ACPCUG Newsletter
October 2009

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

October Meeting
October 5th, 2009, 6 pm
PC Security: What's In Your PC part II—Mike Sabol
BelARC Advisor—Gerry Schaefer
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.

Belarc Advisor

Gerry Schaefer will be discussing Belarc Advisor at the October Meeting.

Gerry requests each member download Belarc, run it on you macvhine and come to the October Meeting with a printout of Belarc Advisor from your machine.

CNET gives glowing accolades when it says:

CNET Staff on November 08, 2008:

"Hiring a professional computer-security consultant is out of reach for most home PC users, but Belarc Advisor can fill part of that gap.

The app analyzes a machine's weak points, looking at elements such as whether antivirus software is up to date, or whether all the security flaws in Windows have been patched. It uses the Center for Internet Security (CIS) benchmark test to give the computer a score showing its overall security level, and produces a report that can be viewed in a Web browser."

http://download.cnet.com/Belarc-Advisor/3000-2094_4-10007277.html

Belarc reports:
"The Belarc Advisor builds a detailed profile of your installed software and hardware, missing Microsoft hotfixes, anti-virus status, CIS (Center for Internet Security) benchmarks, and displays the results in your Web browser. All of your PC profile information is kept private on your PC and is not sent to any web server. "

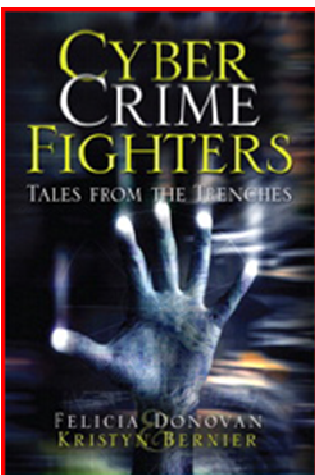http://www.belarc.com/free_download.html

Cyber Crime Fighters: Tales from the Trenches
Reviewed by Steven M. Breitbart, Director, NOCCC (North Orange County Computer Club, California)

Orange Bytes, July 2009
www.nocc.org
sbreitbart (at) socal.rr.com

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).

I have never wanted one of my book reviews to be on Page 1 of the Orange Bytes before now. The Internet has become an entity where all of the old evils are amplified and expanded, and new evils have been created. As the book says "Once again, computer technology and the Internet is a double edged sword, providing tools both for those involved in illegal drug activity as well as for those seeking justice." You can just as easily plug in identity theft, child pornography or any other crime that can be committed using the Internet.

This book explores many, if not most of the crimes committed
using the Internet. The authors, Felicia Donovan and Kristyn Bernier have "over 25 years of combined law enforcement experience." They discuss cyber stalking, identity theft, online dating, child pornography, social networks, illegal drugs and peer-to-peer network crimes. The crimes range from bullying, stalking or stealing the victims' identity all the way to murder.

The book is written for the ordinary person who is not an IT professional. They describe an honest, if pessimistic view of the Internet. It appears that someone illegally exchanging songs using a peer-to-peer network is more likely to be sued by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) for music piracy than people who acquire child pornography are to be arrested by law enforcement.

One thing I have learned from this book is that if you have a business with any sort of network and access to the Internet, you must either have an IT person or be the IT person yourself. You must have policies clearly defining acceptable uses of business computers and make sure every employee understand the risks involved of visiting risky web sites. You must have procedures, hardware and software in place to make sure nothing sensitive gets out or nothing dangerous, such as spyware and viruses, get
in.

Another thing is that you should initiate all actions and not respond to web sites or emails offering any type of get-rich quick scheme or warning. If you get an email asking you to send money, promising that you'll get back more, it's probably one of many types of scams. If the scam isn't asking to you to send money, it's asking for enough information so they can steal it directly out of your bank accounts - having acquired your name, user identification and password. The authors describe how pedophiles have posed as children and get information from real children, who give out all sorts of information on Facebook, MySpace or other social networking web sites.

Sometimes they get the children to do things in front of their webcams. Once recorded, these videos are circulated among the community of pedophiles. If the pedophiles can get the children to meet them in person, they are often molested or worse.

A great thing about the book is that they include a lot of information on how to protect yourself, your family and your business, but it is scattered all over the book. What we all need is a pamphlet summarizing all the recommended procedures and different web sites we can go to for help.

