability to delete the driver and install a previous version. Open the Device Manager, and double click the drive that's causing problems. Switch to the Driver tab and Roll Back the driver to the previous version.

What we've discussed so far is fine if you're using relatively new equipment, but suppose you're having trouble with something that's old and the manufacturer has gone out of business. Chances are good that the original installation disk is lost or deteriorated to a point where it is no longer useful. There are many other reasons why you could have difficulty finding a device driver, but these are the most common.

In the past, finding the right device driver or firmware was often a tedious, time consuming, and frequently impossible task. Nowadays, we have web sites such as www.driverguide.com to help us. The site has been around since 1997, and has seen many improvements. It has a unique membership base of thousands who collectively compiled a massive database of drivers, firmware, and support documents that is the largest and most comprehensive on the Web.

Recognizing that most people who use computers are not experts, they have devised an easy step-by-step process that will help you find and install drivers. There is an archive of hundreds of thousands of files containing not only drivers, but voluminous information on manufacturers including links to other sites with driver information. Also useful are the discussion boards where you can chat with others who have the same hardware, and learn from their experience.

After you search for a driver and find it, help doesn't stop. The Driver Summary provides you with a rundown of all the information you're likely to need to make the decision about whether or not to download and install the driver. This information is put together from the original manufacturer, plus ratings and comments from those who have previously downloaded and installed the file. It's nice to have everything in one place.

There are many web sites where you can find information about device drivers, but this is one of the best places to use as your starting point. Managing device drivers does not have to be a search in the dark. Use the tools available to you, and your system will be stable and a lot less prone to crash.

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and a lot less prone to crash.

Title: “Suddenly...” OR “I didn’t do anything!” Part 2

Subtitle: Or — a month’s log of a SCA Computer Club “house call” doctor.

By Charles W. Davis, Newsletter editor & webmaster, Sun City Anthem Computer Club, Henderson, NV

Chas (at) anthemwebs.com

www.myscacc.org

These first two paragraphs are a repeat of the introduction to Part 1 of this article. In working to help Club members and others with their computer problems during the Thursday morning Computer Talk sessions, or more often when making “house calls,” I often hear strange tales that usually involve acts of some gremlin like creature. However, gremlins are more closely related to mechanical problems in aircraft.

Generally the caller’s comments start with “all of a sudden” or “suddenly” and end with “I didn’t do anything.” I can only surmise that it was probably one of cartoonist Bil Keane’s ghostly imps “Not Me.” “Nobody” or even “Ida Know.”

A very frequent “Suddenly”

Quite frequently, I get a call and the party on the other end is complaining about the fact that suddenly there are small dashes between words accompanied with the backward “P.” I kind of like this one, as I can generally “fix” it over the phone. This one is usually caused by the imp “Nobody.” “Nobody” placed the pointer on the Show/Hide icon on the Office Word tool bar. In the image below you will note the parenthetical expression (Ctrl+*). Holding Ctrl+Shift+8 will turn them on, do it again to turn them off. Note that “shift + 8” is the *.

Naturally, in MS Office Publisher the keyboard short cut is Ctrl+Shift+Y.

By the way, that backward “P” is called a pilcrow. For a complete rundown of funny dots and arrows, see: <http://word.mvps.org/FAQs/Formatting/NonPrintChars.htm>

“Suddenly” I can’t print!

This call came in late in the afternoon. A member had changed his printer cartridge and could no longer print. He could no longer receive e-mail messages. To my surprise, there was no task bar visible on the desktop! He had been without a means of normal shutdown for weeks! After installing 23 critical updates to his Windows 98 SE system, the task bar was still not visible. However, the printer was now back in working condition.

Now was time to address the e-mail problem. He showed me an article he had clipped from the Las Vegas Review-Journal by the syndicated columnist James Coates. The article revolved around a question submitted by a customer of Comcast, an Internet Service Provider. James walked the reader through the steps to properly set up Outlook Express for the Comcast e-mail account. Unfortunately our club member had followed the instructions completely and therefore attempted to access Comcast’s e-mail server. “Suddenly” incoming e-mail messages had ceased

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to arrive. I reset the account to the member's Cox Communications server. Messages were now arriving as desired.

