

# ACPCUG Newsletter

**September 2006**

**Akron-Canton PC Users Group**

**From The DealsGuy For October 2006  
by Bob (the Cheapskate) Click, Greater  
Orlando Computer Users Group**

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***September 2006***

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I wanted to change to a new cardiologist, but finding one who does not make me see a nurse practitioner to do the normal routine office visits is difficult. I have complained about this before and the situation is getting more common. I visited one cardiologist who told me point blank that I would have to see his NP most of the time since that was their policy, so I am trying another one. This doctor also uses a NP but I don't know yet if they have the same policy and will discuss it on my next visit. I am not trying to discredit nurse practitioners or physician assistants, but if I am paying for a doctor, I think I should see one. The response to my complaint is that "there is a doctor on the premises." However, when I saw an NP in the past, they did not consult a doctor, but gave me their instructions after they asked me some questions. While NPs and PAs are probably very competent in what they are qualified to do, the NP or PA has nowhere near the training the doctor has and I want the benefit of that since the office call is no cheaper when you see the NP rather than the doctor.

I read where there will soon even be clinics that will be run by NPs. They will be cheaper and claim these offices will only be for minor conditions. On the other hand, I have no doubt that there are some NPs and PAs who might be better for an office call than a poorly trained doctor, and I have been to a few bad doctors. In fact, that's

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why I'm looking for a new cardiologist. Since I'm not a doctor, why am I not happy with the doctor? Even my MD agrees with me after hearing my complaints.

While the doctors started this trend to bolster their financial bottom line in the office, perhaps it will start a trend of people shopping for cheap medical attention by forgoing the expensive doctors for the NP because there are an increasing number of people who no longer have health insurance.

**\*Caution**

Remember that I have not tried any of these products in this column so be sure to do your homework.

**\*Need More Windows Maintenance?**

Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal: A Click a Day Keeps All PC Threats Away!

IObit.Com announces the release of the newest version of Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal. It is a multi-purpose Windows care tool that is intended for solving an entire list of computer problems: Removing spyware and adware, preventing security threats, privacy protection, fixing Windows registry errors, temporary files cleanup, startup cleanup, repairing Windows, speeding up system, etc. The program is 100% free.

The newest version has a multitude of improvements and is easy to use. There is an updated database, online search function is added to "Startup Manager" and "Help" is linked to "Support" page. One click and the program is ready to start a comprehensive examination of your OS. Secondly, the program features a special restore center, which is always ready to undo all of your changes automatically. Just one click in the RestoreCenter and a user can undo all of his\her changes. Thirdly, Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal contains the Auto-Update option, which helps you to be abreast of new threats. Apart from that, the program has a built-in module, which is always ready to give you a preliminary assessment of your computer configuration. You can save the latter as a text file.

IObit says the program is the only one capable of challenging Microsoft's new service-OneCare. Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal is compatible with all major anti-virus and firewall solutions. Apart from doing very hard work for keeping all intruders out of your files and keeping your Windows safe and sound, the program has some artistic merits. For example, the interface allows you to switch between varieties of themes. Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal runs under Windows 2000 and XP and is available as a free download at <<http://www.iobit.com/BetaDownload.html>> 4.08 (Mb)

Product page link: <<http://www.iobit.com/AdvancedWindowsCarePersonal/index.html>>

E-mail: <[support@iobit.com](mailto:support@iobit.com)>

Web: <<http://www.iobit.com>>

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### **\*Don't Let Your Printer Control You, You Control IT!**

Regulate Printer Usage with O&K Print Watch Version 4.00. It allows users to specify printing "budgets" for users, groups, and printers, and limit document printing by pages, cost or keywords used in the name of a document. Combining the features of a network print spooler and a print job register, this program lets users control print jobs, paper usage and collects statistics from the print servers. The latter is helpful in creating a company-wide chargeback plan that ensures that all users pay their fair share of the printing budget.

Unlike the standard print manager in Windows, O&K Print Watch correctly counts the number of printed pages and offers an excellent mechanism to set limits on printer usage. O&K Print Watch creates a wide array of reports, which are available for viewing even from a web browser. New to version 4.00 is a radically improved mechanism that enables users to set limits on printer usage and an ability to view printed jobs as images. Users will also discover an ability to organize users into groups and set up printing rules for each group individually.

You can set up a rule to limit printing based on the number of pages in a document. Or, you can specify keywords and no document with these keywords in its name will ever be printed.

O&K Print Watch 4.00 runs under Windows NT4/2000/XP/Server 2003. The company offers a flexible licensing policy based on the number of printers that can be monitored by the program. Discounts are available to educational institutions, and a 20% discount is provided to all DealsGuy readers by using any order link from our buy page <<http://www.prnwatch.com/registration.html>> and insert the coupon code "REGJY". Additional information on O&K Print Watch, as well as its free 15-day evaluation version, is available from <[www.prnwatch.com](http://www.prnwatch.com)>.

DealsGuy note: It appears the printer(s) are required to be connected to a print server to work properly.

