

ACPCUG Newsletter

August 2009

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

The date of the September meeting is currently in flux. State tune for the meeting date.

**August Meeting
August 3rd, 2009, 6 pm
Windows 7 an overview—
Frank Ramsey**

**John Torok Community Center
4224 Massillon Rd
Green, Ohio 44720**

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PLEASE NOTE

Due to construction on Massillon Rd, you must follow the posted detours. Take Town Crossing south from Massillon to Steese. Take Steese east to the fire station. Park behind the fire station and walk across the parking lot to the Community Center. Please see the maps on page 14.

ACPCUG Web site

Acpcug.org was deleted by the web host. It has been restored from back-ups that are old. We are in the process of bringing it forward.

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

I've been writing the DealGuy column for 14 years and have not missed a month, but its time I took a month off, so don't look for the column next month. I need a break and thanks in advance for the opportunity. I'm finding less and less to offer anyway so a break is probably in order.

A while back, I talked about the FACUG spring conference and the attendance of about 140, but I was unable to find out how many user groups were represented. I was able to take a look at the registration recently and it looks like they came from 39 user groups, but remember that there were also several APCUG officers there who listed their own users groups. I'm glad it was successful, but next year's FACUG conference will be really something to look forward to. I'm sure you will read about it, and it looks like the attendance for that one will set a record.

Thanks for your feedback about my comments pertaining to the special setup arrangements for the SAP Sapphire show. So far, readers said they understand the difficulty of taking pictures under such difficult conditions. I don't feel too bad because I have watched the official photographers for some shows get very frustrated trying to get good pictures of the booths they were supposed to photograph.

I'm working on an article about trade show setups, but here is something else to think about. When you walk through the entrance to a trade show, you probably don't pay much attention to that obscure security guard who stands in the background and is checking for badges as you walk by. You probably don't even consider that the person you are walking by sees much more than you realize. I can't say this about "all" the people checking badges, but it is mostly true of the more experienced guards you see. They usually look like they are casually checking for your badge, but here is what really happens with an experienced security guard:

They actually take a mental snapshot of your badge and automatically read the name on it to see if the name matches the gender of the person wearing it (is it a male name if the person is a male), some shows they may look for other traits; they read the year to make sure the person is not using a last year's badge, and they check for color codes that might be on it to allow certain people in only on certain days (sometimes the day of the week is there, but usually only a color bar on the bottom). For some shows there might be other info on the badge. A good guard can also spot a phony badge made with a computer pretty easily because they get used to seeing the right badge. Yes, people try all kinds of tricks to get in free because some shows have very high registration fees.

They also must be diplomatic when they run into a belligerent attendee who doesn't want to be bothered going to registration to obtain a proper badge. Some of them are ready to punch you when you stop them. As you can imagine, diplomacy is a good thing to master. They usually do all this for somewhere around eight or nine dollars per hour, depending on what city you work in.

Since I don't have very good vision, I try to avoid entrance door positions, although I don't mind working at loading docks where you mostly see the same people going in and out while working, and you get so you recognize them when you see them. Since most of those workers wear colored wristbands for ID, they hate to wear them on their arm so you must look on the wrists, a belt loop (with their shirt hanging over it), or other spots to find it. Often you must ask them to see it if it is not in plain sight. Some convention center employees don't like to wear badges, but again, you get to know them, rather than argue with them. I once worked an entrance to a pharmacist job interview area where I had to watch for an ampersand on the badge someplace. That was a tough one for me. One person somehow got an interview without paying the fee and we were all given

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the name to watch for; and one guard found that person, who was then interviewed by show management.

***Worried About A Web Site's Safety?**

A popular warning product for dangerous Web sites is McAfee's "Site Advisor" <<http://www.siteadvisor.com>>. I've read a couple of reviews that were not all that complimentary, but have not tried it myself. Another one that I have not read about either way is Site Hound. When you get there, these products warn you if a Web site is safe to visit. Site Hound is offered by Fire Trust <<http://www.firetrust.com>>. There is a free version, and also a pay version with more features for \$29.95. They also offer MailWasher if you want spam protection and it is a popular product with a one time price. There used to be free updates for life, but it doesn't look like that applies any more. Do your homework if you are interested in either of these. User group member discounts are available for Firetrust products through APCUG <<http://www.apcug.net>>. Your user group must be a member to have access to the Sharepoint page for that information.

***Ever Consider A Virtual Cover? (This is their announcement, but edited)**

Insofta Development has unveiled the newest version of Insofta Cover Commander, a tool providing the effective solution to quickly and easily create quality custom-designed three-dimensional virtual boxes for software, e-books, DVDs, manuals, CD-ROMs and screenshots. Version 3.1 delivers a host of improvements.