Following a phone call and suggestions from another trouble shooter ("Silly," he said: "Hit the start key!"), the task bar was located hiding off to the right of the screen! I started to drag it to the bottom of the screen and the thing snapped up to the top of the screen. I started to drag it to the bottom, but he didn't want it moved! Suddenly, he is back in the retiree business! "Ida Know" had clearly been involved here. The evening was warm and clear with a view of the sparkling lights of the Las Vegas Strip in the distance as my Miata carried me and the \$20 check home.

My Miata has sat in the sun with the top down for many hours each day for the past six years. One morning I made a trip to a shop to have the interior panels on both doors replaced. While I was gone, two members called and one explained to Vickie that he had four Word files that when opened immediately shut down word. The other told Vickie that he had major computer problems and it was probably ready for burial.

In the first instance "Ida Know" was definitely involved. Big time! Norton Antivirus hadn't been updated since 2002! I downloaded the free AVG Antivirus, uninstalled Norton Antivirus via Control Panel's Add/Remove function. I installed AVG, after the Roxio update as mentioned earlier, then updated AVG and scanned for viruses. None! I downloaded and installed Ad-Aware SE Personal and scanned. Ad-Aware found 335 malware programs that were removed. Still, it didn't fix Word.

During the scans, which seem to take forever, the lady of the house was distraught over the loss of her Quicken backup data. She thought that she had backed up to a new USB Flash memory drive prior to buying her new computer. I opened the My Computer folder and double clicked on the USB drive and located the Quicken file and double clicked on it. Quicken opened and her checking balances were as expected. I renamed the USB Flash Memory drive to her name. Hoping to avoid future trips to her home, I had her practice the routine several times.

The above scans were now complete.

I returned to his computer and I chose Detect & Repair from Word's Help drop down menu. Following this repair function, things were still the same. I finally opened one of the documents and immediately chose "Save As" from the File drop down menu. I changed the file name by one digit and closed. I reopened the newly saved document and Word remained open. I followed the same procedure on the others with success in each case! Why? "Ida Know."

By this time, I was late to the second appointment. Earlier, I had tried to call, but got an answering machine. I left the message that I was running late and would be there soon. I had called the wrong number, and I have wondered whether the unknown party was still waiting. I collected the \$20 donation check and departed.

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On arrival at the second destination, the member had meticulously written down the steps that led to his problem, and more important, the steps that he had attempted to resolve the issue. I listened to all the steps as he read from the sheet of paper. Then he explained that the screen went haywire when Windows XP booted up, and the system crashed. It seemed that the problems started with the installation of eight Windows updates that he had downloaded on a dialup connection. “I don’t know” was definitely involved here, as I have not heard of any Critical update causing this reaction. On rebooting he received several messages that indicated some drivers were back level. He couldn’t access the Internet via his Earthlink access. The Earthlink Tech Rep had told him install some drivers from the Dell CD that came with the computer. Big mistake! I looked at the CD and it was for Windows 98! This member was running Windows XP with SP2 installed.

I started the system in Safe mode and went to a System Restore point that preceded the first of the steps that he had outlined.

He was now back in business—well, as much in business as any of us retirees. His wife wrote the \$20 check and I arrived home on a Friday evening just in time for our cocktail hour.

Desperate Housewife

A desperate housewife called and let me know that she needed some help with her computer. AOL had “Suddenly” gone berserk! What’s new? I thought. My Miata soon delivered me to her driveway in Ridgecrest Village.

AOL was unresponsive. When opening, a message would appear stating that a file was not a Windows image. OK, so what? I finally uninstalled AOL and using the installation disk re-installed it. Same message, but we did manage to open an e-mail message and print a picture taken at her first great-grandson’s first birthday.

I soon found that Norton’s subscription had expired some 14 months before! Next order of business was to uninstall Norton’s Anti-virus and then download the free AVG Antivirus. Following the start of the download, I read that it would take approximately three hours on the dial-up connection.