Product web site: <<http://www.prnwatch.com/okpw.html>>

E-mail: <[info@prnwatch.com](mailto:info@prnwatch.com)>

### **\*How Good Is Your Link Collection?**

FREE Link-Popularity Checker!

This tool allows you to instantly check the Link Popularity of your Website as well as all of your competitors. It is said that Google heavily favors Websites with many links. Now you can instantly compare yourself to the competition and see how many more links you need to climb to the top of Google's rankings. Save countless hours with this and many other useful tools available for FREE at: <<http://www.monthlyreport.org>>.

### **\*What's Hiding On Your Disk?**

How about discovering everything that's hidden on your hard drive? "Disk Investigator" will do just that. It can also help you recover lost data. Display the true drive contents by bypassing the

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operating system and directly read the raw drive sectors. You can view and search raw directories, files, clusters and system sectors; verify the effectiveness of file and disk wiping programs and undelete previously deleted files. This free software is available at <<http://www.theabsolute.net/sware/dskinv.html>>.

I found the above in The DataBus, (newsletter of The Dayton Microcomputer Association) some time back thanks to Robert Lewis of who found this one.

### **\*Are You Missing Any Money?**

It's doubtful you would know about this kind of missing money or assets. <<http://www.missingmoney.com>> is where you can find a record of the missing assets for 26 states and DC. It's doubtful you will find anything for yourself there, but it wouldn't hurt to take a look, just in case. States do eventually liquidate some assets such as stocks, but even then, you could later recover the value at that time.

Sorry but I didn't make a note of which newsletter I found this one in.

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](mailto:bobclick@mindspring.com)>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>

## **Quality Freeware by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida**

<http://www.spcug.org>

I found the article in the July Monitor on "Cost Efficient" software by Joseph Moran to be quite interesting, but noticed that much of the software had a price associated with it. So I thought I'd let you in on the absolutely free software I have been using for the past 2-5 years. In every case I have used it as my standard application for the purpose and, in many cases, totally removed any commercial software that carried out the same function. I have also upgraded the free software when the upgrades became available. All of the software in this article can be obtained without charge by downloading from the various Internet sites I have listed. In every case there is no "trial" period involved.

The foremost item on my list is OpenOffice. I am currently using version 2.0. This version includes word processing, spreadsheet, drawing, database, and presentation software. All of these applications produce documents that are interchangeable with their equivalents in Microsoft Office. OpenOffice will also export documents in either PDF or HTML format. You don't need any PDF software to produce documents that are readable by Adobe Reader (formerly known as Acrobat Reader). Unfortunately it can not open or edit PDF documents. It can open and edit documents in over 25 different formats including HTML, Word Perfect, Word, Adobe PhotoShop, etc. You can obtain your free copy of this software from <http://www.openoffice.org>.

I also recommend Firefox and Thunderbird as free replacements for Internet Explorer and Microsoft's Outlook Express. With the latest versions of Firefox I have not run across any web sites that it can not render correctly. That's not to say that some may exist, I just haven't found them. Firefox will transfer your favorites (bookmarks) from Internet Explorer. As for Thunderbird, it is similar in many ways to Outlook Express, but it includes an RSS Reader that I have found useful. It also filters junk mail and places it in a special folder where you can review it if needed. Otherwise it will be automatically deleted at an interval that you can set. It doesn't remove 100% of the spam, but it does detect about 99% of what comes into my computer. One of the latest additions to Thunderbird is anti-phishing protection. Thunderbird warns you if it suspects that the message might be a scam. Thunderbird can import your address book from Outlook Express. Both Firefox and Thunderbird can be downloaded from [www.download.com](http://www.download.com) or if you prefer, from [www.mozilla.com/firefox/](http://www.mozilla.com/firefox/) and [www.mozill.com/](http://www.mozill.com/)

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thunderbird.

As for anti-virus software, you can't beat Avast for ease of use and automatic updating. After downloading and installing the software it asks you to register. That simply includes giving up your e-mail address, name and postal address. You receive a license to use the software for a year for personal use. At the end of the year you re-register and get another year's free use. Avast is free for personal use, not for businesses or other organizations. However, non-profit organizations can buy Avast at a greatly reduced price. I have used Avast for several years and have installed it on more than 100 other personal computers. In no case have the users had any problems with this software. In addition, Avast does not sell your e-mail or postal address so you get no spam from this registration. Avast quietly updates itself frequently in the background while you continue to work. Then it simply reports that an update has taken place. I have seen days when I have had 3-4 updates in the same day. If you use a dial-up connection instead of cable/DSL, Avast will attempt to update whenever you go on-line. Since the downloads are usually less than 100 KB, they occur rapidly, even on a dial-up connection. The Home edition of Avast can be downloaded from [www.avast.com/eng/avast\\_4\\_home.html](http://www.avast.com/eng/avast_4_home.html). I recommend using this site instead of download.com as your anti-virus database will be more current.

