

ACPCUG Newsletter

June 2009

A K R O N - C A N T O N P C U S E R S G R O U P

June 1st 2009

Main Program:
Microsoft Web Developer by Dave Bohm

PLEASE NOTE

The new location of our meetings, The John Torok Community Center, 4224 Massillon Rd in Green. The center is about 1 1/4 miles south of I77 and Massillon Rd. See the map below.

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June Meeting
June 1st, 2009, 6 pm
John Torok Community Center
4224 Massillon Rd
Green, Ohio 44720

From The DealsGuy For June 2009 by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

I was reading the Orange County IBM PC Users Group newsletter (nibbles & bits) and noticed an interesting article. Linda Gonse does a great job of editing this great newsletter and those of you who don't get to read it are missing a real treat. I don't own an iPhone, but many of my readers do. Lorene Romero, North Coast Macintosh Users Group President (in Santa Rosa, CA), wrote the article about some unique items available for iPhones. Three that I found interesting are quoted below with Lorene's permission:

"Coffee Break: \$1.99 (****): Great app for those who love coffee! It has a very 'fun' interface with appropriate company cups. It has the usual suspects (Starbucks, Pete's and Seattle's Best), but it also has a category for 'Other Coffee Places.' It is a great app if you are a coffee hound, like I am. The seller is Marco Pifferi"

"AroundMe: Free (****): Cool little app that lets you find banks, coffee places, gas stations, supermarkets, and even an Apple store, located near you. First it finds your location and then accesses a database filled with local shops. I used it in Seaside, OR and found a wonderful coffee shop right down the street."

"Say Who Free (****): Finally an app that brings back voice activation to the iPhone! Say any name (Jon Jones Mobile) and it will dial it every time for me."

You can download these from the iPhone store: <<http://www.apple.com/itunes/whatson/appstore.html>>

***Why Not Scrap The Crap?**

One of the Vendors at the FACUG/APCUG Florida spring conference was Sunbelt Software. They offer Vipre Enterprise. They call the product a non-bloated antivirus, antispysware, and antirootkit software that includes other technologies to make it an all-in-one protection. They say it offers Real-Time Monitoring with Active Protection. Removing rootkits is supplemented by VIPRE's FirstScan™, which runs at the system's boot time. FirstScan bypasses the Windows operating system to directly scan certain locations of the hard drive for malware, removing infections where found. They say Vipre's Active Protection delivers real time monitoring and protection against known and unknown malware threats. Active Protection works inside the Windows kernel, (the core of the operating system), watching for malware and stopping it before it has a chance to execute on your system.

VIPRE includes comprehensive protection against e-mail viruses, with direct support for Outlook, Outlook Express and Windows Mail; and support for any email program that uses POP3 and SMTP. In reading their product information, I found more good information on the product than I could possibly include in this column, so please visit their Web site and look it over carefully for full information. <<http://www.sunbeltsoftware.com/Home-Home-Office/VIPRE/>>.

This company is not based on some small Pacific atoll, or some strange sounding name of a country you never heard of, but is located in Clearwater, Florida where their tech support will speak good English (maybe Spanish if you need that) if you need to talk to them. Trip Kirk, Sales Engineer for Sunbelt Software, said they'll offer user group members the following coupon code (DealsGuy) that's good for \$5 off of any Vipre consumer license through August 31, 2009 at <<http://shop.sunbelt->

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software.com/licensing.cfm?product=VIPRE>. Trip says that can be a single license, a two-computer license, or even the unlimited home license, which is good for as many computers as someone has at their one home address; or if they have computers in Florida and also in another state, such as snowbirds can, they can use it for all of the computers that they personally own. I guess that being surrounded by seniors in Clearwater has influenced them favorably.

For what it's worth, I realize that you can instantly name at least six places to find FREE protections of all types, but it can also be said that "you get what you pay for?" Just about every free protection product also offers a pay version with added features that they hope you'll buy later on to give better peace of mind. Here you get the peace of mind right up front. I have not had the chance to try this product.