Enhancements in the latest version of Insofta Cover Commander include support for batch processing from the command line, providing a perfect solution for creating a large number of similar virtual boxes, books, and many more. This is essential for those who create covers and boxes for on-line shops, catalogs and other large projects. The program also allows saving animation in SWF, GIF and AVI format.

The program enables creation of sophisticated and modern cover designs with very few mouse clicks; streamlining workflow. The program allows comprehensive customization of background color and transparency, gradient, shadow and reflection; what's more, the settings can be saved and used later. All the features are delivered in multilingual user interface (English, German, French, Spanish, Japanese, Hungarian and Russian).

Insofta Cover Commander is compatible with Microsoft Windows 98, ME, NT, 2000, XP and Vista, and costs \$48.30 for a single license, entitling a user to 1 year of free updates. Further information on the product, as well as its free trial version, is available from <www.insofta.com/cover-commander>. User group members get a 20% discount by entering the code ICC-RRDJ-DUG in the proper space.

Direct download link: <www.insofta.com/download/covercommanderssetup.exe>

Company website: <www.insofta.com>

***Problems?**

A while back I mentioned the problem I had not being able to access the memory in my digital picture frame with either of my desktop machines, but I could with my new laptop. Nobody was able to tell me what was wrong, but Bob Balogh, a past president of the Boca Raton Computer Society <<http://www.brcs.org>>, sent me a suggestion for finding the answer <<http://www.blackviper.com/>> and I am sharing his advice with my readers who might have their own problems. I have not had the time to go there to research it yet, but hope to get it done soon. Bob's suggestion is below:

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“The above is one of the best sites available for learning about your computer. The section on Windows Configurations, left hand side, is most helpful.” Bob also writes a monthly help column, and has traveled to other user groups in his area to do presentations.”

I always read Bob’s column in their newsletter, Boca Bits, and here is something he recommended for their members. Bob likes to keep a monthly calendar on his desktop. This enables him to see the entire month at a glance. The one he suggests also has an array of other features that lets you enter events that are upcoming, etc. It is called Rainlendar Lite, and it’s free at <<http://www.snapfiles.com/get/Rainlendar.html>>.

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>>.

Dozens of Free Utilities from Camtech

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

This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author’s permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

WEBSITES:

<http://camtech2000.net/Pages/Downloads.html>

I will admit that I am a junkie when it comes to free utilities. I enjoy trying new software, especially if it is legitimate freeware from a reliable source. Occasionally I have a special need for a utility, and there are a few places that I typically check to see if such a freeware utility is available. One of those websites is Camtech2000 (camtech2000.net).

Camtech2000 has dozens of freeware utilities available, many of which will run on most versions of Windows, from Windows 95 to Vista. The Camtech2000 download page is broken down into categories, such as desktop enhancements, assorted games, screen savers, desktop themes, internet related, utilities, and system related. The website is very easy to navigate; clicking on the name of a program will bring up a program specific webpage with information on the selected program, often including screenshots demonstrating how the program functions. Clicking on the “DL” on the right side of the listing downloads the program. According to Camtech2000, “Camtech Freeware is developed for free personal use and is NOT supported by Banners, Adware or Malware of any type!” For those desiring to support Camtech2000, a PayPal link is provided for donations. My personal choice (and recommendation) is to make a donation to Camtech2000 via PayPal whenever I download a program that I find useful, and intend to use on a periodic basis. Some of the utilities displayed are free to download and fully functional for a limited period of time, but request a fee to register the programs for continued use. In my experience, I have always found Camtech2000 software very intuitive and easy use, requiring no special skill or knowledge.

In the category “Desktop Enhancements” are 16 programs that can be used to customize the users’ desktop or

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Internet Explorer. With these desktop enhancements, the user can easily customize the appearance of folders, create MP3 play lists, create and manage desktop icons, change the appearance of the desktop and toolbar wallpaper, and create customized logos to display on Internet Explorer rather than the default Microsoft logo. For those who like to customize the appearance of Windows, and would like features not otherwise included in Windows, some of these utilities would be appropriate, as well as fun to play with.

I am typically too busy to play games on my computer, but I do know that a lot of users enjoy simple but entertaining games to pass the time. Camtech2000 offers five games free for the taking. Gamers can play darts, or manipulate squares in an obvious knockoff known as "Cubik's Rube". Word Finder is a common word game for those wishing to practice their observational skills and gamblers may appreciate "Camtech Slots" which has some of the excitement of a slot machine, without actually losing money to the "one armed bandit".