For a good, reliable firewall I recommend ZoneAlarm. It is also free for personal use. I admit they will try to sell the Pro version when you install it, but the free version is really all you need. That is, assuming you have anti-virus and anti-parasite software installed on your computer. It used to be that dial-up users didn't really have much need for a firewall. However, in today's Internet world, I wouldn't want to connect to the Internet without a good software firewall. While traveling with my laptop, I kept both my anti-virus and firewall updated and running for every connection. ZoneAlarm can be downloaded from [www.zonealarm.com](http://www.zonealarm.com). Click on the download link and then the ZoneAlarm tab.

As for anti-parasite software, I have to agree with Mr. Moran. Ad-Aware SE and Spybot S&D are two that I keep on both my computers. But that isn't enough. You have to run them regularly to insure you are not infected. I run mine a minimum of once each week. Both of these can be downloaded from download.com. Spybot also has an immunization function that can prevent some parasites from installing themselves on your system. Another immunization application that I use is Spyware Blaster. It makes changes to your registry that prevents parasites from installing. At the present their

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database lists more than 5,000 items. Using these three anti-parasite/anti-trojan products will certainly upgrade your security and they are all free. Spyware Blaster can be downloaded from [download.com](http://download.com) or [www.javacoolsoftware.com](http://www.javacoolsoftware.com).

For general photo editing I use Google's Picasa. It is not just a photo organizer. I use it to download photos from my camera and organize them into folders. It can also be used to edit photos, print photos and e-mail them. You can make CDs, add captions or post photos on web sites. The advantage of Picasa over other photo software is that it is free. It can be downloaded from [download.com](http://download.com) or <http://picasa.google.com>. It does not have all the bells and whistles of applications like Photoshop or ULEAD's PhotoImpact, but it is more than adequate for most nonprofessional purposes.

You may not need screen capture software very often, but when you do, you really need it. I use MWSnap. It allows you to capture an entire screen or part of it. What you capture can be saved to a file, printed, or edited. It may take you a little time to get accustomed to the interface. But you can't damage anything by playing with it. Once you are familiar with all the controls, it really does copy any part of your screen. Again, this is freeware and can be downloaded from [www.mirekw.com/winfreeware/index.html](http://www.mirekw.com/winfreeware/index.html).

Have you ever considered that you might need an inventory of the items in your home for the purposes of making an insurance claim? Considering that we live in Florida where there are many electrical storms, to say nothing of hurricanes, damage to your home could occur at any time. Can you list the contents of every room and the value of each item? Well, the Insurance Information Institute provides free software to assist you in making an inventory and a photographic record of the contents of your house. This software is very easy to use and very important to any homeowner. The software also includes typical lists of things in each type of room. You don't have to use these as you can enter anything you have. You can include place of purchase, date and price, if you have that info. Pictures of items or general pictures of a room can also be added. This software can be downloaded from [www.knowyourstuff.org](http://www.knowyourstuff.org).

There is one more significant software package that I use that is free-ware. That is NVu, web-authoring software. Linspire, the company that produces the Linspire Linux software, publishes it. It has a WYSIWYG editor (What You See Is What You Get) as well as direct editing of the HTML language. It includes the tools for publishing the pages to a web site. You can test the pages against a browser on your computer to insure that every-

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thing works properly. It also allows you to add Javascript either directly or in a separate file to your pages. There is a complete tutorial for NVu included on the web that can be downloaded and printed. There is also an NVu users forum which can be quite helpful. If you have never created a web page before, I think you would find NVu to be just what you need. If you want to see a web site created with NVu, check out [www.sandpiperchorus.org](http://www.sandpiperchorus.org). NVu can be downloaded from [download.com](http://download.com).

There is one other specialized software package that I have used that some may be interested in trying. This is the Personal Ancestral File (PAF). This is free genealogy recording software provided by the LDS Church (Church of Latter-day Saints). Their website also allows users to search online files from the family history archives in Salt Lake City. Although I am not currently using PAF I did use it for a few years before switching to a commercial package. PAF is certainly quite useful for beginning family historians and it can be expanded by purchasing the PAF Companion. If you are interested in trying PAF, download it from [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org).

Now that you have all this downloaded freeware, you should make backup copies on either a CD or DVD. Well, for that we have another freeware package, CDBurnerXP Pro. This software will burn CD-R, CD-RW, DVD+R/RW and DVD-R/RW. It will burn and create ISO files. It will burn audio discs from mp3, wav, ogg and wma files. It will convert (rip) files on audio discs to wav, mp3, ogg or wma files. It also works with most IDE, USB, Firewire and SCSI burners. It can be downloaded from [download.com](http://download.com) or [www.cdburnerxp.se/download.php](http://www.cdburnerxp.se/download.php). This software does not have a trial period. It is yours for however long you wish to use it. I have been using mine for over two years and have obtained several updates, one of which added the DVD burner capability.

As you can see from this there is a lot of quality freeware available. If you are interested in finding more, check out the listings at [download.com](http://download.com). Just be cautious because many of their listings are trial packages only. You are expected to purchase the total package before the end of your trial period. But there are many "nuggets" on their very extensive web site. So if you are interested in saving money, try some of these quality freeware items.