The whole thing reminds me of an episode of the television show Criminal Minds. The victim asks FBI Agent Hotchner "How many of these people are out there?" He replies, "More than you want to know." While the characters were not talking about Cyber Crime, the result is the same. As long as I mentioned a television show, I would like to thank the authors for Appendix B, which describes the incredible differences between television's version of law enforcement and the real thing. It seems to me that animated cartoons resemble reality more.

There are seventeen chapters in the book, plus two appendices. Sixteen of the chapters are chock full of case after case of criminal activities committed using the Internet. While it seems repetitive and tedious, one must remember that this is a small sample of what law enforcement and other agencies find. The book usually describes what happened to the victims and whether the criminals were caught. As one would expect, it doesn't usually cover the techniques that law enforcement

uses too much. Law enforcement is apparently at such a disadvantage in terms of funding, personnel and legal requirements that they cannot afford to give away any information.

Law enforcement is fighting an uphill battle. A lot of the "evil" is coming in from other countries, the criminals are able to remain anonymous on the Internet, and law enforcement is constantly crippled by a lack of budget or personnel for specialized squads. Add to this the fact that the laws applying to cyber crime vary from state to state, technical challenges and other factors; you get a very pessimistic picture. The Internet is an almost lawless place and it is up to the user to be vigilant.
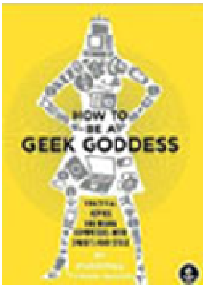
There are a few small issues I have with the book. The title did not excite me; the word "trenches" is used to mean everything from real world experiences to military operations to undercover investigations; how about "online front line" instead. They repeat various agency names and their acronyms over and over. Either use the full name once along with the acronym, then use just the acronym for, say, the rest of the chapter. The photographs they used for the Internet address line that says "https" and the padlock icon weren't clear enough to see. Also, in the chapter where they describe botnets, they begin with a clear description. Two pages later, they say they will define botnets "later" - but they already have.

The last chapter is "How We Would Combat Cyber Crime." They have many good ideas and I hope the new Cybersecurity Czar will at least listen to the advice of these authors. I highly recommend this book for anyone who uses the Internet.

It will certainly be too simple for people already involved in computer security. However, the rest of us need to understand what can happen if we are unaware of the pitfalls of using the Internet.

Cyber Crime Fighters: Tales from the Trenches, by Felecia Donovan and Kristyn Bernier; ©2009 Pearson Education, Inc. (part of Addison-Wesley Professional) Boston, MA. ISBN-13: 978-0-7897-3922-3; ISBN-10: 0-7897-3922-4
List price is $21.99, but is available for $17.15 at Amazon.com. If your group is a member of the Pearson User Group program, members will receive a 35% discount. Purchase of the book includes a free 45-day online edition through Safari Bookshelf.

How to Be a Geek Goddess
Reviewed by Sandy Berger, CompuKISS
www.compukiss.com
sandy (at) compukiss.com

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).

I am an old hat when it comes to technology. I was a computer programmer back in the seventies before computers came into the home, and I've kept my hand in the technology arena all these years with my own computer consulting business and my technical writing career. Yet I've never considered myself a "Geek Goddess". As a matter of fact I have often been a little aggravated to hear Kim Komando refer to herself as "The Digital Goddess" — like she is something really special.

But Christina Tynan-Wood in her book, How to Be a Geek Goddess, isn't advocating that a Geek goddess is someone above everyone else. She says that being a Geek Goddess is "a simple matter of embracing the incredible innovation that's going on in our times and harness it for our own purposes".

Oh yes, and Christina understands the differences between how men and women look at, and deal with, technology. She starts the book off with the sentence, "My husband is a pompous ass." Many of us have noticed how men seem to pound their chests and promote themselves as the technology heroes of the day. Women, on the other hand, just want to use and enjoy technology.

Christina's book is filled with good information about technology with everything from how to choose a computer sales person to hooking up with others online. There are tips on everything from controlling your email to trouble-shooting a wireless connection. Chapters include: Getting in Touch with Your Software Side, Where the Stores Never Close, The Wireless Home, Keeping It Safe, Geek Parenting, Groovy Gear and Gadgets, and Your 200 Closest Friends.