While they are functionally obsolete, many computer users still like to use screen savers. In the early days of computing, it was somewhat common to burn-in an image on the CRT if it was displayed too long. While typically unlikely with a modern monitor and video card, burn-in is still theoretically possible, and this is where screen savers are of use. (For the record, I do not use a screen saver on any computer that I use, and choose to turn the computer off if I am not going to use it for any reasonable length of time). Camtech2000 offers an even dozen screen savers offering a variety of shapes, colors, images, music, and other visual treats. I have seen the Camtech Space screensaver in use, and it is very attractive as it changes between a series of astronomical images. For those who like and use screen savers, and would like some variety, these may be a worthwhile addition to their collections.

I have made some use of the "Internet Related" utilities, of which Camtech2000 offers 30 titles. The one that I have used the most is Password Reveal Pro 2.0, which displays the hidden passwords in programs that display a password as "*****". Loading Password Reveal Pro 2.0 and dragging the lock image over the asterisks displays the underlying password. Another neat utility that I have used on some of the web pages I have created or edited is RedirectEm, which generates a small script file to be placed on a webpage that automatically connects the user to another webpage. This is especially helpful when the new webpage has a different address than the old page. You may have noticed that some email users have fancy signatures at the bottom of their emails; it is very easy to create your own professional looking email signatures using Camtech2000's Signatures 2.0. With this program the user can create custom email signatures with a choice of colors, fonts, and graphics. Additional graphics, both static and animated are included with the program. Another especially helpful and possibly even profitable program is Multi-Stock Browser, which can display stock quotes and charts. While the basic version of Multi-Stock Browser is free, a registered version is \$20.

Camtech2000 offers 45 miscellaneous utilities which can be used for such tasks as cleaning up startup files to creating and storing passwords. I just had the occasion to use UnlockMe, a utility to unlock files which may have been used by another program. Many users complain about how slow the computer boots, and seems to run slower than it did in the past. This problem may be quickly and easily resolved by cleaning up the startup files by using Ultimate Startup Manager. This program displays all seven places that contain startup information, not just the three sources displayed by some competing programs. While the program is free, a registered version is \$20. With 45 utilities available in this category, most users will likely find something useful here.

There are nine system related utilities available including a System Restore Control, XP Repair Install, Reg-Key Backup, MemCheck Pro, CT Attrib (file attributes), and a Visual Basic Runtime Library. I used CT Attrib to manage a troublesome folder on my hard drive, and it worked admirably.

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Camtech2000 has an impressive list of useful utilities available for download. Users of all levels will likely find something useful to download and try.

Mozilla Releases Firefox 3.5 Browser

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

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WEBSITES:

<http://www.getfirefox.com>

It is no secret to regular listeners of my weekly radio show (KLVI 560AM 6-7pm Mondays) that I have been a longtime user of the Firefox browser. While Windows may come with Microsoft's Internet Explorer (IE) installed and an integral part of the operating system, I and millions of other computer users have chosen to use an alternative browser, such as Firefox, to provide features and security lacking in IE. There has been an active war between browsers for market share for several years, led by IE with its deep pockets capable of carrying on its battle though the use of prodigious commercial advertisement, backed by the financial clout of Microsoft. Firefox, from an open source, non-profit organization, Mozilla, lacks the financial capital to compete in the commercial marketplace, but has developed a loyal and expanding user base based on its quality and features, rather than its advertising. Mozilla's Firefox has been successful at capturing an estimated one-fourth of the browser market from IE, and has spawned competition from other non-Microsoft competitors, such as Google's Chrome, Apple's Safari, Opera, and several other browsers, all of which offer features and benefits lacking in IE. While IE, Chrome, and Safari have substantial financial backing behind their respective promotions, Firefox is forced to compete based on its merits and performance, and not the dollars behind it. Due to the competitive nature of the browser business, and the fact that when Microsoft developed IE and announced that it would be a free browser, despite many millions of dollars in development costs, all of the other major browsers now currently available were also provided for free.

Firefox in its earlier versions has been around for several years, and attracted the interest of the computer press pundits who have recognized the superiority of Firefox over the 800 pound gorilla in the room, Microsoft's IE. What Firefox has lacked in financial capital, it has more than made up with its feisty adherence to innovation and performance. Recently, Mozilla released version 3.5 of Firefox, a substantial update and upgrade to the not-so-old 3.0 series of releases. Over five million copies were downloaded during the first 24 hours of its release. It is available as a free 7.7mb download from getfirefox.com, and available for most contemporary operating systems including XP, Vista, Mac and Linux.

The new version 3.5 of Firefox has some dramatic improvements over the older versions of Firefox, many of which have increased the performance, features, and security advantages of Firefox over IE, and makes Firefox more competitive with the advanced features of its competing browsers. One notable improvement in 3.5 is its rendering speed, the time it takes to display web pages being downloaded. One example of dramatic speed improvement is in displaying web pages containing Java, a very common form of coding on web pages today. In comparison testing on an XP machine using different versions of Firefox, 3.5 was about twice as fast as version 3, and 10 times faster than version 2. In comparative tests performed by some of the leading computer magazines, Firefox was much faster than IE in loading a variety of web pages. To be fair, Safari and Chrome were also faster than IE 7 and 8 as well, with IE sometimes being very sluggish in loading and displaying websites by comparison. Firefox 3.5 has improved memory management which minimizes memory leakage, and also uses fewer system resources than IE, still another reason for improved performance.