***What's This, A Photo Production Line?**

Bits&Coffee has released BatchPhoto V 2.5, a powerful Windows photo manipulation program that makes it easy to annotate, touch up, transform, apply effects, convert, and rename hundreds of pictures in a single operation. BatchPhoto lets you select a group of images, define a series of edits, and apply them in a single operation rather than individually.

With version 2.5, BatchPhoto introduces Raw Photo Development. DSLR digital cameras can save the raw image data as read by the optical sensor without any loss or additional processing. The resulting files, often called raw images or digital negatives, need additional processing on the PC with specialized software. Almost every digital camera manufacturer has one or several different file formats for storing the raw image data, which leads to poor support from software vendors. BatchPhoto can read and convert most of those formats, including formats from digital camera makers like: Canon, Nikon, Sony, Olympus, Fuji, Kodak, or Pentax.

By taking advantage of multi-core processors, BatchPhoto can convert hundreds or even thousands of raw images to common image formats like JPEG or TIFF in a single session. Custom defined settings, like White Balance or Demosaicing, allow the user to control the development process in detail. Additional filters and transformations can be applied to photos in the same session (e.g. Watermark, Resize, Sepia and so on).

BatchPhoto can convert the raw images to dozens of image formats, including: JPG, TIF, PDF, PNG, GIF, BMP, EPS, TGA, and PSD. It can also change the meaningless names assigned by digital cameras to custom keyword based names, in the same operation. A second new feature is the ability to create PDF documents from multiple images. In the same process each image can be annotated, watermarked, and adjusted.

Overall, BatchPhoto has more than three-dozen graphical filters that can be applied to pictures. The filters are divided into four main categories; Annotate, Touch Up, Transform, and Effects. BatchPhoto adds itself to Windows Explorer's contextual (right-click) menu, so the user can apply predefined, or custom defined profiles to groups of pictures with ease.

BatchPhoto V. 2.5 runs under all versions of Windows, including Windows Vista and Windows Server 2008. Home version is priced at \$29.95 (US), and Pro at \$59.95 (US). User group members get a 40% discount on the purchase of BatchPhoto by using the discount coupon 5A1398E4 when

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ordering, and it's good through June 2009. <<http://www.batchphoto.com/>>.

***How About Better Efficiency**

Almeza Company has announced LeaderTask Company Management 6.4, a smart solution for managing employees' projects, processes, company documents, and relations with clients. Designed to facilitate and streamline workflow, the system offers essential tools for managing task assignments, scheduling appointments, tracking project status, evaluating employees' efficiency, and many more.

To save time and effort, LeaderTask Company Management has been developed. The system provides advanced workflow management capabilities, storing the information on all tasks, projects, and appointments and delivering it in the convenient form. The software doesn't require a server and works via Internet or LAN. LeaderTask provides each user with an organizer and can serve as a task planner, personal information manager, calendar, project manager and contact manager, allowing the user to add tasks, contacts, notes, links, projects and categories.

LeaderTask PDA Organizer is a mobile version of LeaderTask for Windows Mobile. LeaderTask PDA allows having an instant summary of tasks by projects, contacts, and categories on the pocket computer. At the same time, it's easy to quickly add new tasks and make notes. The program features customizable filters with flexible viewing options. A user can easily sort and filter projects and tasks by key elements and tags such as due date, priority, employee, project, and category, etc.

LeaderTask Company Management requires MS Windows 2000 or higher and costs \$69 for a workstation license. User Group members will get a 10% discount. Further information on the product, as well as its free evaluation copy is available from <www.leadercommand.com>. To order with the discount, e-mail them at <ivan.abramovsky@almeza.com> because I haven't gotten a response to my request for instructions. Also, with a minimum of five workstations per order, look the pricing over carefully if you are interested.

That's it for this month. I'll have some more new product announcements on my Web site that didn't offer discounts. 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 at bellsouth dot net>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>>

How Fast Is My Broadband Internet Connection? What Does Connection Speed Mean?