The information in this 315 page book is all accurate and informative. Yet, this is not a reference book. It is rather like a free-flowing novel with technical information. If you want a book where you can look up how to do things, you will have to look elsewhere. This is a book for women who want to absorb some pointers here and there while reading about all the things you can do with your computer. If you are already very familiar with computers, you can skip this book. But again, if you want to immerse yourself in technology and pick up some knowledge and useful tidbits on the way, you will love this book. And you may even become a Geek Goddess yourself!

FastStone Image Viewer 3.9
Written by Charlotte Brown, President of the Canton/Alliance/Massillon Users Group, Ohio
www.camug.com
cbrown (at) my stepco.com

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).

If you want a really simple but powerful basic photo program, look no farther than FastStone Image Viewer 3.9. This is the program that I encourage my students to use in the beginning of their picture enhancing journey. When you want to do more things than Image Viewer offers, you can add another program. Many of the programs that help you through the next steps are also free. Working through the basics into more advanced techniques is not as overwhelming as jumping into the middle of a professional program and wondering how to do simple things such as cropping, adjusting light, changing to sepia or grayscale, or even converting to other file formats.

FastStone Image Viewer has powerful capabilities of batch converting images from one format to another, for example, from jpg to png. It also allows for batch renaming & resizing, batch watermarking and dpi adjustments and more. To keep things simple, let me walk you through the process of taking only 1 picture at a time through a series of adjustments to make the final print.

I always use 3 windows when working with FastStone Image Viewer. This is the default setting. The upper left window allows you to browse through Windows Explorer to the folder containing your photos. Double clicking the folder opens thumbnails of the files in a large window on the right. When you

click on a picture to select it, you see a large thumbnail in the lower left-hand window. Look over my shoulder as I browse to **Pictures** and double click the folder inside that I have named Christmas 08. Large thumbnails of all the picture files in that folder now appear in the large window. I will select a file titled Jayden. Now Jayden's picture appears not only in the window on the right but also as a large thumbnail in the lower left hand corner.

The first thing I do is click File > Save As. I rename the file as JaydenP and use the drop-down menu by File Type to select png. Then I click Save. The new file appears in the large window with all the other thumbnails. It is much bigger than the original jpg. It is now in a *lossless* format, allowing me to make all kinds of changes without losing any of the information originally captured by the camera. I could choose to work with tiff to accomplish the same capabilities. Png files allow me to cut out transparent areas if I wish and the file size is smaller.

Let me insert something that will interest those of you who are doing more advanced work. The rest of you can skip to the next paragraph! When I double click the picture, it fills my entire window. Moving the mouse to the right side of the screen brings up information about the picture. One of the tab choices is Histogram. That provides me with information about the lighting. Here is a little tip. If you double click the original jpg or you decide to save as tiff instead of png, the tab titled EXIF will give you all the camera information captured when you snapped the picture: date and time, make and model of camera, ISO setting (much the same as film speed in the olden days), the aperture setting, shutter speed, focal length, and whether or not the flash fired.

Now let me return to the really simple process of working with JaydenP, my png file. I click on Edit on the menu bar, and then click on Resize / Resample. Now I can choose to size my picture by number of pixels, percentage or print size. In this case I want to make a color print so I will click on the radio button titled Print size. Next I will select 300 dpi by using the drop down menu or hand entering the numbers. Remember that digital cameras were developed for digital viewing. Most digital camera settings take pictures at 72 dpi. When you resize to 300 dpi, you have a much clearer picture that has a slimming effect on your subject that is much more flattering!

In this case my picture is portrait, not landscape, so I will choose 5 x 7. I put a check mark in the selection box titled Preserve Aspect Ratio so I don't create distortion effects similar to those created by convex or concave mirrors! I notice that the photo will not be exactly 5 x 7. One thing to remember is that digital pictures are not the same scale as film pictures. In this example, my picture turns out to be 5.25 x 7. I click OK. Now I am back to the 3 pane original window and my picture is still selected (blue frame around it). Now I click on the cropping tool. I check the Paper Ration to make sure it says 7 x 5 and has a check mark by Flip Ration so that I get a 5 x 7. A dotted line around the picture shows that the program is suggesting an even crop from both sides. After looking at the picture carefully, I decide I want the entire crop to come from the left side. When I move the mouse onto the picture, it becomes a 4-sided arrow. I click and drag the dotted outline to the right as far as I can and click Crop followed by Close. The picture is still selected in the main work area.