I asked her to install the program upon completion of the download and left. Later that day, a power glitch hit and I lost my next issue of the Anthem Compendium. There is no auto-save function in FrontPage.

Two days later the desperate one called again and said nothing had worked. Sure enough that power glitch had shut the download off. Further, it was corrupted. Once again I started the download and went home for lunch. On my return, there were still a few minutes to wait. AVG Antivirus was successfully installed.

Now, I had to address her problem with AOL, the same message as before, and it would not re-

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spond when one clicked on the mail icon. Yet the Windows Task Manager said it was running. Upon trying to close it using the Task Manager, one discovered an update being applied. Later, I would start to shut it down but, then it was downloading a program update. It had been months (years) while since the CD had been produced so there were several updates to install.

I decided a different tack was needed. I did a search for a file with a .tol file extension and found three. On a subsequent restart of AOL, I noticed the one in trouble was in a “b” version?

I then opened Windows Explorer and plowed down through the C drive folders and located the three files. There were really three different versions of AOL installed. The un-install hadn’t uninstalled a thing! That proved to be the answer, as I simply copied the .tol file from one installation to the “b” folder. All is well in AOL land once again.

She made me take a second \$20 donation to the Club and I was soon back home writing this.

The parking lot approach!

Last week, as I walked from the Computer Club classroom to the parking lot, a lady called to me. She explained that one of our other “house call” volunteers had spent hours attempting to download and install a new version of Norton antivirus at \$59.99. It appeared to him to be a bad download as it kept saying something needed to be “fixed.” After a while he assumed that the download was corrupted and they called Symantec. After several hours with Tech support, they finally ordered a box copy mailed to the house, another \$59.99. She added that she had also bought a router as recommended and that needed to be installed.

The next morning at the Computer Club’s “Computer Talk” session I asked why he had not installed the free AVG Antivirus. He explained that the member was only doing as her late husband had instructed. ‘Nuf said.

The next day, I called and made an appointment for Saturday. Since she lives only two blocks away, I walked. No one answered the bell. So I returned home and about 45 minutes later she called. I had been at the house next to hers! Another mutual time was arranged. On this day the temperature was hovering around 100 degrees, so I drove the Miata. With the top down and the air conditioner on full blast, of course.

When I started her computer, the Norton product indicated a problem with a button to “fix it.” I clicked on it and it started a system scan. After several minutes, that wasn’t going to accomplish anything, so I stopped the scan and re-booted. Same routine! This time though, I decided that the programmers at Symantec, thought the lack of a scan meant something needed “fixing” and Tech support didn’t pick up on the lack of clarity in their message! Sure enough, when the scan was completed, the need for a fix went away.

I easily installed the router and then went online to the URL that Symantec had provided on the receipt and applied for a return of the boxed versions that had been mailed. No problem!

“Suddenly” or “not so suddenly” all of the incidents reported here are of a real concern to the

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Club members that called for assistance.

When you have a problem, contact your Computer Club's President.

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

Choose Your Own "Home Page"

By Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:

<http://my.yahoo.com>

<http://www.live.com>

<http://www.msn.com>

<http://www.theexaminer.com>

<http://www.mozilla.com>

<http://my.netscape.com>

<http://www.google.com/ig?hl=en>

I work on a lot of different computers at a variety of locations, and one factor that consistently astounds me is that many people have blissfully ignorantly never changed their startup "home page" from its default. This is the page that first opens when the user connects to the internet. For example, many Dell computers have the Dell website set for the startup page when the user first accesses the internet, while Windows itself, unless otherwise changed, defaults to Microsoft's MSN home page, making it one of the mostly used startup pages. Many internet service providers (ISP), such as AOL, AT&T, and others changed the users' home page to the ISP's selected home