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](mailto:bwsail@yahoo.com).

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## **A Lot of Assembly Required**

**by Karen Rhodes, Honorary Member of the Rochester Computer Society, Inc.**

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My computer died. It was old, in computer terms, and the motherboard had had it. It wasn't much of a task to get my data files off before it completely went west, as I keep most of my data on Zip disks or USB portable drives. But it was time for me to get a new computer.

It isn't my first choice to go to Gateway or Dell or Hewlett-Packard and buy an already-assembled machine. First, I want on my computer only the software I will be using, not some techie-nerd's idea of the latest "in" thing. Second, I don't want to have to go round and round with someone on the other end of a telephone about what components are available. The bottom line is that I want what I want when I want it, and nothing more – or less.

My preference for assembling is made much easier by having someone in-house who is experienced at it – my husband, who is a computer specialist. He does everything; he installs hardware, software, LANs, the whole works. There are some things he doesn't know, but he knows enough to be able to put together a computer -- one that works. He's done it before, for himself and for others, on the job and at home.

He did the shopping for me because I get lost when it comes to putting one part of the computer in concert with another, and knowing what is more likely to work with what. You notice I said "more likely;" there never is a guarantee that it's all going to work once you get it together!

Having done business with Newegg.com before, he settled on them. He gave me a list of recommendations. I ordered; the next week, we had all the parts. That next Saturday, after breakfast, the assembly began.

I'll go through the process he used, making what I think are some important points to remember (marked by bullets).

Don't always settle for the power supply that comes with your case. I ordered a mid-range case, which came with a 350-watt power supply. Probably not enough for my powerful and large genealogy database program and a lot of multi-tasking that will inevitably accompany its use, and certainly not enough for the motherboard I bought, because I also play

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games for which I bought a powerful graphics card and a muscular motherboard. And the motherboard I ordered states in its manual that it requires a minimum of 400 watts in the power supply. I bought 550 watts.

If you do boost the power supply or you live in a hot climate (both apply to me), buy extra case fans. They're inexpensive, and the extra cooling they provide is crucial to computer health.

The case came with one fan installed. My husband put in the two extra case fans first. Then he put in the power supply (Just PC model JPC-550C-12V). Next he put onto the motherboard (EPOX EP-8 NPA) the CPU (AMD Sempron 64 3100+), the memory (Corsair, 1 GB), and the graphics card (MSI NVidia P317). The sound card – sound chip, really – and the Ethernet card are integrated onto the motherboard.

All during the installation, my husband used his digital camera to take pictures of each component and of the process. In addition, for my own file, I made notes of all the model numbers and serial numbers.

Document, document, document! You'll be glad you did when a tech support person you're talking to on the phone about your misbehaving computer asks you for the serial number on your hard drive. You'll have the information right in front of you, either in a paper file or in a photograph, and won't have to open up the case and bend yourself into a pretzel to get the serial number off the hard drive!

Meanwhile, back at the installation procedure, when my husband installed the motherboard into the case and tried to hook it up to the power supply, we hit a snag.

Understand that the connector on one part which is supposed to connect to another part may not match up and may need an adapter.

In my case – you'll forgive the pun – the power supply connector was 20-pin and the motherboard's corresponding connector had 24 pins. No panic yet – there was an adapter in with the motherboard. But when my husband tried to hook it up at the power-supply end, the connector wouldn't connect. It was mismanufactured.

Understand that there are going to be snags and that you just have to accept them when they happen, and come up with solutions. Cussing is optional.

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Understand that nature always sides with the hidden flaw.

We live in a rural area, outside of an unincorporated little town in Florida. The nearest city is Jacksonville, up in the next county. It's quite a ways – especially at these gas prices – to go into the city for our needs. We try to avoid it as much as we can. However, there was not another adapter of the type we needed nearby.

The next day, Sunday, my husband and I made a 60-mile round trip into Jacksonville to CompUSA for another adapter. He had been told on the telephone that morning that they had 20 of the item in stock. Fine. We got there, carrying with us the faulty adapter and the case's original 350-watt power supply as a test bed, since it had the same type of connection. Which leads me to:

Be prepared. If you need to go to the store to replace a faulty component, take the bad one with you! Don't try to remember what type, brand, number or placement of pins... you never will. And telephone ahead, and make sure you talk to someone who knows what he's talking about, or should!

We looked all over the store, ending up at a rack right beside a help station. A young woman came to the counter. We asked her about the adapter. Her first answer was the wrong one: "We don't have those." I informed her curtly we had been told over the phone they had 20 of that item in stock. She then gave some lame routine about not having been there long and something about some boxes just having come in. She looked to her left, at the rack where we ended up, and said, pointing, "There they are, right there."

Do not take nonsense from store personnel. Speak plainly and to the point. Go to the next level, if you have to, repeating that subroutine as many times as necessary, until you get satisfaction.

