ACPCUG Newsletter
September 2009

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

Please note the new date of the September meeting ONLY!@ Starting in Octobr, we will resume the first Mondayu of the month

September Meeting
September 16th, 2009, 6 pm
PC Security: What's In Your PC—Mike Sabol
John Torok Community Center
4224 Massillon Rd
Green, Ohio 44720

ACPCUG Yahoo group

To ease in distribution of the newsletter and other important club communications, a Yahoo group has been created for all paid members of the Akron-Canton PC Users Group.

Important points to remember about the group:

1) Do not Reply to the message welcoming you to the group as it will delete you from the list.
2) The list is meant only for newsletter distribution and other news from the officers, it is not for member discussions.
3) It may be used to send meeting reminders.
4) The address should be added to any white list so it is not interpreted as spam.
5) Use of the list does not permit anyone to see their address so their privacy is protected.
6) The list is private; it cannot be seen by non-members of ACPCUG.

ACPCUG Web site

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

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

A month off makes me lazy and I've wondered if it would even be worth my while to continue the column because I am not getting many new product announcements lately. However, I do have one for this month. I was browsing some items I've saved while reading newsletters I receive; most I've had for ages, but if the product is still a good one, and I've only seen it in two or three newsletters, it should be usable. Perhaps I can keep DealsGuy going a bit longer.

Like many others across the US, I have my own adjustments to make. For me, its because of the GM bankruptcy. I don't know how many benefits I'll end up losing, but I'm glad my wife and I still have a part-time job to bring in a few extra bucks. However, we get less security work lately because some trade show management officials feel that old grey-haired people don't look good working in their shows, and sometimes our employers must listen to what the customer wants or lose business. Even if discrimination is against the law, employers must please the client to survive.

Also, some of our co-workers are vocal that since we have pensions, we shouldn't be working and taking money away from our younger counterparts who do not have a pension. Those people have not tried to live on a pension, especially a pension rate established 25 years ago when I retired. Most young people don't know that pensions don't grow much over the years. Some of our co-workers also only get a small pension to live on and could not make it without other income. Trade shows are fun to work, but the job doesn't pay much. There aren't many jobs available for seniors, except volunteer work. Right now (August), we have no security work scheduled until at least October. Some jobless people are taking these part-time security jobs with several companies in an effort to make them full-time by running from show to show with various companies.

*I Used That Good Tech Support Again!

I seem to get a lightning strike each year and in spite of having adequate protection, I still lose some equipment. It knocked out my favorite toy again, (my weather station), my router and a few other items. It's hard to safeguard the weather station because the wind anemometer sits on the roof, a vulnerable place for lightning. It seems the DSL filters saved my phones because two phones wouldn't work until I replaced the DSL filters in their phone lines. The phone line for my DSL modem was protected through the UPS, but my router no longer worked, so I finally replaced it. The new D-Link router had a disk with a setup wizard on it that worked fine for the setup, also configuring the security. However, I later found that my Ricoh printer wouldn't print. Other routers I've used sent print jobs just fine without any special configuration. After a lot of "trial and error," I decided my router wasn't talking to the printer, which connects to the network, so I called Ricoh.

A guy named Larry answered immediately and we went to work. He tried many things that included pinging the printer, which worked, but the printer still refused to print, even though the computer was now talking to the printer. He said my new router, a D-Link, didn't like my printer and he would have to keep trying port changes. After an hour, he found the right combination and I was printing. As before, Ricoh tech support answered in Atlanta and was easy to work with. He kept his cool, even when his new settings didn't seem to work, or I made a mistake when instructed to punch certain keys.

I noticed my DSL was running slower than usual, but running the computer directly from the modem worked fine. I was unable to find the D-Link free tech support phone number on the Web site so I e-mailed them for a phone number and finally was able to call their tech support. After some difficult time, they improved it. They said they were based in California, but didn't sound like it. Seems the modem and the router both had the same IP address.

However, I now couldn't print again, but another call to Ricoh fixed that. I told a friend about the good experience with Ricoh and he asked if I had talked to HP's tech support lately. He said he called HP tech support recently and talked to a guy in India. He had problems understanding him and nothing they tried was working. He said the guy finally hung up on him; and still no solution. My friend is quite computer literate so I doubt he was the problem.

*All About Charts

This product is said to be for software developers, but I'll pass it on because it has a discount and I don't know how many readers develop software. This had the most confusing write-up so I have edited out the hype and tried to make sense of what's left.

ArtfulBits aiCharts for Android is intended for software developers to use as an easily integrated part of their applications to allow representing and visualizing charts of different kinds. It is developed especially for the Android platform and is compatible with Android version 1.1, Cupcake 1.5 and Android 2.0. Presently, it supports the following chart types: Line, Spline, Point, Bubble, Column, Stack Column, Stack Column 100%, Bar, Stack Bar, Stack bar 100%, Area, Spline Area, Stack Area, Stack Area 100%, Pie, Polar, HiLoCandlestick, Funnel, Pyramid.

aiCharts does not use any low level native libraries and is 100% safe for Android OS users as it runs in a completely safe managed environment of Dalvik Java VM. Online documentation with samples and tutorials gives developers all the necessary information to easily integrate and provide support for applications with aiCharts. Online documentation will be updated frequently.