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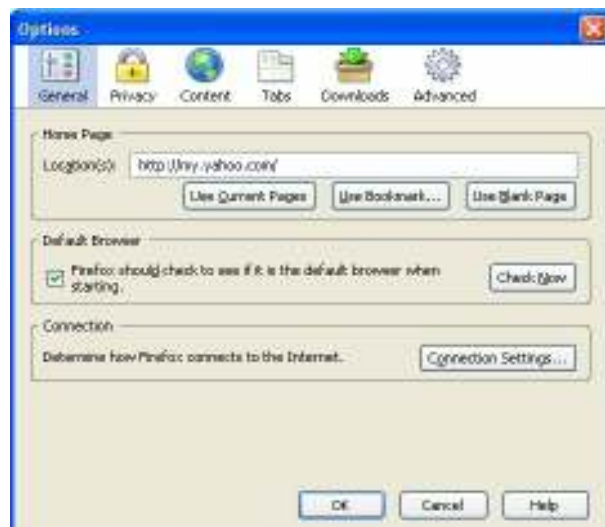
page.

Startup or “home” pages are big business because they are commonly advertiser supported, and the more views (also referred to in the industry as “hits”), the more revenue generated by the host. This on-screen real estate is so valuable that a type of malware or spyware, sometimes known as homepage hijackers, will attempt to change your homepage to its client’s home page, for which the miscreant receives compensation for each page such changed.

There are many different services offering home pages, and if the user finds one that he likes, it is very easy to make the selected page the new home page. The process for selecting the default home page is the same for most browsers. Using Microsoft’s Internet Explorer (IE), which is still the most widely used browser in the world, the process is simple. If the user visits a website that he would like as his homepage, he simply clicks on “Tools” on the menu bar, and then that will open a window where the home page can be selected. If the open page is what is desired, then click on the “Use Current” radio button, and the current page will be displayed each time the browser is loaded. If “Use Default” is selected, the home page will revert back to the Microsoft (or other manufacturer) default start up page. On the new Internet Explorer 7 (Beta), which offers tabbed browsing, a different home or startup page can be selected for each tab. For those who do not want to connect to any page at all when loading the browser, IE7Beta offers the option of a blank page. All versions of IE also allow for the manual entering of any selected internet address for a home page. To directly go back to the home page at any time, simply click on the little house or “home” icon on the menu bar.



Firefox (www.mozilla.com), one of the most popular browsers behind IE, offers a simple interface to select or change the homepage. Clicking on “Tools” on the menu bar opens a window where “General” can be selected, and then “Home Page”. Firefox allows the address to be manually entered, or the current page loaded can be selected. Other options allow for the home page to be selected from a previously saved bookmark (Internet Explorer calls these “Favorites”), or the option for a blank startup page can be selected. Firefox also offers the little house on the menu bar for instant access to



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the home page.

There are many choices for a home page, which is totally up to the user. Some users use their web mail accounts as a home page, first displaying their email when connecting to the internet, while others may choose retailers, auction sites, employer web pages, search engines (such as Google or Yahoo), newspapers (such as the Examiner at www.theexaminer.com), or any other page of interest. While any page can be selected as a home page, the most popular home pages selected are usually news and information based pages.

My personal favorite, which I use on all of my computers, is "My Yahoo", at my.yahoo.com. I have found My Yahoo to be the most comprehensive and flexible home page. Being an information junkie, I have customized my My Yahoo page to include stock and mutual fund listings,

The screenshot shows the My Yahoo! homepage interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'Web', 'Images', 'Video', 'Local', 'News', and 'Shopping'. Below these is a search bar and a weather widget showing '71° - 92°'. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Stock Portfolios:** A table listing various stock indices and mutual funds with their current values and changes.
- The Examiner - News:** A list of news headlines from The Examiner, including 'LU baseball players receive more accolades' and 'Big Bad Wolf on trial at Port Arthur Little Theatre'.
- Reuters: Top Stories:** A list of top news stories from Reuters, including 'Top Bush policy adviser leaving White House' and 'US to extradite Afghans at Guantanamo: Afghan official'.