Now I click on the Red Eye control on the toolbars below the menu bars. The picture pops open in a new screen. I like to use a zoom ration of 200%. Then I click in the middle of the eye and draw a circle that covers the entire eye. I can click in the middle of the circle I have drawn, hold down the mouse, and move the circle to fine-tune its location. Then I click Remove Red Eye. Whoosh! It is gone. The program takes me back to the mail work are with the three windows.

I click once more on Edit. This time I chose Enhance Colors. The picture opens in a full screen with controls at the bottom for adjusting brightness, contrast, gamma, red, green and blue levels, hue and saturation. You can create some wild looks here. I brighten the picture slightly and make a small color shift to enhance the reds. I click on "Hold Down to See Original Image" to make sure I like the adjustments I have made. When I am satisfied, I click OK. Once again I click on File > Save As. This time I rename the file Jayden 5x7 and select the type as jpg. All my changes hold. The picture is still 300 dpi. The size will be perfect with no surprise cropping by the photo lab.

The program allows for so much more: adding text, straightening a picture before cropping, creating slide shows, and things I haven't yet explored. I downloaded the newest version this week. There is now an 83-page manual you can download to learn from clear directions and screen shots how to take advantage of this marvelous program. The manual was written by Bill Westerhoff who has written tutorials on other free photo products as well as Photoshop Elements 3-7.

I suppose you now are wondering about the price. First of all you need to know where to get the program. Go to www.faststone.org. There is no charge to download this program. You will be encouraged to give a donation keep the developers encouraged to work on future enhancements. If you decide you like the program as well as I do, you will want to help them. There is no set fee, so whatever you choose to give is up to you.

Googlepedia
A review by George Harding, President, Tucson Computer Society, AZ
www.aztcs.org
georgehardingsbd(at)earthlink.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).

This book is the greatest! If you are interested in anything Google, this is the place to go to find out about it.

This is a Que book, the 3rd edition, by Michael Miller, who is a prolific author for Que. He's written some 80 non-fiction how-to books, mostly about computer-related
subjects.

The book has over 700 pages, including a comprehensive index, a very complete Table of Contents, 46 chapters and 3 appendices.

I suspect that a 4th edition is not far off, because Google is constantly developing new tools that you will want to know about.

The best known Google tool is the Web Search engine. In the olden days, say five years ago, there were several search engines, all of which produced a list of results that contained many duplicates and may not even have produced something useful to you.

Google took a new approach to produce search results that do not have duplicates, are up-to-date and are sequenced by probable usefulness to you. They do this by the following process:

Periodically, usually every few weeks, their GoogleBot crawler searches the web for each page, tracks every link in the page and saves a copy of each page it encounters on its servers.

Google creates an index to each of the saved pages, storing every important word on each page.

Once a search of the pages is complete, the results are ranked by methods known only by Google.

The rankings are displayed on the search results page in order by what is likely to be the most important to you, to the least likely. There are many techniques to making a successful search, and these are described fully in the book. Using quotes or operators can significantly improve the accuracy of your search.

What's most interesting, though, is all the other services provided by Google. I suspect you, like me, are not aware of many of these:

GOOG-411. Search for businesses by voice from your cell phone. Dial 1-800-GOOG-411 to try it out.

Google Desktop. Create a home page environment that has just what you want on it.
Google Docs. Word processing, spreadsheet and presentation documents on the web, sharable with others.

Google Earth, Sky and Mars. Tools to explore these areas.

Google Gmail. An email portal.

Google Groups. Create and join specific discussion groups.

Google Maps. View maps and driving directions.

Google Notebook. Store web information you come across.

Google Reader. Display articles and headlines from blogs and RSS feeds.

Google Scholar. Read and search scholarly journals and articles.

Google Transit. Plan your trip using public transportation.

Google News and Web Alerts. Be advised of new material that meets your criteria.

And more…

Each chapter tells you about a Google service and how to use it. Each description is described sim-

ply to begin with, but continues with more details about how to make use of special features. You can easily be an expert user of any of their tools through this book.

All of these services came out of the Google Labs, which is essentially an R & D facility. It is constantly on the search for new, useful tools for users. One recently announced service is Google Voice that gives you free phone calls within the US, but also forwards calls to your cell phone and land line and transcribes voice messages into email.