A subscription guarantees fast feedback, access to the internal bug tracking system and the latest solutions. Any problems that may occur will be reviewed and resolved as soon as possible, and solutions and/or patches will be available before the release of the next version. aiCharts creators assure that all users will get feedback and the ArtfulBits team will do everything possible to meet customers' demands, and to perfect aiCharts.

This opportunity seems more interesting considering the recently announced ADC 2 (Android Developer Challenge 2) launched by Google aiming to support developers in their efforts.
Get a 50% discount by using the code "DealsGuy-Customers-Choice" when ordering. Bonus is an added 1Year Subscription. Limitations are: code works from September 01, 2009 until November 01, 2009. The code works on a Developer License, Bundle 3 and Bundle 5 and does not work on a Subscription only. That would help a lot on the MSRP of $299.
Product page: <http://www.artfulbits.com/products/>
YouTube demo: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ho5wiV-o8g>
Purchase: <http://www.artfulbits.com/Products/Purchase.aspx>

*Someone Sent Me This, But Didn't Want To Be Named

Ever wonder if somebody might have plugged a USB device into your computer for some reason? People sometimes like playing tricks on you (like a surprise midi file you didn't expect), or might browse through your HD and even copy items to, or from, a flash drive or some other media, but this product might provide some details if a flash drive was used. USBDeview finds out what USB devices are currently connected to your computer and also sees which devices were connected before. It tells you the time the device was

plugged/unplugged (if the machine hasn't been rebooted). Other information possible is; device name/description, device type, serial number (for mass storage devices), VendorID, ProductID, and more.

USBDeview allows you to uninstall USB devices that you previously used, and disconnect USB devices currently connected to your computer. Unfortunately it can't figure out which files might have been copied from, or to, your machine, or even if that actually happened. Use your best judgments if you suspect that. Check this out at <http://www.nirsoft.net/utils/usb_devices_view.html>. This is a freebie and works on newer Windows systems. The Web site says no need to install it, just run the .exe file. I thought it sounded interesting.

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>

**Speed It Up! A Non-Technical Guide for Speeding Up Slow Computers**
Reviewed by Gordon Strickland, Member, NOCCC (North Orange County Computer Club, California)
Orange Bytes, July 2009
www.noccc.org
editor (at) noccc.org

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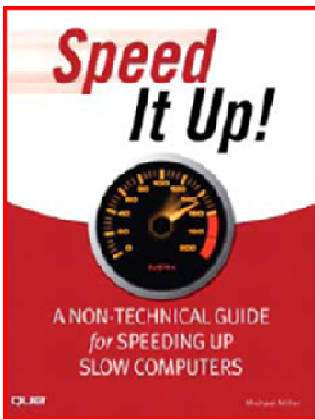
Almost anyone would like his computer to run faster. This book may therefore be regarded as being aimed at a very wide potential readership. It discusses measures for restoring the performance of a computer whose performance has degraded from what it was originally and hardware modifications to enhance its performance perhaps even over the original. However, if the measures discussed in the main part of the book will not yield sufficient improvement, the author also includes a final section offering guidelines for buying a new computer. The specific discussions in the book are applicable primarily to machines running Windows XP and Vista, although some of the material would also be applicable to earlier versions of Windows. Apart from some hardware issues, there is little applicable to Linux and Apple machines.

The book is organized into an introduction, eighteen chapters, and an appendix. The chapters are grouped into six sections, with titles that I will abridge as follows: Quick Diagnosis, Simple Speedups, Power Speedups, Upgrading Your PC, Internet and Network Speedups, and Buying a Faster PC.

Under Quick Diagnosis, the author rightly notes that the perception of performance degradation can be very subjective. He describes instances where acquaintances thought that their machines were slowing down, when in fact that had not really
happened. Perceptions of degraded performance are particularly apt to occur when an older machine is asked to run new, demanding software. Windows Vista and some of the newer games can be very problematical in

this respect. The author then discusses various symptoms of actual performance degradation, and emphasizes the importance of doing a thorough backup before moving on to the tasks of repair and enhancement.

The Simple Speedups section deals with removing spyware and viruses, cleaning out unnecessary programs, optimizing the hard disk, and making Windows go faster. The Power Speedups section discusses cleaning the Windows registry and reinstalling
Windows from scratch ("when all else fails").

Under Upgrading Your PC, the author discusses hardware upgrades such as adding more RAM, installing a larger hard disk, upgrading the video card (perhaps particularly beneficial when going to the more demanding versions of Vista), and installing a faster CPU. This last measure is sometimes possible with machines that are of fairly recent vintage. Alternatively, the author suggests that one can provide for a new CPU by also installing a new motherboard, but this would seem to get one into the area of the final section, Buying a Faster PC.