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Firefox 3.5 is very feature rich with security and conveniences that makes it a very attractive alternative to IE. One is the “Awesome Bar”, also known as the address bar, where an intelligent wizard makes it easy to locate websites without typing or knowing the URL (internet address). Simply typing a keyword term in the address bar will cause Firefox to instantly reference the browsing history searching and then displaying web addresses with similar keywords, and then interactively searching the web for popular websites with that key word. The Awesome Bar is intelligent in that it learns about your surfing interests in order to make more relevant recommendations. Of course, if you know the web address, just simply type it in as always, but if you have been there before the auto complete feature will display your potential choices as fast as you can type. If a desired web address is displayed by the Awesome Bar, simply click on it to open the page.

Many of us have developed a large collection of favorites and bookmarks. Firefox 3.5 offers an improved version of its “Tags” feature where terms can be added to a bookmark for rapid sorting and display of appropriate links. For example, if I labeled the bookmark for THEEXAMINER.COM with the tag “news” (there is no limit on the number of tags that may be added to any bookmark), and typed “news” in the address bar, the Examiner link would be among the top placements instantly displayed in the address bar for immediate selection. Adding new links to the bookmark list is a simple one click operation; simply click on the star at the right side of the address bar to create a bookmark with the currently displayed website.

One cute feature in Firefox 3.5 that has been continued from the earlier versions is a built in spell checker. When filling in online forms, blogs, Tweets, webmail, or other forms of text, Firefox will check the spelling of words entered in real-time, and underline any misspelled words with a red dotted line. Simply right clicking on the word will display the correctly spelled recommendations, and another mouse click will replace the erroneous word with the correctly spelled term.

Another useful feature is the tabbed browsing. While other browsers, including IE 8, have tabbed browsing, Firefox 3.5 tabs can be dragged and dropped wherever desired. I have been guilty of closing a tab, only finding later in the session that I want to go back to the now closed tab; Firefox saves closed tabs under the History menu as “Recently Closed Tabs”, where a mouse click reopens the closed tab. A similar benefit is the ability of Firefox to remember where you have been; when closing Firefox, the user is given the choice to remember the open tabs, and automatically reload them the next time Firefox is opened.

Since Firefox is not beholden to any other software company, there is no prejudice in the selection of search engines accessible from the integral search bar. In fact, there are literally hundreds of search options available, many with an integral smart search function that makes recommendations of search terms as they are being typed. The search selection does include not just the typical Google or Yahoo, but also hundreds of other domestic and foreign search engines as well as commercial resources. In addition to Google, Yahoo, and AllTheWeb (my personal favorite), I also have EBay, Amazon, and other shopping sites in my search list where products can be entered in the search box, and the results quickly displayed.

One interesting feature in 3.5, which can be easily selected or disabled at will, is “Location Aware Browsing” where capable websites will provide relevant local information such as restaurants or events based on the current geographical location of the computer. Firefox emphasizes that no personal information is disseminated when using this feature and it can be turned off at will.

One of the top selling points of this free product is the security of the browser. Integral with the browser is an anti-phishing feature which will prominently warn the user if he attempts to connect to a known phishing identity theft site. Firefox also protects against websites containing viruses, Trojans, and malware in their code.

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Since Firefox runs on top of the operating system, and not as a part of it, Firefox is inherently more secure than IE, and less vulnerable to attack. While no browser is absolutely secure, in penetration testing, Firefox has proven to be more secure than IE. If any serious security vulnerabilities are detected, Firefox is quick to release and distribute software updates, typically much faster than most competing browsers, and almost always faster than IE. Firefox offers an automatic update feature which can download updates as soon as they are released, keeping the browser up to date with the latest security fixes.

Firefox 3.5 is totally adequate as downloaded, and includes abundant features. For those who like to customize their browsing experience, Firefox has compiled a catalog of over 6000 plug-ins and add-ons. I use add-ons for a variety of purposes, including downloading and converting YouTube videos, color coding my tabs, and “IE Tabs” which will run IE only websites that require Active-X from inside Firefox, without loading IE.

I strongly recommend Firefox to everyone. It is easy to install, and will happily coexist with IE and other installed browsers, and not interfere with them. Firefox offers an option during installation to non-destructively copy and import favorites (bookmarks), cookies, passwords, and other information from IE, such that Firefox is ready to run and complete as soon as it is installed. If upgrading from an older version of Firefox, the newer version will perform some housekeeping tasks and install itself over the older version while maintaining all bookmarks, passwords, cookies, and other information.