I found this book fascinating, because it opened my eyes to all the things that are available from Google. It will take me some time to learn about the ones in which I'm interested.

About: Googlepedia

Author: Michael Miller

Publisher: Que Publications
www.informit.com/que

ISBN-10:   0789738201
ISBN-13:   978-0789738202

Price: $30, $24 with free membership

Broadsides
Compiled by Ron Broadhurst, a member of the Space Coast PC Users Group, Inc., FL
The Space Coast PC Journal, June 2009
www.scpcug.com
shiron (at) cfl.rr.com

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).

Dear friends,
These ideas are compiled from years of accumulations from various magazines, books, on-line sites and my own personal experience. I claim neither originality nor ownership to any of its contents. My only intent is to share the various "tips, "tricks", & "hints" in hopes of helping & maybe enhancing your computing experiences. They are all intended for anyone who uses a PC. It is for beginners as well as advanced users. Enjoy and use as you will.

Ron Broadhurst

TURN OFF INDEXING TO SPEED UP XP

Windows XP keeps a record of all files on the hard disk so when you do a search on the hard drive it is faster. There is a downside to this and because the computer has to index all files, it will slow down normal file commands like open, close, etc. If you do not do a whole lot of searches on your hard drive then you may want to turn this feature off:

• Open My Computer.
• Right-click your hard drive icon and select Properties.
• At the bottom of the window you'll see "Allow indexing service to index this disk for faster searches," uncheck this and click ok.
• A new window will pop up and select Apply to all folders and subfolders.

It will take a minute or two for the changes to take affect but then you should enjoy slightly faster performance.

CORRECTING SYSTEM HANG AT STARTUP

If your system hangs about 2 or 3 minutes at startup, where you can't access the Start button or the Taskbar, it may be due to one specific service (Background Intelligent Transfer) running in the background. Microsoft put out a patch for this but it didn't work for me. Here's what you do:

• Click on Start/Run, type 'msconfig', and then click 'OK'.
• Go to the 'Services' tab; find the 'Background Intelligent Transfer' service. Disable it, apply the changes & reboot.

CHANGE THE START MENU STYLE TO CLASSIC

Does the new Windows XP Start menu take up too much space on your desktop? You can easily change the look back to the Windows Classic Start menu by following these steps:

• Right–click the Start button, and then click Properties.
• Click Classic Start menu.
• Click the Customize button to select items to display on the Start menu.

By default, selecting the Classic Start menu also adds the My Documents, My Computer, My Network Places, and Internet Explorer icons to your desktop.

DISPLAY YOUR QUICK LAUNCH TOOLBAR

• Right-click an empty area on the taskbar, click Toolbars, and then click Quick Launch.
• Easy as that your Quick Launch bar appears.
• To add items to your Quick Launch toolbar, click the icon for the program you want to add, and drag it to the Quick Launch portion of the taskbar.

KEEP YOUR FAVORITE PROGRAMS NEAR THE TOP OF THE START MENU

Do you have a favorite program that you frequently use? Elevate its priority on the Start menu by putting it at the top of the list. This ensures that the program will remain on
the Start menu and cannot be bumped by other programs, even if you use the others more frequently.

Right-click the link to your favorite program on the Start menu and select Pin to Start Menu. Your program will be moved permanently to the top part of the list, just below
your browser and e-mail programs.

CHANGE OUT YOUR POINTER SCHEME

Tired of seeing your pointer as an arrow or an hourglass all the time? Windows XP offers a number of alternative pointer schemes, such as Dinosaur, Ocean and Sports:

• Open the Control Panel, double-click Mouse, and select the Pointers tab. (If you start in Category view, select Appearance and Themes, then click Mouse Pointers under "See Also").
• Next to Schemes, click the down arrow and select a scheme to preview its pointers.
Click OK to apply the scheme to your desktop.

CREATE A PERSONAL SCREEN SAVER

For a great way to put your digital photos to work, try creating a slide show presentation for use as a screen saver.

• Right–click an empty spot on your desktop, and then click Properties.
• Click the Screen Saver tab.
• In the Screen saver list, click My Pictures Slideshow.
• Click Settings to make any adjustments, such as how often the pictures should change, what size they should be, and whether you'll use transition effects between pictures, and then click OK.