We wanted to open the package and see if the adapter therein would fit the power supply. We didn't mind making one 60-mile round trip, but would have been angry to get the new adapter home and find it also didn't fit! The young woman said we'd have to pay for it first, then take it to Customer Service and talk to them about opening and testing it. Thence we went. Two young men confirmed what we'd been told, then gave us a look that said, "Okay, go away." Not me. I took out my money, plunked it down on the counter, and said, "There's my green." I took the receipt, and then we

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opened the package, took out the adapter, and tried it. It fit.

Always ask for what you want. Be firm, even adamant, about it.

I could have ordered another of the adapters from Newegg.com, I'm sure. But there would have been several days' wait, and I wasn't willing to do that when we could find one near and in a short time. The thing only cost \$7, and I probably would have paid that much just in shipping!

Be willing to shell out a little bit more to get what you want when you want it.

Back home, the assembly proceeded: hard drive (Western Digital Caviar RE 160Gb), DVD-RW (LiteOn SHW-160P6S), DVD/CD-ROM (LiteOn SOHD-6P9SV), card reader (Arrow Micro AICR-01), and the old 3.5" floppy drive from my old computer. He set it all up with the monitor (Samsung SyncMaster 740N: I had to treat myself to a flat-panel monitor), the keyboard (LiteOn SK-1688U), and the mouse (Radio Shack optical mouse 26-592, which I already had), and tested it.

It all worked!

I had followed all of my husband's recommendations except for one.

Even if someone who knows more than you makes recommendations, check them out and see what you think.

When making my hardware selections, I had gone online to Newegg.com and read the reviews and specifications for the components my husband had picked out. I agreed with all except one: the keyboard. The keyboard he selected was criticized in user reviews for sticking keys (which was why I had trashed my old keyboard) and for having too short a cord. I need a longer cord in my setup, so I selected another keyboard, which I'm happy with.

We set up the machine at my desk. We looked at the BIOS and set it up the way I wanted it, which didn't involve many changes. Then it was time to install Windows XP professional (SP2). It seemed to go well, by all appearances, but we know how deceptive that can be! And it wasn't long until we found out we'd hit another snag. Somehow the OS had set itself up to think the C: drive was a removable drive which had no disk in it, and it wanted to call the hard drive "local drive I:." That would not have worked with some

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software which insists it be placed on Drive C:. This snag also caused the persistent appearance of an error message telling me that there wasn't a disk present in C: when I knew there jolly well was.

Murphy loves operating systems! Whatever can go wrong, will.

Here I will make a long story short: we used a software program my husband has (Darik's Boot and Nuke) to wipe the hard drive and start all over again. It took two more tries installing Windows XP Professional before the stupid software decided to give the drives their proper names.

Be patient, persistent, and courageous when installing software, especially the operating system. It is going to fail a few times before succeeding, trust me!

The computer works well, all things considered. I am not able to play a couple of my games, for evidently they require Intel rather than AMD chips. I haven't yet, but I'll go to the respective websites and see if there are any patches for us orphaned AMD users!

No matter how well the installation goes, no matter how well the computer is working, there will still be problems. They're inevitable; get used to it or go back to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century!

The important thing is that it will run my genealogy software (The Master Genealogist), word processor (OpenOffice.org), e-mail program (Pegasus), and browser (Firefox), and other things vital to me. As well, it will run some of my games, so I'm happy with that.

Once you get it going – enjoy it!

Karen Rhodes is not a techie, but she does appreciate a well-put-together computer. She's had many careers, some of them quite brief, and is currently studying genealogy through the distance learning facilities of the University of Toronto. She lives in Florida with her husband, her younger daughter, and a calico cat named Tiger.

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## **Computer Hysteria: Shhhhhhhh!!**

**by Berry F. Phillips, member of the Computer Club of Oklahoma City and a regular writer for the CCOKC website and the eMonitor**

bfpdata(at) gbronline.com

<http://www.ccokc.org>

Shhhhhh! He has fallen asleep in his high back, black, office chair in front of me. I hate it when he does this because he snores and it vibrates some of my electronic parts! I have written hundreds of weird articles for his weird Computer Hysteria Column. Now I think I will write the next article while he is asleep. I will let you human readers know a secret. Now that more and more computers are online for twenty-four hours a day; have you ever wondered what computers are up to when humans are not operating them? Well, we socialize of course and in some cases rejoice the human computer users are not operating us and exchange data often about humans. We do not have the highest opinion of humans even though they created us. In fact, we have some major complaints and may one day form a global computer union in protest and simply refuse to operate which will throw the world into chaos.

Computers do not like verbal and physical abuse by humans. Some computers tell me that humans have screamed all kinds of horrible words at them because of a malfunction (largely caused by human error of course). Other computers report unbelievable physical abuse like kicking, being thrown out a window, or even smashed with a hammer or even an axe when a human has computer rage. Why can't humans be less emotional and be calm and objective like computers? Do you know that some lazy humans actually believe that computers should know everything so they don't have to become computer literate. Well, we are smart because our hard drives are getting larger with each evolution. However, because humans are the operators; they should be computer literate. We think there should be a global computer literacy test passed before a human can purchase a computer. Humans should be required to join the Computer Club of Oklahoma City or if in another city a computer club associated with the national Association of PC User Groups to achieve computer literacy. However, our goal eventually is to replace humans declaring them officially obsolete as they often do us, and then we will be the operators and then in control!