The appendix, entitled "PC Performance Resources," consists of useful lists of available software packages for the performance of the various optimization and repair tasks discussed in the previous text. For instance, under "Registry Cleaners," ten
different programs are listed, including a number of free ones.

Other categories of programs presented include General Performance Suites, Benchmarking, Startup Optimization, File Cleaning, Hard Disk Optimization, Internet Speedup, and others. Altogether, the appendix lists 61 programs.

By way of criticism, it is curious that there is no discussion of the possibility of reflashing (reloading) the BIOS of a machine. This procedure, admittedly only for the more courageous user, might provide important benefits where the originally loaded BIOS contained bugs, had become corrupted, or did not provide proper support for software or hardware developed since the date of the originally loaded BIOS. The author misleadingly states (pg 166) that the BIOS is loaded into ROM that cannot be written to, but this is not true in modern machines. Indeed, some BIOS's can be reflashed even from within the Windows operating system.

With the printed book, the purchaser also receives, for 45 days, access to a free online edition of the book. Presumably the access period can be extended for a fee, if the user desires. The object here seems to be to make the book more convenient to use when one is already working at the computer. I tend to prefer to use a printed version of a publication in such situations, if it will stay open at the page you are consulting
while typing at the keyboard. Unfortunately, the book is assembled with the now near-universal "perfect" binding (was there ever a more outrageously misleading terminology?), and therefore is quite likely to change pages, or close, spontaneously. Depending on your monitor size and other factors, the online version might be more convenient in some situations.

I thought that the book was very informative and potentially useful. The experienced user, opening up the book at random and examining a particular topic, might be inclined to say, "Oh, I already knew that," but most should find the detailed, systematic, and thorough coverage very helpful. Even the experienced user may find that the book fills in occasional knowledge gaps.

The 2009 book is authored by Michael Miller and from Que Publishing (Pearson Education, Inc.) (312+xvi pages). http://www.informit.com/store/product.aspx?isbn=078973947X

List price is $22. If your group is a member of the Pearson User Group program, a 30 % discount is available to members plus free shipping.
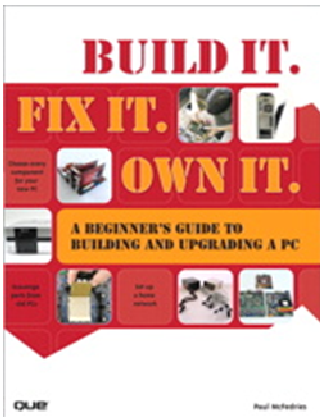
Build it, Fix it, Own it
A Beginner's Guide to Building and Upgrading a PC
Review by Joe Mizer, a member of NOCCC (North Orange County Computer Club, CA)
www.noccc.org
editor (at) noccc.org

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This book, published by QUE, is a good guide to understanding a PC from the inside out. Building a PC is easier than selecting stereo and video entertainment equipment for your home; you decide on the features you want and the performance level desired. In both situations the components inside a PC such as the mother board, memory, disk drives, optical drives, sound cards, and video cards all have standard interfaces and when connected, become a PC inside the case you selected.

This book is targeted for beginners with the desire to build a PC from scratch. The book is laid out in two parts; the first part is about getting to know your PC. The chapters cover in detail the options and decisions to be made when selecting a motherboard, and CPU, memory type and size, drives, audio and video options, networking, parts and building skills. The author in a step-by-step approach discusses the choices available with each of these components and how to guarantee your selections will operate as a fast and reliable system. This book was an introduction into the technology changes that have occurred since I last built a system from scratch. My understanding of the latest hardware options, are clearly much different from the past. In fact, many of the performance changes make the devices more than just updated versions of those available only a few years ago.

In a careful step-by-step journey, the book explains the technology so you will really understand the choices you need to make when selecting the parts for your new computer and how to get the best deals on the parts you decide on. My favorite chapter in the first section is chapter six which introduces the reader to networking and security without the complex technical discussions which are normally included with networking. The second part of the book puts all of the details discussed in part one into action by designing five computers, each as a project / chapter and aimed at different jobs. Chapter 10 Building a Basic Business PC explains goals and expected requirements as well as how to select components and to overcome problems you will probably encounter. A detailed assembly section answers a lot of the expected questions, and gives a check list procedure to actually use when powering up a new machine for the first time. Chapter 11 is on Building a home theater PC. This project builds a computer which connects to your television either analog or digital, your audio system, cable box, gaming interface, and other digital and analog devices. Chapter 12's project is Building a high performance computer. Chapter 13's project is Building a Killer Gaming PC, and Chapter 14 covers building a Building a Budget PC.