Now your screen saver is a random display of the pictures taken from your My Pictures folder.

If Your Computer Gets Wet…What?
Written by Bob Schwartz, a member of HAL-PC, Texas
www.hal-pc.org
 bobx (at) hal-pc.org

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).

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.

Vista Task Scheduler
Written by Vinny LaBash, Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida
www.spcug.org
vlabash (at) comcast.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).

Windows draws its share of critics, but one thing the wizards of Redmond did right was to redesign the XP Task Scheduler for Vista. There were no radical revisions, simply a combination of small changes that made a big difference. The tool is easy to access, easy to use, easy to modify if necessary, and easy to tell it to go away when you don't need it anymore.

Why would you want to use it? If your computer activity includes doing anything on a regular basis,
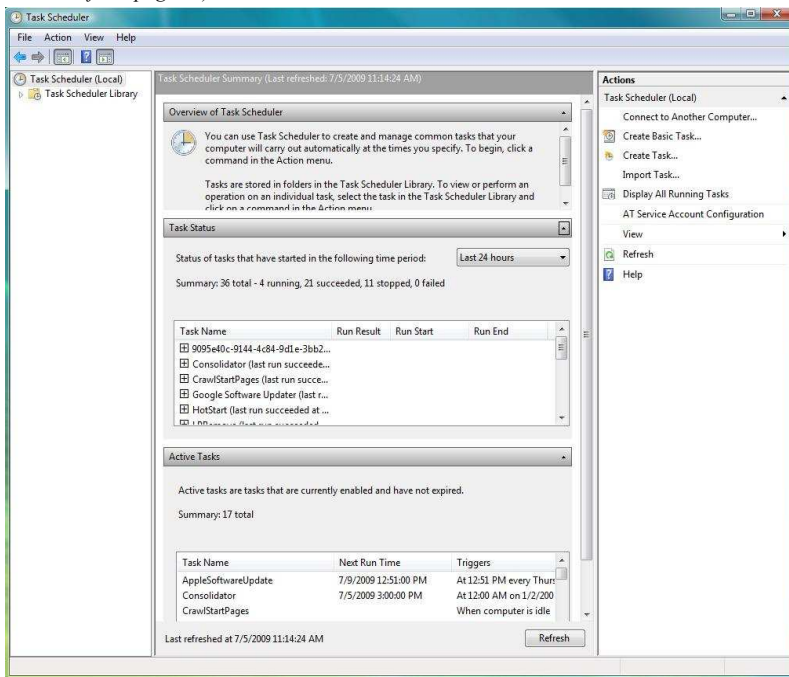
whether it is daily, weekly, monthly or some other time variant, Task Scheduler could be useful. For example, I need to remember to take medication usually at a time when I'm busy doing something else. Task Scheduler throws a message in my face reminding me to pop my pill at the appropriate time. If I'm not at home, my smart phone relays the message. But at home or elsewhere, it's Vista Task Scheduler that gets the message to me. Of course, when I leave the house I have to remember to bring my medicine with me, but that's a tale for another article.

I'm seriously thinking of creating a computer game for senior citizens called "The Hereafter". It starts out with the player walking into a room and wondering "What am I here after?" Task Scheduler will play a big part in this.

Let's say you use the calculator a lot and you would like it to start up whenever you turn on your computer. Here's how to set it up:

1. Click on the **Start** Orb.
2. Click on **Control Panel**.
3. Click on **System and Maintenance**
4. In the **Administrative Tools** section, click on **Schedule tasks**. (You may have to scroll down).

At some point you may be asked to supply an Administrative Password. Provide it and continue.

You will now see a dialog box with a very intimidating appearance. It doesn't bite and won't tell anyone if you stayed up past your bed time.

Let's examine it briefly to understand what's going on in the dialog box before we proceed. In the left pane, the top item which is marked (local) tells us that what we see in the middle pane are Task Scheduler items assigned to the machine you are currently using.

If your machine is not part of a network it has no other significance. The middle pane is divided into three parts:

Overview of Task Scheduler: Overview is a brief description of what you can do with the tool and where the tasks are stored. The folder labeled **Task Scheduler Library** can be expanded to display the Console Tree. Ignore this for now.