Written by Gabe Goldberg, Computers and Publishing, Inc.
Triplet (at) gabegold.com

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Internet Service Providers (ISPs) like to brag about connection speeds offered and speak glowingly about the wonderful "experience" their services offer. But how honest are their claims and how does connection speed affect what we do online?

The two most important words in any ISPs advertisement or service contract are "up to". As in, speeds promised are described as "up to X megabits per second".

(Megabits means "millions of bits" and "megabits per second" is often abbreviated Mbps. A bit is the basic unit of information or data, a "binary digit", a single unit that is either 0 or 1. Everything on the Internet and all information and software on your computer is composed of bits.)

But quoting "up to" speeds is like saying that an automobile whose speedometer dial includes the number 160 can travel "up to 160 MPH". When shopping for a car or an ISP, claims shouldn't be taken as facts -- though some are safer to verify than others.

It's a pleasant surprise when ISPs deliver speeds faster than promised. That results from advancing technology and -- in areas fortunate enough to have multiple broadband ISPs -- competition. More common, though, is discovering that delivered service doesn't quite match the 160 MPH sort of promise ISPs make.

So to keep your ISP honest and detect problems, and for bragging rights, it's useful to occasionally measure connection speeds. Internet connections are usually described with two speeds: download and upload. For nearly everyone, download speed matters most -- it's the rate at which data, Web sites, email, sound files, video streams, telephone calls, and services yet to be invented reach your computer. This greatly affects your Internet experience, determining whether your browser responds quickly or sluggishly to Web requests, how quickly email arrives, etc.

Upload speed measures how fast your computer sends data such as email or Web requests to the Internet. Unless you frequently send large volumes of or huge email or other files -- or run a server of some sort -- this speed likely isn't critical.

A number of Web sites measure connections speeds. My favorite is [SpeedTest.net](http://speedtest.net); Googling "speed test" finds others. It opens showing you a couple of gauges, a small map of the world, and a large map of your region. Your local map will include many blue pyramids and one orange symbol -- that's the closest and recommended server for your test.

Click the orange pyramid to run download and upload speed tests. When they finish, click My Summary at top to see your download test results along with a number of comparisons -- your ISP's average speed and its speed in your state, your state's average, and similar numbers for the USA, North America, and globally. Click Upload Results for that set of speeds. SpeedTest.net reports speeds in kb/s -- that is, kilobits per second. One Mbps is 1000 kb/s, so an ISP's promised speed of 5 Mbps would show as 5000 kb/s.

As you run occasional speed tests, your history of speeds achieved lets you can track trends and detect problems. If your speeds don't match your ISP's promises -- or they decline -- it's worth investigating. Note that cable connection speeds often vary more than those of DSL or FiOS services,

though cable broadband is usually faster than DSL. I'm pleased with my Cox cable service, usually delivering more than 20 Mbps download and about 2.5 Mbps upload.

www.nytimes.com/2009/02/12/technology/personaltech/12askk-002.html

Q. I am trying to decide which type of broadband service to use. I see that a DSL provider offers “up to 7.1 Mbps,” while the cable company says it can do “up to 10 Mbps.” What do these numbers mean?

A. The numbers refer to how fast you can download files over your Internet connection. Data transfer speeds are traditionally measured in bits per second. The “7.1 Mbps” figure means that the DSL provider says it can download a file to your computer at 7.1 megabits (or million bits) a second, and the cable company says it can move that file faster, at up to 10 megabits a second.

Higher speeds save time when downloading large files like movies, music, large photos and other hefty chunks of data because you receive it all quicker — in theory. In reality, the actual data transfer rates will probably be much slower than advertised.

Congestion on the Internet, the number of other people using the service at the same time, and even settings on your computer can affect how quickly your data actually moves.