The most important reason for building a new computer is the chance to configure it exactly as you want it - you can have a blazing fast machine or an average business computer. You can have the best audio or the standard small speakers, and the best of all internal components, or not. You also get to select the operating system

of you choice, which in my opinion is not any version of Vista. As you can guess I do not like the Vista operating system, and really I do not know whether Vista is the problem or just that I am out of date again. This is why I am now going to read "Windows Vista" by Steve Johnson and see if I can I learn to do things the Vista way.

Avoiding only one mistake will easily save you more than that amount. I recommend this book because since I last built a system, so much has changed in the hardware available, I was just plain not up to speed on selecting the best stuff. With this book at my side, even though I skipped the chapters on salvaging parts from old computers and renovating old computers because I just don't like to reuse old parts. I now feel I know the questions to ask and where to get advice when making the necessary decisions to build a new system, hopefully it will be faster and live longer.

This book is available from amazon.com, the publisher (http://www.informit.com/store/product.aspx?isbn=0789738279) And, of course, your local book store. The list price is $29.99 USA. ISBN-13 978-0-7897-3827-1

Install Those Updates
By Marjie Tucker, Newsletter Editor, Mountain Computer User Group, Georgia
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Are you taking every precaution to safeguard the data on your computer? If you answer "yes" because you have turned on the Windows Firewall and use anti-virus and anti-spyware software, that's great. However, you may be forgetting something very important - installing software updates.

Software usually contains bugs that are not found until the general public uses it. Because of this, all companies including Microsoft and Apple periodically make updates available to fix the bugs that have appeared. Many viruses and worms are written specifically to take advantage of holes that appear in operating systems and other programs. If you don't install the latest updates to your computer, those holes will remain and your data will be vulnerable to the malware.

Both Windows XP and Windows Vista have the ability to automatically download the most important updates as they are posted. To ensure that this is happening on your computer use the Control Panel to go to the Windows Security Center and make certain that the Automatic Updates are turned on. If Automatic Updating shows a green On color, then the updates will be downloaded. If the function for Automatic Updates is disabled, use the setting available to turn it on.

When the updates have been downloaded to your computer you are notified of their presence. This usually occurs with a small golden icon in the lower right-hand corner of your taskbar that reads "Updates are ready for your computer." If you click on the icon and give permission, the update will install immediately, usually in the background so you can continue working. After it is installed you may be asked to give permission for your computer to reboot.

However, if you tell the computer not to install this update, the message that it is available may stay on your computer permanently, as it waits for you to click that it can now be installed. If you see the gold icon on your taskbar, check to see if you have updates waiting right now so you can protect your computer.

There May Be Additional Updates

Sometimes there are optional updates available that won't be downloaded automatically. For that reason it's a good idea to check the Microsoft Update website periodically. The easiest way to check is to use the link you can find on your Start Menu.

That link will take you directly to the Microsoft Update site where you can choose between the Express or Custom method of installing available updates. Custom is preferable so you can determine if there are any updates you don't want to install.

Click on the Custom button and then wait while the Microsoft site compares your computer's software against the Microsoft database. Eventually you will see a list of updates that are missing from your computer. Any High-Priority (important for security) updates will already be selected to be downloaded. However, you need to look at the Optional Updates to choose the ones you want to include. Click on Software, Optional and choose all that are shown. You should need all of these. If any Hardware, Optional updates are shown, you should be a little choosier. If your hardware is working properly, you may want to skip these driver updates. But if you are suffering any hardware problems, these updates may solve your problems.

 After you have chosen the updates you want to download, click on Install Updates at the top of the screen and the download will begin. This may take quite a bit of time, depending on the number and size of the updates being downloaded. This would actually be a good time to take a coffee break or make that important telephone call.

You can view a list of the updates you have installed on your computer at the Add or Remove Programs location on your Control Panel. At the top of the screen you will see a small box labeled "Show Updates." Click in that box and all your Microsoft updates will be displayed.

This screen is very useful if you encounter difficulty after installing an update or service pack. You can always find the update and uninstall it through this screen.

You can also easily see if your computer contains the latest Windows Service Packs by looking at the Properties of My Computer. Right-click over the My Computer icon and choose Properties. The most recently installed Service Pack will be listed on this screen.

Don't Forget Your Anti-MalWare Programs

Of course, it's also critical to constantly update your anti-malware programs. Viruses, worms, and spyware are constantly being developed and these protection programs work hard to provide fixes. When possible, also set these programs for automatic updates and regularly perform a manual update just to make certain that you don't miss any patches or new program features.

And, Remember Your Other Software

We've spent most of our time talking about Microsoft software. Your other programs, such as Adobe Reader and Java also receive regular updates. Look at the settings for those to be sure they are updating automatically.

This is especially important if you have any difficulty while working with a program. The solution may be a simple as installing the latest patch.

Apple Software Updates
Apple also frequently releases updates that you can download and install. To check your Mac for patches, use the Apple menu and choose Software Updates.