Task Status: This section covers four time periods. Tasks that have run in the last hour, 24 hours, 7 days or 30 days. It tells you how many tasks have started during the period, how many are currently running, how many are complete, how many are stopped for one reason or another, and how many have failed. Obviously, this section is used for troubleshooting.

Active Tasks: This section tells you what Task Scheduler is doing right now. Let's leave it at that.

The right pane is the section we came to play in. For our purposes there is no important difference between **Create Basic Task** and **Create Task**.

1. Click on **Create Basic Task**.
2. The **Create Basic Task Wizard** opens.
3. Type the name of your task. You could try something original like Start Calculator. Create a description if you want. Then click the **Next** button at the bottom left of the dialog box.
4. Tell the Wizard when you want the task to start. You have several choices. For this exercise choose **Daily**. Again, click on the **Next** button when you're done.
5. Tell the Wizard what day you want the calculator to make its first automated appearance on your desktop.
6. Now tell it what time of the day to start. Be careful you don't choose a time when you're sleeping. Click **Next**.
7. The **Action** box makes its appearance. You aren't sending an email; neither do you want to display a message. **Start a program** is the correct choice. Click **Next**.
8. Type calc.exe in the **Action** text box. Click **Next**.
9. Check the **Summary** dialog box to make sure that everything is the way you want it.
Click **Finish**, and you're done.

There are two important concepts at work when you run tasks using the Task Scheduler. The first is the trigger, the event that causes a task to run. The second is the action, the work that is carried out when the task is triggered.

There are three main actions associated with running a task: sending an e-mail, running a program, and displaying a message. Many actions can trigger a task. Among the most common actions are starting the computer, the computer entering an idle state, the occurrence of a specific time and date or the computer performing some specific function. Think about how you use your computer and you can probably find a productive use for the Task Scheduler.

Clean Up Your Room/Desktop - Part I
Written by Ron Hirsch, Contributing Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, FL
www.brcs.org
ronhirsch1439 (at) comcast.com

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).

So, does that line ring any bells? If you're a youngster, you've heard your elders tell you to clean up your room very often. And if you're not a youngster, then you use the line yourself on your kids or grandchildren. Well, I have no young kids around anymore, but I often use that line (with a slight change.) I'm constantly telling people to "Clean up your desktop," with "desktop" being their computer screen after the machine has booted up, and before any programs are run.

There are some desktop differences between the different Windows versions. And, some companies

such as Dell and Compaq very often install a "special" arrangement on the desktop, mostly to keep their name in front of you. Also, there are programs which generate their own desktop arrangement. But, they all generally respond to the procedures presented below. Once you become an expert in this area, you'll have no problems with the finer points and variations.

Since most of you are using Windows XP, and since I use XP on all my machines, all the activities discussed are based on XP. I have not used Vista, but I would assume it's the same there. One thing I do remember however, is that in Windows 95, desktop icons did not automatically line up in rows and columns. In XP, when you move an icon, it automatically snaps to the nearest position which keeps the rows and columns aligned.

The average computer user, even those who should know better, generally have disaster zones for the desktops. There are icons all over the place, not in any order and not lined up. And, there are many, that when I ask what they are, I'm told "I don't know." And, when I ask to have Windows Explorer or Notepad opened, there's usually a lot of scrambling, to find out where the icon is located.

Many programs, when installed, will place an icon on your desktop. Sometimes they ask you during the install if you want this - and sometimes they don't ask. There is always a tendency for software companies to grab real estate so that they can prominently keep themselves in front of you. Some newer computers running Windows XP/VISTA may even start off with almost nothing on the desktop. If you want to go back to a more conventional appearing desktop, right click on the desktop, and view the various options you have. There is probably a choice to revert to an "old-fashioned" desktop, which I personally prefer. Most people keep their medications in a medicine cabinet, canned goods in the pantry, garden tools in the garage, etc. But when it comes to their computer, they are as disorganized as is humanly possible. They feel intimidated by their computers, and don't wish to antagonize it. So, the thrust of this article is to go back to real basics again, and give you some information on organizing and cleaning up your desktop. If you're already super organized, you can skip this article, accept my apologies. and move on. But 99 out of 100 of you probably don't qualify to get the gold star for desktop organization. Once you do the tasks presented, you'll probably wonder why you didn't do it sooner. It not only is much easier to work with a good functional desktop, it looks prettier also, and will impress those who see it.