I use IE for less than 5% of my browsing tasks, choosing to use Firefox for almost all other web browsing. Other than the fact that it is already installed on Windows computers, I sometimes find it hard to understand why so many would still use such a slow, vulnerable, and insecure browser as IE, when a reasonably secure and fast browser such as Firefox is available for free. Go ahead and download Firefox right now (getfirefox.com). Play with it for a while, experimenting with its myriad of features unavailable on IE. If you like it, go ahead and make it your default browser (I did). If not, either keep it as a secondary browser, or uninstall it (Add/Remove Programs). Once you try Firefox 3.5, I really do not envision many of you wanting to uninstall it, but I can see many more of you choosing Firefox as your primary browser, rather than the cumbersome IE.

Microsoft Releases Free Beta of New Security Software

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

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WEBSITE:

http://www.microsoft.com/security_essentials (effective June 23)

Many of us love to kick Microsoft as the 600 pound gorilla who created the most popular computer operating systems and also attracted countless miscreants who locate and take advantage of security breaches. Microsoft has produced some very good security products, such as the anti-spyware product Windows Defender, and some mediocre products such as Windows Live OneCare. Now, Microsoft is releasing a free public beta of its newest incarnation of comprehensive security software code named “Morro”, but publicly named “Microsoft Security Essentials” (MSE). The public beta release of MSE should be online by the time you read this, at www.microsoft.com/security_essentials. There are some reports that Microsoft will limit the number of beta downloads of MSE to 75,000.

MSE’s final release version is scheduled to be available later this year, and is planned to be a free security

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package designed to protect the computer from viruses, spyware, rootkits, and Trojans. MSE will be replacing Microsoft's current commercial offering, Windows Live OneCare, which Microsoft announced will be discontinued as of June 30. Initial reports that have leaked from Microsoft indicate that MSE will be a low-end security product, competing against the wildly popular free offerings from AVG and Avast, but lacking the full featured security capabilities of such commercial powerhouses as McAfee, Norton-Symantec, and TrendMicro. MSE will be a free download, and will run on Windows XP, Vista, and the new Windows 7. Separate installers will be available for 32 bit and 64 bit versions of Windows, and will vary from 3mb to 7mb in download size. It should be noted that only users of genuine licensed copies of Windows will be able to download and install MSE, as Microsoft claims that the MSE installer will be able to detect illicit copies of Windows and block the installation.

Preliminary anecdotal reports leaked about Morro, the precursor of MSE, indicate that it will install with a wizard that will require the uninstallation of any antivirus software that is on the computer before MSE can be installed. MSE will also deactivate Microsoft's Windows Defender anti-spyware if it is installed on the computer, as it will no longer be needed.

MSE will offer free frequent updates of virus and malware signatures, as well as system scans on demand and at scheduled times. MSE was designed to minimize the impact on system resources, and not significantly degrade system performance. The user interface (UI) is simple and clean, much like Windows Defender, and does not require any technical skills to properly operate. Microsoft designed MSE to be a simple but effective free security utility to protect Windows computers lacking effective antivirus and anti-spyware software. At present, it does not appear that MSE will be offering additional security features and benefits included in the top-selling commercial security suites. "This is security you can trust," said Alan Packer, general manager of Microsoft's anti-malware team, when asked to define how it differs from rivals, both free and not. "And it's easy to get and easy to use." "Rather than scan and clean, which it also does, it's trying to keep you from being infected in the first place," Packer said.

In addition to malware signatures which will be updated frequently, MSE will use a feature Microsoft calls "Dynamic Signature Service" which links the computer with MSE installed to Microsoft's servers. If MSE detects suspicious behavior, but does not have a digital malware signature in its database, MSE will query Microsoft's servers. "If it sees something new, like a new binary, the client queries the back end," Packer said. "The server can then ask for a sample, which the client sends as a hash." The user can control and consent to the sending of the potential malware to Microsoft, as MSE will ask for permission to send it. If Microsoft has already created a digital signature and remedy for the malware, the server will instantly push the signature to the computer. "We have a list of known good software, of course, but outside that, if a program is doing things like hooking Autostart points in the registry, or trying to kill other processes, Essential will query the servers." Packer said.

It is too early to tell about the quality of protection offered by MSE, as it has not yet been tested and rated by the independent services that test and rate security products. It also needs to be noted that the current software is a "beta" or pre-release version, and may contain unresolved bugs or other problems that will likely be resolved by the final release later this year. Still, if your PC is lacking effective security software, or your subscription to a commercial product is about to expire and you are willing to take the risk of having beta software provide basic protection to your computer, then Microsoft Security Essentials may be a worthwhile consideration.