Be aware that what goes down does not usually go up as fast. Most broadband services have faster speeds for snagging files than for sending them. For example, a DSL provider may offer 7.1 megabits a second for downloads, but only 768 kilobits a second for uploading files.

When shopping for a service, be sure to find out the speeds for both directions in the data transfer if you expect to be uploading large files on a regular basis.

If you are looking for opinions on specific service providers, the DSLReports site has reviews and information at www.dslreports.com. For more about the measurements and data transfer speeds, check out the SpeedGuide site's article on bits, bytes and bandwidth at snipurl.com/bcqtp.

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Dozens of PC Utilities Free for the Taking

Written by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio Talk Show Host
lwilsker (at) apcug.net

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WEBSITES:

<http://tinyurl.com/95free-utilities>

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<http://openoffice.org>

<http://www.iobit.com>

<http://www.defraggler.com>

<http://www.recuva.com>

I read a lot of online computer magazines. Most of them are American, but some are foreign, including from such diverse places as England, Germany, and Australia. Recently the Australian magazine PCWorld Australia published an article titled (sic) “95 great free sites and downloads you’ve probably never heard of” (tinyurl.com/95free-utilities). From the feedback I have received from readers of this column, there is great interest in totally free computer utilities, especially in these pressing economic times.

The article categorizes the free software into 12 categories including productivity software, music utilities, security tools, web enhancers, phone utilities, photo and video managers, social networking, PC performance enhancements, file synchronization, and business applications. In the productivity software category, the first recommendation is one of my personal favorites, OpenOffice. OpenOffice (OpenOffice.org), which was reviewed in this column last year, is a full featured free office suite that can read and write Microsoft Office files such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, as well as many other formats. With its frequent updates and enhancements, OpenOffice would be a wise choice for anyone who wants an office suite with “all the bells and whistles” totally free. The menu hierarchy and appearance are nearly identical to Word, Excel, and other Microsoft Office products providing for a “near zero” learning curve for anyone familiar with Microsoft Office products. Other productivity utilities are displayed including: Flowgram, which can create web-based multimedia presentations; Gubb, which is a personal time manager; PrimoOnline, which helps you create PDFs without software; and “Remember the Milk” which helps you to remember to do anything, and integrates many platforms, including BlackBerry, iPhone, Gmail, and Windows Mobile.

The music utilities category has several programs that I am not familiar with, but appear to be very attractive, and since they are totally free, there is no downside risk in trying them. The one rated as a “BEST BET” by the magazine is Songbird, an open-source downloadable media player that’s completely customizable and packed with innovative features. Songbird is both a music player and a Web browser that enables the quick downloading of music. Other utilities listed include “SharePod”, which enabled iPod users to change, backup, or share music between iPod users.

The security category includes some utilities that I have written about in the past. The one top rated by PCWorld Australia is the excellent and free Avast Antivirus, which utilizes seven different “shields” to protect the computer from attack from different sources and vectors. Avast is one of the most popular free security utilities with tens of millions of devoted users, and would be a good choice for anyone wanting a free antivirus product that is equal to or superior than many of the expensive commercial competitors. Other free security utilities listed are from “a-squared” (previously discussed in this column); “Attack Trace”, which can detect if a website is under attack; Comodo EasyVPN Home, which allows the user to create a virtual private network (also recently discussed in my column); a firewall, and a pair of excellent anti-spyware utilities. These utilities would all be worthy of consideration as their quality is generally excellent, and often better than their commercial counterparts.

Most of us use our internet browsers directly as they come from the publisher, unaware that there are tweaks that are available to improve our online experience. There are thousands of plug-ins and add-on’s for Firefox, and unknown to many there are also many similar improvements for Internet

These plug-ins listed in the magazine article include a note taker for Firefox, a news reader which is an improvement over the one integrated with Internet Explorer, a FTP (file transfer) utility for Firefox, a nifty utility “Google Preview” that displays thumbnail images of web pages that appear in Google search results, IE7Pro which adds Firefox-like features to IE7, a mapping utility that automatically displays street maps by clicking on an address, and “Video Download Helper” which is a Firefox plug-in that I use to download videos from the major video sites such as YouTube. The 11 browser enhancements listed may add a lot of enjoyment to the web browsing experience.