Symbol	Value	Change
DJIA	10816.92	+110.78
NASDAQ	2086.00	+13.53
NYSE	7780.33	+60.55
S&P 500	1230.04	+6.35
ACRNX	27.85	+0.15
AIG	59.27	+0.13
BDCO	3.85	+0.21
CECX	N/A	N/A
DPTR	14.00	+0.17
EWTX	23.18	+0.12
FDGRX	60.68	+0.53
FSAGX	30.59	+0.39
FDVLX	75.62	+0.27
FGLDX	4.94	+0.10

news from dozens of sources, weather, lottery results, sports scores, my personal calendar, latest emails received, TV listings, and other information. My Yahoo, which is very easy to configure, directly offers thousands of choices. Many information resources, such as the Examiner, are now using "RSS" or "XML" feeds as a news source, and these can be added to My Yahoo often with a single mouse click. My Yahoo is also customizable with hundreds of backgrounds, color schemes, layouts, or other features to personalize it.

Microsoft is currently testing a new homepage intended to at first supplement its flagship homepage at www.msn.com, and maybe later replace it. This new homepage, currently in beta testing, is currently online at www.live.com. It will be a strong competitor to My Yahoo, offering news, sports, weather, email, and other resources in columns that are infinitely customizable.

The screenshot shows the Windows Live homepage interface. At the top, there is a search bar and a weather widget. The main content area is divided into several columns:

- Portfolio Tracker:** A section for tracking stock portfolios, with a warning about installing gadgets from trusted sites.
- Windows Live News:** A section for news, with a warning about installing gadgets from trusted sites.
- Mail:** A section for email, with a warning about installing gadgets from trusted sites.
- Earlier.com Most Popular Stories:** A list of popular stories from Earlier.com, including 'The Blue Economy' and 'NLS Plunge Salvages On The Street'.
- Medscape Medical News Headlines:** A list of medical news headlines from Medscape, including 'Dreadful and Deadly Disease Found to Spread in China'.

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There are countless other “My” homepages available, such as AOL’s my.netscape.com, and other personalized home pages, including Google’s “Personalized Home” link sitting quietly on the top right corner of the popular google.com website. All of these home pages can be easily customized to suit individual needs.



There is no need to continue to use the default startup or home page provided by your operating system or ISP. Investigate some of the alternatives, and increase your enjoyment of the web.

The New, the Best, and the Worst

June 2006

Collected by Pim Borman, Website Editor, SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc.

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

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

Open Document Format

Long-term archiving of documents generated and stored in computer format presents formidable problems. Current storage media, such as magnetic tape, CDs and DVDs, have a limited, ill-defined lifespan. Programs currently used to read their contents sooner or later will become obsolete. And the most-used formats for storing office documents are mostly proprietary, mutually incompatible, and incompletely documented.

The international Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (**OASIS**) has developed an Open Document Format (**ODF**) based upon the XML-based file format originally created by OpenOffice.org. It was developed with inputs from a variety of organizations, with the notable exception of Microsoft, and a committee of the United Nations. It is publicly accessible, and can be implemented by anyone without restriction. The Open Document Format was recently adopted by the International Standards Organization as ISO/IEC 26300. Many foreign governments are adopting the new format, and it has also been adopted by the US National Archives

Microsoft, meanwhile, is developing its own proprietary, XML-based document format expected to be used in the forthcoming Office 12 suite. Most likely it won't be compatible with ODF.

The most recent version 2.0 of OpenOffice.org uses ODF as its native format, although documents can also be saved in formats that are compatible with the major proprietary Office Suites. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/OpenDocument>)

Camera Fingerprints

Jessica Fridrich and coworkers at Binghamton University have developed a technique to extract a characteristic "fingerprint" pattern from pictures taken by a digital camera. It depends on the observation that each original digital picture is overlaid by a weak noise pattern characteristic for the camera used. It is due to background electrical noise in the pixel units of the light sensing element.