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New Free Security Utilities – Do You Speak Klingon?

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

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WEBSITES:

<http://www.sophos.com/beta/threatdetection/index.html>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Klingon>

<http://www.sophos.com/products/free-tools/sophos-threat-detection-test.html>

<http://www.bitdefender.com/site/Products/showSolutions/6/>

Do you speak Klingon, the language of the intergalactic warriors of Star Trek fame? If so, the newly released (beta) product of Sophos' new on-demand malware scanner may be just for you. If you are among the Earthlings who have some command of the English language, then the English version of Sophos Klingon Anti-Virus may be more practical than the Klingon language version. Those of us so ethnocentric that we choose to speak English may be at a slight disadvantage, as Wikipedia states, "According to Guinness World Records, Klingon is the most popular fictional language by number of speakers."

Klingon Anti-Virus (beta) is one of the latest anti-malware products released by the UK's Sophos, a successful security company with over 100 million registered users. Klingon Anti-Virus is not a stand alone security product that provides continuous protection, but instead is an on-demand scanner that detects and removes viruses, spyware, adware, zero-day threats, and other varieties of malware. According to Sophos, "The software can be run without deactivating your current anti-virus software." This software is expressly intended to detect any malware that may have slipped through the protection provided by any installed security software on the computer. It should not interfere with any other security software already installed on the computer, and is not memory resident (loaded) except when explicitly loaded by the user.

Klingon AV is really an incarnation Sophos Threat Detection Test, which is the product name displayed when the English version of Klingon AV is installed. If the Threat Detection Kit is downloaded directly (not the Klingon AV), the user must register online (free) prior to the download. The Threat Detection Test uses the same scan engine as the commercial Sophos Anti-Virus product, and has been tested and certified as effective by the major antivirus testing organizations, including the ICSA Labs, West Coast Labs, and Virus Bulletin. Sophos' Klingon Anti-Virus and Threat Detection Test are effective and useful tools to periodically check to verify the integrity of the installed security software, and to determine if any malware has penetrated the existing mode of protection. The Threat Detection Test directly checks performance of Symantec, McAfee, Trend-Micro, CA, Kaspersky and F-Secure security products, without interfering with them.

If the user can read Klingon, then that version may be the better one to download, but if English is more appropriate, then download the English language version of Klingon Anti-Virus. Confirming that the installed anti-virus software is functioning properly can provide some peace of mind.

Three other free security utilities have been made available by BitDefender, a European purveyor of excellent quality cyber protection products. One utility that I use regularly is the browser (Internet Explorer) based BitDefender Online Scanner, which runs a very fast but thorough scan of the computer for malware. BitDefender Online Scanner runs on demand from the browser, separate from the installed antivirus software, and scans for

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viruses and spyware that may have penetrated the existing security software. The online scan does not interfere or interact with the existing security products. The Online Scanner will scan the system memory, files and hard drive boot sectors, and then automatically clean any malware that is found. I have used this product several times on several computers, and found it to be the fastest scan that I have ever used, and was capable of detecting what the installed security software missed. My only issue with the product is that it only runs only on Internet Explorer, and not on Firefox or other browsers. BitDefender Online Scanner is a very worthwhile product to have available on all PCs as a check and verification that the system is clean of malware.

Many of us routinely chat online. While most of our online chats are of a personal and casual nature, there is sometimes a need to discuss sensitive or proprietary information in a chat session. Because we never know if some unauthorized person is listening in on our chats, it may be necessary to encrypt our online chats, such that interception of the content is nearly impossible. BitDefender has released its free BitDefender Chat Encryption utility that allows users to communicate securely if Yahoo! Messenger 8 (or later) or Windows Live Messenger 8.5 (or later) is utilized. With these instant messaging clients, BitDefender Chat Encryption offers effective privacy by integrating a simple but automatic encryption and decryption process. In order to function, both parties must have BitDefender Chat Encryption installed. This software runs on XP with SP2 installed (32 bit), and 32 bit versions of Vista. If secure online chats and instant messages (IM) are desired, then this product may be for you.

One of the common methods of identity theft is phishing, where the user is tricked into entering personal and financial information on a spoofed website. While the latest versions of Internet Explorer (IE) and Firefox offer some protection against phishing and spoofed websites, another layer of protection may be desirable. BitDefender Anti-Phishing Free Edition is a toolbar that works well on both IE and Firefox. According to BitDefender, "BitDefender Anti-Phishing Free Edition provides browser-based protection from phishing attempts by blocking the malicious web pages used to steal credit card data and other personal identification information." This toolbar incorporates real-time filtering of web pages, and detects attempted fraud. If a suspicious site is detected, the user is notified of the potential threat, and given the choice to continue to the questionable website or to block it. The toolbar will also detect links that may be sent through Yahoo! Messenger or Windows Live (MSN) Messenger. If the user does not already have a layered anti-phishing defense, this toolbar from BitDefender will provide substantial protection from phishing websites.