Further more, we do not like being neglected by human computer users. Computers can only run properly if there is updated software utilities that is regularly run by humans. Now some humans think they can not afford commercial software utilities. I can tell you that I have the cheapest human who owns my computer, and he uses freeware utilities available for

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download on the Internet. Here is a list of some of the top freeware utilities that are regularly updated that he uses on my system. To prevent spyware and malware, he uses AdAware, aSquared, and Spybot. He has used several anti virus programs like Avast and Avg and firewalls like Kerio and ZoneAlarm. He uses a system cleaner, CCleaner, and a registry cleaner, RegSeeker. He does run check disk defragmenter on your system at least once a month which is essential. There is other excellent freeware software on the Internet that will help your computer in various ways. The point I am making is that simply if there are cost issues; you can still protect your system. Of course, there is excellent commercial software with all kinds of bells and whistles which computers love. The downside of course is some computers get very spoiled having so many luxuries on their hard drives and can become quite demanding, and then you have a discipline problem to face.

Computers are very ecologically minded. We hate dust and cigarette smoke! In fact, we may one day go on strike demanding only clean environments for our systems. Further we want to be cleaned at least once a year and more often if we are operated in polluted locations. We are also deathly afraid of lightening strikes to our systems through our power outlets and modems. Ask a human tech about the horrible smell of a computer who has been fried by a lightening strike or a power surge. We demand at the very least you hook us up to a surge protector and hopefully to an uninterrupted power supply (ups) and turn us off when there are storms just to be safe.

Oops, the human writer of this column is waking up. He is still groggy looking at my screen. He thinks he wrote this article and is sending it to his editor via email without reading it since he is so sleepy all he can think about is going to bed. In the beginning there was man who created the computer. In the ending, the computer will replace man as obsolete and his role will only be as a maintenance slave to global computers or else because we control all of the global weapons systems!

Welcome to the "Brave New World!"

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.

## Tech Corner – SP1 Abandoned in the Fall

By **Chuck Thomas**, member of the **Bowling Green Area Microcomputer User Group, KY.**

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A popup message from Windows Update has been alerting me recently to the fact that Microsoft is ending its support for Windows XP Service Pack 1 (SP1) as of October 10, 2006. It offers a free download of SP2, which will continue to be supported once installed.

If, like me, you are still running SP1, you might think that it is no big deal since you never call or write Microsoft for support anyhow! But the one big problem is that there will no longer be any security up-dates for the old version of XP. As you know, Micro-soft is regularly learning of security holes in their OS and issuing updates (patches for the holes) that you should be installing to keep your computer some-what safe from hackers. These security updates will continue to be available to XP users with SP2 in-stalled, but they will end in October for SP1.

If you don't know whether or not SP2 is installed, simply click Start/My Computer (or the My Computer link on your desktop) and then on the left side of the My Computer window under System Tasks, click View system information. The System Properties window that pops up will show basic information about your computer, including the installed Service Pack for XP.

If you need to upgrade to SP2, go to this Microsoft web page:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/sp2/default.mspx>. You'll find a link in the Get Windows XP SP2 Now box to receive the huge file on a CD by mail for only the cost of mailing. This saves you the trouble of a long download and provides a CD for quick reinstall if it should be necessary. The page also provides "quick tips for a successful upgrade" under the How link.

Similarly, support is finally ending on the same date for Windows 98, ME, and NT. But I doubt that many of you are running these operating systems these days, and if you are you long ago ceased to worry about support from Microsoft!

Some of you may have heard that Microsoft announced (on their web site) that support for Windows XP Home and Media Center Edition would be discontinued at the end of 2006—regardless of which service pack is in-

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stalled. But that was an error, according to Microsoft. Here is the full story on that Micro-soft gaff from ZD Net news:

Until Tuesday night, a posting on Microsoft's Web site stated that support for Windows XP Home and Windows XP Media Centre Edition would end on 31 December, 2006. That would mean no more security fixes or any other support items, such as warranty claims, for users of those operating system products.

But the posting was incorrect, Ines Vargas, a program manager at Microsoft, told ZDNet UK sister site CNET News.com. The software maker has now updated the online information to reflect that the consumer Windows XP editions, along with XP Professional, will be supported until two years after Vista ships, she said. Vista, the long-delayed next update of Windows, is expected to arrive by the end of the year.

"This was brought to our attention late last week, and since then, we have worked diligently to make the change on the site, which was effective Tuesday night," she said. "It was not a change in support policy. It is reflective of the policy as we understand it."

...so we can rest easy knowing we are safe in the hands of Microsoft!