That pattern can be seen by taking a picture with a digital camera with the lens covered. The resulting image is not pure black, as with a film camera, but shows a mottling in many colors, due to electronic noise. The mottling also shows up when a digital picture is underexposed, maybe because the flash did not go off. The mottling pattern is uniquely different for all cameras. It is distinct from pixellation that results from insufficient resolution.

It requires a number of pictures taken by the same camera to extract the characteristic pattern. Being able to identify the camera used can be helpful in legal prosecutions of child pornography and such. Study of the background patterns can also give an indication of image tampering. Astrophotographers habitually take pictures of faint objects in a dark sky with CCD chips similar to those found in digital cameras. In order to eliminate the mottling from their images they take a "dark frame," a picture taken under identical conditions with the lens covered. They then digitally "subtract" the dark frame from the image to remove the mottling. This can be done

with Adobe Photoshop, but it doesn't work with inexpensive digital cameras that internally process and compress photos, usually in JPEG format. (<http://urel.binghamton.edu/PressReleases/2006/Jan-Feb%2006/Fridrich.html>)

Linspire Back On Top

The best things in life generally go unnoticed. If you notice your shoes, they probably don't fit right. If everyone notices your new glasses they may not be flattering.

If you own a PDA, do you know what operating system it uses? Never noticed it? How about the operating system of your computer? You've noticed that plenty of times, haven't you?

The ideal operating system works quietly in the background, doing what's expected of it. Microsoft Windows has come a long way over the years, to the point where weeks may go by without you noticing anything wrong. But oh boy! when it crashes.

Over the past 15 years Linux, "the other operating system," has in the hands of computer professionals grown into a powerful, reliable tool. It has been running many of the largest computer servers in the world, including Google. Early efforts to make it available as a desktop operating system didn't get very far because of the steep learning curve to overcome in mastering it.

To make Linux easier to use, a number of Linux distributions on CD-ROM have become available. They typically bundle the Linux Kernel with drivers for peripherals, sound and video cards, and network connections, and include a boot manager to allow side-by-side installation of Linux with MS Windows. In addition, the self-installing distributions typically include a windows interface, an Office Suite such as OpenOffice.org, an Internet browser and email program (Mozilla), a paint program (The Gimp), a variety of card and arcade games, and other useful or entertaining features.

The ideal distribution provides the best off-the-CD support for a wide variety of peripherals, useful programs, and easy access to a broad range of other programs available for the Linux operating system. Over the last several years I have reviewed most of the major distributions and concluded that Linspire (nee Lindows) and Xandros came the closest to the ideal.

Last year Linspire underwent a major upgrade to version 5.0, including support for the latest version of the Linux Kernel, itself a major upgrade. Unfortunately, I couldn't get the new Linspire to run well on my computers, so I reluctantly switched to Xandros on my desktop, and kept the old Lindows 4.5 on my laptop for everyday Internet access. Xandros does not have the same range of software available, including updated versions, as Linspire.

Recently Linspire issued its greatly improved version 5.1, and I am glad to report that in my opinion they are back on top again. It faultlessly recognizes all my systems, including the recent AMD 64-bit double-core CPU in my new computer. In fact, Linux was weaned on 64-bit processors and runs best in that environment. Linspire continues to offer its extensive program library (\$20/year) that lets you download programs over the Internet and install them, all with a single mouse click. It doesn't get easier!

Try it sometime. Use the free LIVE CD version of Linspire 5.1 to boot your computer. It allows you to experience Linux without permanently installing anything on your hard drive, and to

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determine your system's compatibility. After you turn the system off nothing is left behind.
(www.linspire.com)

Maybe some day you'll be running Linux without even noticing it!

Noticeable

One amazing event during our special May meeting that went unnoticed: Jim Geiser, 75, SWIP-CUG President and volunteer fireman, backing a humongous, \$400,000, gleaming red firetruck into its cramped stall in the fire station – in a single try! (<http://swipcug.apcug.org/Photos/photos06.htm>)

Did you see his interview on CNN in mid-May?

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

ACPCUG Club News

Nice to be back! AKRON MAIN Library

Maps & Description on ACPCUG Website, 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 Treas. Jim Albright

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