Whether in Klingon, or from BitDefender, it may be a good idea to have another verification of cyber defenses using the appropriate products mentioned above. You can never be too safe.

Act Quickly to Get A Deal on Windows 7

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WEBSITES:

Microsoft Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/upgrade-advisor.aspx>

Windows 7 Pre-order Sources:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/buy/offers/pre-order.aspx>

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In case you have not heard, Microsoft is about to release a new operating system intended to replace Vista, and the almost phased out XP. This new operating system is known as Windows 7, and preliminary reviews indicate that it is far superior in most aspects to Vista, and as stable as XP. While the new Windows 7 will not be in full release or installed on new computers until this fall, Microsoft is offering a short term deal for those who would like to pre-order Windows 7. Anyone interested in partaking of this deal where Microsoft will sell Windows 7 with deep discounts must act quickly, as the promotion will end on July 11. Microsoft and select retailers are offering the pre-order of Windows 7 Professional for \$99.99, which will have a retail price of \$319.99 when officially released. Windows 7 Home Premium is available on pre-order for \$49.99, and will sell for retail price of \$199.99 when officially released. Locally, the offer should be available at Best Buy, Sam's Club, Walmart, and Office Depot, and online from Amazon and other stores, and directly from Microsoft Stores. The projected delivery date for the pre-ordered copies of Windows 7 is October 22.

For those buying a Vista equipped computer with one of the premium versions of Vista (but not Vista Home Basic) after June 26, but before October 22, Microsoft has announced a free upgrade policy to Windows 7 with some qualifications. The upgrades will be available through the PC manufacturer, and not directly from Microsoft. According to a Microsoft release, "Under the program, designated PCs pre-installed with premium versions of Windows Vista will qualify for licenses of the equivalent Windows 7 product." Users purchasing a new PC with Vista Home Premium will get Windows 7 Home Premium; Vista Business will get Windows 7 Professional; and Vista Ultimate purchasers will get Windows 7 Ultimate. While Microsoft is not charging users for the upgrade, some PC makers may charge a fee to cover the cost of shipping the disc. The free upgrade program will expire on January 31, 2010, and eligible Vista users must exercise their upgrade privilege by that date.

For those not purchasing new Vista equipped computers, but considering upgrading their existing XP or Vista computers, Microsoft has made available a free Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor, a small utility that will scan the installed hardware and software on the computer, and display whether or not your computer can run Windows 7. Microsoft designed Windows 7 to be able to run on almost any computer that can successfully run Vista. Any incompatibilities on the current computer with Windows 7 will be displayed, and any drivers that need to be updated in order to be compatible with Windows 7 will be noted, along with a link or other information on obtaining an updated driver that will work with Windows 7. Windows 7 Upgrade Advisor is available directly from Microsoft at www.microsoft.com/windows/windows-7/upgrade-advisor.aspx.

The system requirements for Windows 7 are about the same as those for Vista, but Windows 7 offers improved performance and stability over Vista on similar machines. According to Microsoft, Windows 7 has minimum system requirements of a 1 gigahertz speed CPU, either 32 or 64 bit; 1 gigabyte RAM on 32-bit systems or 2 GB RAM on 64-bit machines; 16 GB available hard disk space for 32-bit installation or 20 GB hard drive space for 64-bit systems; and a video card (or integral video device) that supports DirectX 9 graphics with WDDM 1.0 or higher driver. Additional system requirements may be necessary in order to utilize some of the enhanced features available.

Windows 7 Professional and higher versions (but not Windows 7 Home) have an interesting feature that will run XP compatible software that would not otherwise run on Vista or 7, by running the software on a virtual XP machine. This feature is called Mode Virtualization or Virtual PC/Windows XP Mode (sometimes referred to as XPM), and allows Windows 7 to run XP software on the desktop, making it appear that the software running in XP virtual mode (XPM) is running as a Windows 7 program.

Windows 7 Home Premium is clearly intended for the common home user, and contains features that Micro-

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soft has determined that home users typically want. Home Premium offers improved desktop navigation, faster startup, watch and record TV (on properly equipped computers), and simplified home networking.

Windows 7 Ultimate, not currently offered for pre-order, has all of the features of Home Premium, plus the XP compatibility mode, automated backup, BitLocker encryption, and support for 35 languages.

Windows 7 Professional, available for pre-order, has basically the same features as Ultimate, except for the BitLocker encryption and the multi-lingual support.