Being a typical geek, I like to try and tweak the best performance that my computer is capable of delivering. PCWorld Australia editors and I think alike as we have both written about some of the same free performance enhancement utilities. At the top of the magazine’s list is one of my personal favorites that I use regularly, Advanced System Care Free, available from www.iobit.com. This is a full featured performance utility that has dozens of tools to enhance PC performance, including a registry cleaner, anti-spyware, internet speed-up tools, and many others. I routinely put this program on almost every computer that I use. Just a few weeks ago I wrote about free utilities from Piriform, including a unique defragmentation utility called Defraggler (www.defraggler.com). This utility, which is on my computer, can quickly defragment files, folders, or an entire hard drive. Recuva (www.recuva.com), also from Piriform, is a file recovery utility that can undelete files on hard drives, flash drives, and other forms of media. I have personally used Recuva to restore some photos accidentally deleted from my digital camera, and it worked fine!

This article can be read online at tinyurl.com/95free-utilities, where dozens more free utilities can be found. The actual URL of the magazine was much longer (138 characters), so I used the free online utility TinyURL (www.tinyurl.com) to create a much smaller URL that would be easier to enter. I hope that the readers of this column will be more aware that there are some fine free programs out there that are worthy of a chance. I suggest that you try some of them.

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How to Work Faster with Keyboard Shortcuts

Written by Gabe Goldberg, Computers and Publishing, Inc.
Tiptet (at) gabegold.com

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The Windows mouse is a mixed blessing. It does things -- like highlighting and dragging text -- that would be tough to do with a keyboard. And yet moving one's hand between mouse and keyboard is a major distraction and time waster; even accomplished touch typers lose keyboard focus when mousing.

So it's worth exploring how Windows' flexibility, providing multiple ways to do things, lets keyboard shortcuts replace many common mouse functions. First, remember that many tasks are standardized across Windows applications, so learning them once helps early and often. And while they'll become second nature as you practice them, don't be overwhelmed by their number -- notice a few that will be most helpful and consciously use them instead of mouse clicks. When they're automatic for your hands, pick a few more. You'll soon amaze colleagues and

friends with your dexterity.

The most common shortcuts include

F1: Help
Ctrl+Esc: Open Start menu
Alt+Tab: Switch between open programs
Alt+F4: Quit program
Shift+Delete: Delete item permanently

Key combinations for editing include

Ctrl+C: Copy
Ctrl+X: Cut
Ctrl+V: Paste
Ctrl+Z: Undo
Ctrl+B: Bold
Ctrl+U: Underline
Ctrl+I: Italic

[Microsoft](http://support.microsoft.com/kb/126449) provides many shortcut categories, including General folder/shortcut control, Windows Explorer tree control, Accessibility shortcuts, and Dialog box keyboard commands.

A similar page for [Firefox](http://support.mozilla.com/en-US/kb/Keyboard+shortcuts) lists an amazing assortment of shortcuts for everything but shining your shoes and waxing your car.

A simple way to learn frequently used shortcuts is to note their definitions on pull-downs from application menu bars.

To speed using favorite applications, press F1 for Help and look for "keyboard shortcuts" or the equivalent. Or Google the name of your app plus "keyboard shortcuts" (with quote marks). There's ample information; Googling "keyboard shortcuts" by itself finds almost four million hits!

Finally, a time-saving Web browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, etc.) keystroke combo is Ctrl+Enter, which allows typing part of a domain name (e.g., "microsoft") and having the browser add "http://www." at the front and ".com", at the end. That is, entering "microsoft" in the address bar and pressing Ctrl+Enter creates "http://www.microsoft.com". Firefox adds Shift+Enter and Ctrl+Shift+Enter which similarly complete .net and .org URLs.

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