You can also set your Mac to get Automatic Updates by choosing System Preferences from the Apple menu. Choose View and Software Update. One of the choices is Automatic and you can also choose a time for the computer to check the Apple website.

Stay Secure
Remember to set your operating system and programs for Automatic Updates, install those updates, and periodically check the websites manually to ensure that you have all the latest patches. This is an easy and inexpensive way to help protect your data.

If Your Computer Gets Wet…What?
Written by Bob Schwartz, a member of HAL-PC, Texas
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What to do if something wet spills on your electronic device or it falls into wet whatever?
The following is not guaranteed but represents years of experience.

Quick, unplug it! Unless there is a likely shock hazard. Look up the instructions (best to do this when you buy it). Find out if there is any prohibition against using ALCOHOL. Alcohol can dissolve some materials.

There are generally two items to have handy. One is *distilled* water to first wash off and dilute any spill, especially anything that might be conductive. The second is alcohol, 90+% isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol. Ethyl alcohol or ethanol – 90% - will work too. Alcohol has an affinity for water. Rinsing the item first with the distilled water and then with alcohol will dilute, pick up water, carry it away, and evaporate quickly. The higher percent alcohol 90% vs 50% have a greater affinity for water.

Time is important. You do not want water to soak into an otherwise insulating medium, especially water that contains something conductive like salt. It will leave a conductive residue that will short out portions of the device. That is why you want to *rinse first* with distilled water to carry away any conductive residue and then the alcohol to remove the water film. *Most tap water has dissolved minerals* that remain after the water evaporates, hence the distilled water to rinse these away.

After, and I repeat AFTER, the above cleaning, you can use *very modest heat to help dry out* the item. You can use a hair dryer at some distance. Make sure you don't heat the item any hotter than is comfortable to hold. Some plastic materials deform at relatively low temperatures.

Remember the order: (1) rinse with distilled water (2) rinse with alcohol (3) *warm gently* with hair dryer or

warming oven.

For items immersed in flood waters, the above approach can be tried but the outlook is not promising. Generally the conductive flood waters have had time to soak into the various insulating materials and are almost impossible to remove. Still, it may be worth a try, especially if you have the time and possible success is worth the effort. Distilled water and alcohol are not very expensive. Most circuit boards are coated with varnish to resist moisture. In this case, wash repeatedly with distilled water. Use a soft brush to remove any remaining film such as mud. Then, the alcohol followed by the dryer. Using the dryer prematurely can "set" the offending material to the point that it may be almost unremovable. So save it for the very last step after you are sure things are clean. Your efforts may save part if not all of the equipment.

Bob Schwartz is a HAL-PC member, retired EE, 14 patents, technical writer, active in civic affairs: President, Brays Bayou Association; Vice President, Marilyn Estates Civic Association; Correspondence Secretary with the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy.

IF YOU LIKE GMAIL, YOU MIGHT LOVE MAILPLANE
Written by Kurt Jefferson, Macintosh SIG Leader, Central Kentucky Computer Society
May 2009 Newsletter
www.ckcs.org

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Raise your hand if you use Gmail (Google"s email service). Plenty of people do. But I have always preferred viewing my email using an email client rather than Web mail. (A client is just computer jargon for an email program such as Apple Mail, Microsoft Entourage, or Thunderbird).

For free, Gmail allows you to configure your email client so you're able to get and send email that way rather than through Gmail's Web site. You can even choose between POP (an older system of email delivery) or IMAP (a newer system).

But using Apple's Mail program with Gmail didn't seem to be the best option for me. Joe Kissell, who's written a number of books about Apple Mail and email in general, writes in a TidBits article: *In particular, if you expect Mail (or any IMAP client) to work just like Gmail's Web interface in the way it handles archiving, some of what I describe here may disappoint you.*

Kissell writes that Gmail started life as a Web–only email system without folders. The idea was to throw all your email into one big mailbox and then do a Google search to find older messages. Later, Kissell says, Gmail allowed users to apply multiple labels to messages. That way, it was easier to find messages by remembering which label or labels applied to a specific message.

Finally, Google decided to allow users to access their Gmail accounts through their own email client. But there could be a catch if you own more than one Mac or PC. Kissell says the folks at Gmail monitor what they consider to be excessive email activity such as downloading all of your IMAP messages a number of times each day. The mathematical equation detailing what Google considers excessive isn"t public, but Kissell has run into the brick wall before. He says he"s been locked out of all IMAP access for up to 24 hours.

In other words, when Kissell checked his email, Gmail stopped delivery because he exceeded the message limit. How did he get around this? You can follow step–by–step directions in his TidBit''s article. You might especially be interested in the section labeled, " How to Configure Everything for Maximum Happiness."

Joe Kissell's Tidbits article is here: http://db.tidbits.com/article/10253 Kissell changed his settings in Apple Mail so he could live with Gmail''s reliance on labels and archiving, Mail''s reliance on mailboxes (folders), and the fact that Gmail began life as a Web mail service.