WHY HAVE ICONS ON THE DESKTOP?
Most users are familiar with the primary way to run a program. Click on START>PROGRAMS, and one can navigate to all the programs that are installed on the machine. But, most users generally have several programs that they use often. Having an icon for these programs on the desktop makes it easier to access that program. Just double click on that icon, and the program opens.

WHY SHOULD I BOTHER?
Let's take an extreme analogy. How would you like to have a dictionary where the words were randomly listed, not in any order? It would take lots of time to look up a word. By organizing things, and getting important icons at your fingertips, you can make your life much easier. And, your friends will be asking you to help them, when they see your desktop. Consider the desktop as a presentation area for icons that you often use. Count the icons on your desktop that you really use, and those you don't use. Then list the icons that you use which are not readily available on the desktop and you have to do lots of clicking to reach. You will see why it's a good idea to improve things. Now let's get down to business and fix things up.

OPERATING ON ICONS
The following activities are easy to perform on icons, wherever they may be. There are a few icons that Microsoft does put in places where they take control away from you - you can't readily rename them, or move them off the desktop, although you can always reposition them on the desktop. You may discover some of these in your travels. When you do, you'll just have to skip those icons. While they can be operated on using special protocols, that's outside of the scope of activities for these lessons.

WHAT IS AN ICON
An icon is a representation of a program, or file, or just about anything you want. The icons on your desktop are usually shortcuts to running a program, be it a word processor, spreadsheet, Internet connection, etc. All icons have properties, which define the nature of the icon, and details of what it does when used. Right clicking on an
icon will bring up a window with the bottom item in the list being "properties." Left click on "properties," and you'll get a window with lots of information about the icon. Try it, and browse around to get a feel for things. The more familiar you become with things on your computer, the more comfortable you'll feel using them.

MOVE AN ICON
Left click on and drag an icon and you can move it manually anywhere you want on your desktop, or into another open folder. The ability to drag an icon around is tied into the choice that was made on how icons are positioned. Before you can engage in changing locations et al on your desktop, you must first check to see how things are set. Right click on the desktop and in XP you will bring up a small box with a list of items in it. The contents of this box will vary, depending upon which version of Windows you are using. The top item is "arrange icons by," and it has a little arrowhead to the left. Click on that arrowhead, and you'll see a variety of items related to arranging icons. Some of these may be checked. The best way to learn what does what is to play around with the checking and unchecking. After a few trials, you will get a good feel for what they all do.

COPY AN ICON
Copying an icon is similar to moving an icon. As with the standard Windows protocol, do exactly as you would to move, but hold down the CTRL key while you are doing the click and drag operation. If you copy it into the same area, you'll probably see a (2) following the text in the copy. You can't have two icons in the same place, with the same name. So, Windows adds the "(2)" for you. If you move it to another folder, the "(2)" will stay, but you can edit the text as you'd like. See "Rename an Icon" below. Dragging an icon to any folder on your desktop will move the icon into that folder.

DELETE AN ICON
Click once on an icon to highlight it, and then hit the Delete key. Remember, the icons here are generally shortcut icons with the little curly arrow on the lower left corner. Deleting these does not delete anything from your system except the shortcut icon. No programs or data will be deleted, just the icon.

RENAME AN ICON
Click once an icon and then hit the F2 key. This puts you in "edit" mode, and you can type a new name by using the keyboard. If you type in a very long name, all the text you entered may not display when the icon is not selected. But, when you click once on the icon, the extra lines of

display when the icon is not selected. But, when you click once on the icon, the extra lines of text should be visible. In general, try to keep the text to a maximum of two lines under the icon. Remember the F2 key. It is the "edit" key for folder names, filenames, icons, and other elements in Windows.

Next month, we'll continue from this point to get a more streamlined desktop for you to work with. But, you must know the various icon manipulation procedures presented above. I won't be repeating the explanation for each step. I'll just say delete, copy, move, (etc.) the icon. So if you've forgotten how to do it, you'll need a copy of this
article handy to remind you.

Remember, you will learn by experimenting and exploring - so don't be afraid to do so.
If you find this material useful, you may want to download this article in PDF format, from our web site www.brcs.org. This allows readers to keep the material either as a PDF file, and/or print it out, and place it in a loose leaf notebook for future reference.