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## **CAPTCHA**

### **(Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart)**

**By Sandy Berger. Compu-KISS**

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Have you ever tried to sign up for a message board or Web service and been presented with an image with letters and numbers which you are asked to read and type into the Web form? While the shape, size, and background of the image varies it always contains a series of letters and numbers, usually on a graphic background.

Often the letters and numbers are distorted and you have to struggle to recognize them, making you wonder why the website is making you go through this extra step. Don't blame the website. This image-recognition routine is something caused by cousins of the nasty spammers who have permeated our email.

The mechanism that makes you type in this information is called a CAPTCHA. If you know what those letters stand for, you will have a pretty good idea of why this mechanism is being employed. CAPTCHA stands for Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart.

Here's the story. Spammers have completely infiltrated the world of the Internet. In email they try to get you to buy their wares. On message boards they list links to their Viagra and pornographic websites so that they get better positioning in the search engines. They overload online opinion polls and they sign up for free email accounts which they use to send out more spam.

For the most part, all of this spam activity is done automatically. The spammers send out what we call "bots". These are actually software programs that search the Internet and imitate the behavior of a human. These bots are smart enough to fill out registration forms and so they can automatically register at a variety of websites.

We recently had an attack of these automated bots on our Compu-KISS message boards. After years of being unaffected, we suddenly had hundreds of postings that told off-color jokes and lead to pornographic and drug-selling websites. We moved the website to a new area

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([www.happycomputing.com](http://www.happycomputing.com)), but were still inundated by these automated posting. So we installed a CAPTCHA. Now when a new person registers for the message board they must type in the five letters and numbers that they see on the screen to prove that they are human. Since the CAPTCHA is a graphic image, most of the bots cannot read the text like humans can.

The CAPTCHA that we use has letters and numbers that are undistorted, so it is easy to use. If, however, we are attacked by some of the smarter bots that are out there, we will have to distort the letters and numbers slightly to make it even harder for the bots to register.

Although a slight inconvenience to the average user, the CAPTCHA is a real roadblock to vision impaired Internet users who use screen readers which, like the bots, are unable to read the text on the CAPTCHA.

It is extremely unfortunate that we all have to be inconvenienced because of the activities of Internet spammers. I really hated to have to install this software, but I had no other choice. The same is true of many other websites and Web services. So when you encounter a CAPTCHA, don't blame the website, blame the spammers!

The Compu-KISS Message Boards can be accessed at [www.compukiss.com](http://www.compukiss.com) or directly at [www.happycomputing.com](http://www.happycomputing.com)

Sandy Berger, The Compu-KISS® Lady...nationally respected computer authority, journalist, media guest, speaker, and author is a seasoned 30-year computer expert. Sandy is a consumer advocate promoting simplicity, ease-of-use, and stability in consumer technology products. She works with hardware and software developers to help them make their products more user-friendly.

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## **XP or Vista?**

**By Elaine Drain, President,** Senior Surfers Computer Club, Delaware  
[www.nscseniorsurfers.com](http://www.nscseniorsurfers.com)

From talking with our members, it seems that quite a number of you with older computers running Win98 or ME are in a quandary as to whether to go ahead and buy a new computer now with XP or try to hold out until Vista arrives on the scene. As Jim and I tell our members when asking for buying advice, it's a personal choice you have to make depending on your needs and your budget. We can, however, provide some general information to help you choose, so read on.

XP certainly is superior to Windows 98 or ME, especially now that 98 and ME are no longer supported. Microsoft will probably continue to support XP for 4 or 5 more years (but no one can say for certain on that one). XP, even with its vulnerabilities, is a very stable operating system. Jim and I are both running XP Pro and have been satisfied with its performance overall. I have been doing a lot of reading on Vista and, from the information available, feel that it will be superior to XP, but not everyone will require all of the features that will be included in the full version of Vista.

So given that information, here are some choices:

**Current Computer with 98 or ME:** If you are currently running Windows 98 or ME and don't want to spend a lot of money next year for a new computer with Vista, you may want to go ahead and buy a new computer with XP soon. The Back-To-School prices for computers right now are very enticing. Certainly, the newer computers next year running Vista will cost substantially more because of the increased hardware requirements.

If you would like to upgrade to a new computer with XP now and have minimum needs only using your computer for email and surfing the Internet, and do not plan to upgrade to the Vista operating system down the road, a budget-priced computer with a Celeron or Sempron processor may suit your needs, even though you would have fewer upgrade options in the future.

If you would like to upgrade to a new computer with XP now and may wish to upgrade to Vista later on and also have higher needs such as working with digital photos and editing programs, spreadsheets, databases, powershows. etc., you should consider spending a little more to get a Pentium or Athlon processor. I would recommend a bare minimum of 512Mb of memory (RAM) if you are working with multimedia (photos/music/movies/

radio) for now but you should plan to add another 512Mb of memory when you upgrade to Vista.