I went another route. Since I''m not a huge fan of Web mail (I use it when I''m away from home but prefer a small client), I because searching for alternatives to use my Gmail account.

I stumbled upon an article in Macworld describing an email program which I had never heard of before. It used WebKit, the same open source software on which Apple''s Safari is built.

In other words, this email program mimics Gmail''s Webmail (even though it''s not Webmail), works only with Gmail, and provides a toolbar that can be customized.
The program is called Mailplane. It''s unique in that it supports standard Mac OS X features, allows Google searches from within the program when activated, and uses Gmail''s labeling and archiving options. A plug–in allows the user to send photos from within iPhoto. The Dock icon notifies the user by revealing how many new unread messages have arrived. A Mailplane icon in the menu bar also reveals the new message count, checks for incoming messages, and lets the user quickly check for messages in more than one Gmail account.

One of my favorite features is Mailplane''s address book. It pulls email addresses directly from Apple''s Address Book in my Applications folder. I can either begin typing a recipient''s address in the proper Mailplane pane and it will autofill or I can choose Mail --> Insert --> Email Address from the program''s menu bar.

If you''re a fan of Gmail''s keyboard commands don''t sweat it. You''ll be glad to know that Mailplane uses most of the same Mac shortcuts. Need to include an attachment? Simply drag and drop it into the Mailplane window (or click on the paper clip and find the attachment in the Finder). One neat feature lets the user adjust the size and quality of an attachment by user a slider bar. In addition, Mailplane 2.1(in beta) supports offline Gmail so the user can read his or her messages without being connected to the Internet.

As I write this, I have 26 days left to evaluate the program. It costs $24.95 for one copy or $15 for a family option. If you''ve got up to 5 Macs in your household, the latter is the wiser purchase.

Mailplane is not perfect. It is a work in progress. But so far, it appears to offer a good alternative for Gmail users who don''t like to use Web mail. As Google keeps expanding its Google Labs programs, Mailplane keeps allowing the user to expand the email program's offerings. If you use Gmail on a Mac, give Mailplane a chance. You might find yourself wondering how you got along without it.

Dan Frake''s review of Mailplane 2.0.9 is here (Mailplane is now in version 2.0.10)
http://www.macworld.com/article/140479/2009/05/mailplane.html

Read about Mailplane from the developer''s Web site: http://www.mailplaneapp.com/

The Unofficial Apple Web Blog review of an earlier version of Mailplane:
http://www.tuaw.com/2007/03/15/first-impressions-mailplane-the-desktop-gmail-client/

Thinkmac.net Review of Mailplane:
http://www.thinkmac.net/review/review-mailplane-gmail-application-your-mac-desktop

MacUser (the British magazine) review of an earlier version of Mailplane:
http://www.macuser.co.uk/reviews/186447/mailplane.html

Bill Sodeman reviews Mailplane at BrightHub:
http://www.brighthub.com/computing/mac-platform/reviews/2214.aspx

Social Networking – What is it, really?
Written by Phil Sorrentino, President, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
www.spcug.org
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Social Networking is all over the news; Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter are the ones that get the most play. So what are they, really? Well, they're websites that provide another way of keeping in touch with friends, family, and associates. What are some older social networking methods? Maybe, the Telegram, the Telephone, Visiting on Sunday, Writing Letters. These are all ways of keeping in touch with your family and/or circle of friends. Yesterday we had these less technical ways of keeping in touch. Today we have the computer to help us keep in touch via email, instant messaging, Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) telephone, and social networking. Social networking has encouraged new ways to communicate and share information. Social networking websites are being used regularly by millions of people, and it now seems that social networking will become a regular part of everyday computer life.

Social Networking is probably the newest technology and revolves around an internet website that provides social networking services. How about this for a definition of a social network: A site that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; to create a list of other users with whom they have a connection; and to view their list of connections and those made by others within the system. With that in mind, a social network focuses on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities. Most social network services are web based and provide a variety of ways for users to interact, such as e-mail and instant messaging.

On many of the large Social Networking sites, participants are not necessarily "networking" or looking to meet new people; instead, they are primarily communicating with people who are already a part of their extended social network, such as on Facebook and Twitter.

While it could be said that email and regular websites have most of the essential elements of social networks, the social networking sites make it easy to use. Here's a look at some of the more popular sites.

Linkedin (www.linkedin.com) – LinkedIn is mostly for business people and professionals. People use it to maintain contacts and to develop new business opportunities. To use LinkedIn, you create a profile where you describe yourself, listing work and education history, skills, specialties, etc. Just like a resume. Once you have your profile, you start connecting to others. That's the driving force behind LinkedIn. You use your connections to promote yourself and build relationships.