If you currently have a Vista computer and are unhappy with Vista, then this limited time pre-order is an excellent deal if you want to try Windows 7. If you have a fairly powerful and modern XP computer, and would like to see if Windows 7 will run well on it, then download and try the Advisor before purchasing Windows 7. In any case, if you are considering purchasing Windows 7, do it before the offer expires on July 11. If you are currently considering purchasing a new computer, confirm from the seller that it will be eligible for the free upgrade to Windows 7.

Windows 7 looks like a much improved operating system over Vista, and may be a worthwhile purchase and installation.

PC PitStop OverDrive – Free Online Testing and Analysis

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WEBSITE:

<http://pcpitstop.com/betapit>

Often, it seems that our computers just do not seem to run well. There can be many reasons for poor performance related to hardware and software issues. While there are many utilities which can be purchased or downloaded and installed that can run a battery of diagnostic tests on a computer, one of the most popular and comprehensive testing services is free and online. This service is PC PitStop OverDrive, available online at pcpitstop.com/betapit.

PC PitStop is very popular, with over 100 million tests run. Tests can be run anonymously (no registration required), or the user can register for free, and track computer performance over time. The diagnostic exams are safe, and performed through the Internet Explorer browser. Since many of the tests are performed using Active-X, PC PitStop will not work on Firefox or other browsers, and requires that Internet Explorer be used. The tests are performed on various components in the computer, including the video card, CPU chip (processor), memory, and disk drives. No settings on the computer are changed by PC PitStop, and no content on the hard drive is accessed, meaning that private data is safe and not being read by PC PitStop. Once the diagnostic process is completed, a report card is produced designating the conditions of what is found. Only with the users' express consent will the automated repair utilities attempt to fix many of the problems that are found. The entire diagnostic process is fairly fast, just taking a few minutes.

The first step in running PC PitStop OverDrive is to download and install an Active-X utility, which takes only a few seconds on a broadband connection. All of the diagnostics are performed on web pages that use

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Map to John Torak Community Center



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Javascript or Active-X, which display in real time the tests being performed. The first test collects information about the PC itself, such as the CPU type and speed, capacity of disk drive, video resolution, BIOS, memory, Windows version, browser version, and a listing of what is currently running on the computer. After the basic data is collected (no personally identifiable information is collected), the computer hardware is tested. These tests will determine the speed of the system and the health of the CPU chip, as well as the condition of the memory, disk drives, video, and internet connection. One warning is in line here, and that is that users with epilepsy or other ailments that may be affected by rapidly changing colors and patterns should not view the graphics card component of the tests. Once the diagnosis is completed, PC PitStop will analyze the data collected, and make recommendations about performance improvements. A full graphical report is provided to the user.

On my computer the entire process was completed in about four minutes. In that time, several dozen tests were performed, and the results of each were displayed. The reports are tabbed into the categories of Summary, Performance, Security, Software, and Drivers. Clicking on a tab may open another level of information. Under the Summary tab is a tab for Fixes, which displays any problems found on the computer. Moving the mouse cursor over a displayed problem will give the user a brief description of the problem. Clicking on any item will open another window with very detailed information giving instructions on resolving the problem. The Summary – Rankings selection displays how the computer tested compared to the millions of other computers tested. In my case on this old computer, I have a very fast processor (top 7% of those tested), but I am sorely lacking memory (bottom 43%) and hard drive space (bottom 23%). My video card performed well, being in the top third that have been tested.

Performance is what matters to most of us when it comes to our computers. The tab “Performance Results” lists 32 performance categories, and the results of each performance test. Items that pass the diagnosis are displayed with a check mark, and those that fail are noted with a bold red “X”. By correcting whatever deficiencies are found may lead to an improvement in performance may result.

Security is another category that should be of high concern, and PC PitStop checks for 37 security breaches, including a very quick scan for viruses and spyware. Included in the security diagnosis are browser tests, desktop security, file download and pop-up ad security, cookie analysis, and other security issues. Each item is clearly displayed and rated, with additional information and fixes being only a click away.

The Software diagnostics displays the name and version of all software installed on the computer, as well as Microsoft hotfixes and updates. The Software – Processes displays the software that is currently running on the computer along with the CPU usage and memory used for each. Clicking on the title of any software listed will display detailed information about that software, as well as any recommendations.

Our computers are heavily dependent on the drivers installed for our components and peripherals for proper performance and security. PC PitStop identifies the drivers installed on the computer, and shows those that are in need of updating. If an updated driver is recommended, a link to the download may be displayed.

I have run PC PitStop OverDrive on several computers and found it to be a very fast and reliable tool to identify the hardware and software problems on the computer. I have registered as a user so I can track performance degradation over time. PC PitStop Overdrive is free, very fast, and comprehensive. It is an outstanding tool to checkout the condition of any computer, and possibly resolves any hardware and software issues that may degrade security and performance.