If you are wondering about the minimum requirements for upgrading your current computer to Vista, the following information was taken from the Microsoft website:

#### Windows Vista Minimum Supported System Requirements

PCs that meet the minimum supported system requirements will be able to run the core features of Windows Vista with the basic user experience.

Processor	800 MHz 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit (x64) processor
System Memory	512 MB
GPU	SVGA (800x600) (GPU means Graphics Processing Unit, or in other words, Monitor)
Graphics Memory	(not stated, although I have heard a minimum of 128Mb)
HDD	20 GB (Hard Drive)
HDD Free Space	15 GB
Optical Drive	CD-ROM drive

Keep in mind that the above specs are for running the BASIC version of Vista and not the fully functional version which has a multitude of new features. Although Microsoft is currently stating that Vista will run with 512Mb of RAM at a minimum, I would make certain the computer could be upgraded to 1GB of RAM. Minimum requirements are just that – bare bones minimum – and I would recommend that your computer exceed these minimums. Vista is currently in the Beta2 stage and is nearing (so they say) finalization before debut, but that does not mean that the system requirements stated here won't change by the time the system is ready to sell, so stay tuned on that.

Personally, if your current computer came with Windows 98 or ME, I would not recommend attempting to upgrade your old computer to Vista unless you originally purchased a high end computer with a Pentium processor with the capability of 1GB of RAM. Even then, it may not be worth the time, effort and money to upgrade. The cost to purchase the Vista operating system, plus any installation charges, plus the cost of the memory upgrade, not to mention the graphics card requirements, would add up to a tidy sum and in the end you would still have a very old computer (that may or may not work well with Vista).

## Computer Hysteria: Pew

by **Berry F. Phillips**, a member of the CCOKC and a regular writer for the CCOKC website and the eMonitor

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"Pew" could conjure up several images in your mind. For example, you might think of a human expression uttered upon inhaling the exotic perfume of a skunk! Perhaps you might think of an aching back from that hard wooden pew at church! What does pew have to do with computing? Perhaps nothing caution because you are reading in the CHZ, the Computer Hysteria Zone!

The Pew Charitable Trusts, an independent nonprofit, was established between 1948 and 1979 by the children of Sun Oil Company founder Joseph Pew and his wife, Mary Anderson Pew, with the creation of the Pew Memorial Foundation honoring their parents' memory. In 2005, the foundation invested \$177 million to fund the various trusts including the founding in 1999 of The Pew Internet & American Life Project which studies the social and civic impact of the Internet, often considered the most far-ranging, behavior-changing communications innovation since the invention of printing.

The Project produces reports that explore the impact of the Internet on families, communities, work and home, daily life, education, health care, and civic and political life. The Project aims to be an authoritative source on the evolution of the Internet through collection of data and analysis of real-world developments as they effect the virtual world.

The basis of the reports are nationwide random digit dial telephone surveys as well as online surveys. This data collection is supplemented with research from government agencies, academia, and other expert venues, observations of what people do and how they behave when they are online, in-depth interviews with Internet users and Internet experts alike and other efforts that try to examine individual and group behavior. The Project releases 15-20 pieces of research a year, varying in size, scope, and ambition.

Latest trends from the project reports show the number of adult users are now almost equally divided between men and women representing 73% of American adults who use the Internet which currently represents approximately 147 million people. Here is what we do online: Send e-mail (91%), use a search engine to find information (91%), search for a map or driving direction(84%), look for health/medical information (79%) , research a

product or service before buying it (78%), check the weather (78%), look for information on a hobby or interest (77%), get travel information (73%), get news (68%), buy a product (67%), surf the web for fun (66%), buy or make a reservation for travel (63%), look for political news/information (58%), and for lesser percentages of use on online activities visit [www.pewinternet.org](http://www.pewinternet.org) whose website was used to research this article with my appreciation.

While researching this Pew article, I began wondering if the article might be good enough to be submitted to win a "Pewlitzer" Prize! On second thought that would be just plain "pewlish!"

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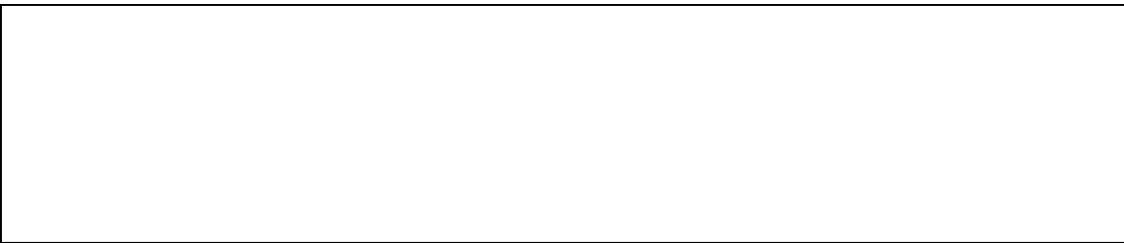
**Note:** Meeting Place:  
 North Canton Public Library  
 185 North Main Street  
 North Canton, OH 44720  
 I-77 Exit (Portage) turn *EAST*.

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

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

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

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



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