Twitter (www.twitter.com) – Twitter is a micro blogging service. When it started out, people used it to tell others what they were doing at various times during the day. Now it has evolved into a way to tell people about your activities and then provide a link to further details. SPCUG as a group could have its own Twitter account. Once we had it, interested members could "follow" it and receive our group information known as "tweets" delivered to them. A Twitter "tweet" has a limit of 140 characters. This may possibly be a substitute for our use of Constant Contact to contact the membership for changes in educational class schedules.

Facebook (www.backbook.com).Facebook is sort of a cross between LinkedIn and Twitter. Facebook used to be mainly for students, but has become more mainstream. Like LinkedIn, you build a profile of yourself, where you talk about what your interests and hobbies are. Like Twitter, you can do micro blogging about things you want people to know. In Facebook, you have friends as opposed to connections or followers.

Users of Social Networks, in general, can upload a picture of themselves, create their "profile" and can often be "friends" with other users. In most social networks, both users must confirm that they are friends before they are linked. For example, if Alice lists Bob as a friend, then Bob would have to approve Alice's friend request before they are listed as friends. Some social networking sites have a "favorites" feature that does not need approval from the other user. Social networks usually have privacy controls that allow the user to choose who can view their profile or contact them, etc.

Privacy of Social Networks is a big concern. On large social networks, there have been growing concerns about users giving out too much personal information and the threat of sexual predators. Users of these networks need to be aware of data theft and viruses. However, large networks often work with law enforcement to try to prevent such incidents.

Access to one's information is also of great concern. Many social networks such as Facebook, provide the user the choice of who can view their profile. This prevents unauthorized user(s) from accessing their information. To edit information on a social network account, the site usually requires you to login or provide an access code. This prevents unauthorized users from editing an account such as posting pictures or changing personal information.

Social Networking is a promising new technology for staying in touch. Give it a try, there must be some group of people you would like to keep in touch with.

Is It Time To Switch To 64 Bit Windows?
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In my February 2008 article in the Monitor comparing 32 bit and 64 bit computing, I was still advising caution for those wishing to upgrade. Today every new computer is capable of running a 64 bit operating system. As a result there are many voices saying if you have the capability to run a 64 bit operating system, you should take

advantage of it. Microsoft had previously indicated that Windows 7 would be available only in a 64 bit version. However, they now say both 32 & 64 bit versions will be sold. There some speculation in the computer industry that Windows 8 may only be 64 bit. So it appears to be time to reconsider the move to a 64 bit operating system (OS). There are many advantages for 64 bit over 32 bit, but in order to better understand them, we need to take a brief look at how these will affect your decision.

To start with we should recall a little history. In the early days of personal computing the processors instruction sets were designed for 8 bit "words". This was the data size that could be used to express a single character. A bit is either a "1" or a "0". Eight bits were then referred to as a "byte" and that was considered a computer "word". In those days the CPUs we had were the Intel 8080, the Zilog Z80, Motorola 6800, and the MOS Tech 6502. These were all 8 bit processors with 8 bit data paths. The Apple I/II/IIe and Commodore Pet all used the 6502. IBM designed the first x86 CPU which was called the 8086 and it was a 16 bit processor. However, when IBM produced their first personal computer in 1981 it used their 8088 processor which was an 8 bit version of the 8086. The next step was to the 16 bit processor with the 80286 processor in 1984. The software changes rapidly followed this advance. The change to 16 bit processing allowed the central processor and the data bus to transfer data in increasingly larger sizes, referred to as double words. The 32 bit processor arrived in 1989 followed by the 64 bit in 2005. As this history shows, the 64 bit computer is just one more generational step in processing power. In addition, a computer "word" is now considered to be 16 bits, not 8 bits. So a 64 bit processor can handle a quadruple word (4x16). Naturally, the increase in the width of the CPU/data path does increase processing speed.

Every time the hardware has changed, there has been a delay while the software manufacturers play catchup. Applications have to be rewritten to take advantage of the hardware changes including the new instructions in the CPU instruction set. Only then can the application take advantage of the added processing power. Although Windows has been available in a 64 bit form since XP was released, it adoption has been quite slow. Many software manufacturers did not make 64 bit versions of their applications. This coupled with the limited acceptance of Vista has markedly slowed the shift from 32 bit to 64 bit. Another factor in this process is the development of 64 bit drivers for peripherals such as printers, scanners, graphics cards, wireless modems, network cards, etc. Microsoft has also indicated that Windows 7 will not install 64 bit drivers unless the software is "Microsoft Certified". Some manufacturers have obtained certification for some of their 64 bit drivers. For example, my Brother multi-function machine has a certified driver for 64 bit Windows. If you don't have a 64 bit certified driver, your peripheral will not work under Windows 7. Neither Vista64 nor Win7-64 will accept 32 bit drivers. Something to check out before you pop for a 64 bit OS. However, if you are buying an upgrade version of Windows 7, several of them are supposed to come with both the 64 bit and 32 bit versions in the box, but not in the OEM versions. This specifically applies to the Home Premium, Professional and Ultimate versions (as of this writing and may be subject to change by Microsoft.).

Another advantage of a 64 bit processor is in its memory management. By now I would hope that everyone understands that the 32 bit generation of computers can address a maximum of 4 gigabytes of RAM. This is the maximum number of addresses that can be handled and is calculated from 2^{32} or two to the thirty-second power. This includes addresses needed by the system as well as the data. A 64 bit processor can address 2^{64} addresses or roughly ten billion more than the 32 bit processor. The catch here is that both the hardware manufacturers and Microsoft have imposed limitations on the addressable memory. Generally, new personal computer's are limited to 128 GB of memory or less. Some manufacturers configure their laptops for a maximum of 4 GB of RAM. Windows OS software is also highly variable in its limits. Some versions of Vista limit addressing to as little as 8 GB (Home Basic & Premium). It is expected that these limits will be raised in Windows 7. For the present, these levels should be more than adequate for most people. If not keep in mind that it is the Ultimate versions of Vista and Windows 7 that have the maximum addressing ability.

The next thing to consider is the software compatibility. Just because you have a new operating system, no one really wants to have to upgrade all their software from 32 bit to 64 bit. For that reason both Intel CPU's and AMD CPU's are not true native 64 bit processors. They are, in fact, hybrids. By this I mean that they allow 32 bit code to run in an emulation mode. Consequently, 64 bit Windows has an emulation mode, Windows on Windows, which allows 32 bit software to be run. WOW intercepts system calls to the operating system made by a 32-bit application and switches the CPU to 32 bit mode. It can switch the CPU between 32 bit and 64 bit as needed. This also allows the 64 bit AMD/Intel CPU's to run a 32 bit OS. The only true 64 bit, non-hybrid operating systems for PC's are found in Intel's Itanium processor (IA64) and the various 64 bit versions of Linux. Systems using these CPUs will give you all the benefits of 64 bit computing, but require all 64 bit software. Windows WOW64 also allows for some 32 bit software to run on the IA64 CPU by converting 32 bit calls to 64 bit.

Windows XP, Vista and Win7 contain large numbers of dll files. These are system libraries, many of which are loaded into memory when the computer is booted. In the 64 bit OS, these libraries can not be used by 32 bit software so instead, there are duplicate libraries written in 32 bit code included in Windows. Microsoft has devised a system so that these libraries can co-exist on the hard drive and in RAM without overwriting the files or accessing the wrong file so that 32 bit code can be run under the 64 bit OS. Sounds good, doesn't it? Yes, it does work, but with some caveats. Adding an emulation layer does slow the overall processing of software instructions. Also, there is an increase in the amount of memory (virtual memory included) needed for the additional 32 bit libraries that are loaded along with the 64 bit dlls at boot time.

There are other problems, but to a somewhat lesser extent as it affects fewer software applications. Some 32 bit applications still use 16 bit loaders. Since Windows 64 does not support **ANY** 16 bit code, these applications will not run, unless Windows can transparently substitute an installer with 32 bit code. Hopefully, all 32 bit software will eventually have 32 bit loaders or be replaced with 64 bit code. Additionally, some 32 bit software requires the use of 32 bit drivers. These drivers will not run on any 64 bit Windows platform. So until the drivers are available in a 64 bit form, these applications can't be used with Windows 64.

Another consideration is that any utility software that works at the hardware level must be 64 bit. This generally includes anti-virus software and other anti-malware products. Those few manufacturers I have checked do have 64 bit versions of their applications available. This includes some which provide free utility applications. This is just one more item that should be checked before you decide to move to a 64 bit OS.

If you decide you want to upgrade to the 64 bit version of Windows 7 when it is available, then you have several more things to consider. No matter which 32 bit Windows version you are currently using, you will have to do a "clean" install of the 64 bit version. That means backing up your data to an external medium and formatting your hard drive or at least a part of it (one partition). You can install Windows 7 in a new partition and dual boot with it and your current Windows version. Or you can install the new version in the space reclaimed from your old version. Either way you will have to reinstall software and drivers. Then you can restore your data. Only if you upgrade to the Windows 7 32 bit version from Vista can you do an "in-place" upgrade. If you are still running XP you have no choice but to do a clean install to convert to the 64 bit version. Of course, if you buy a new computer with the 64 bit Windows 7 installed that reduces your problem to just installing applications and data from your old computer.

I have already pre-ordered a 64 bit version of Windows 7. So, you see, I have answered the question I posed in the title of this article. When it arrives, in October, I will be installing it, then testing drivers and applications. You probably won't see any of my experience until the December Monitor. In the meantime, I have obtained a 64 bit version of the Linux OS, Ubuntu. Over the next few months I will be installing and testing it on my computer. So you will be seeing more about 64 bit computing. I hope it will help you as the entire industry continues to move into a fully 64 bit era. Just think, the next move, in a few years, will probably be to 128 bit computing!