



Brevard Users Group



September 2004



Prez Sez

By George Rymer



It is with great sadness that I must report the sudden and totally unexpected demise of our Second Member at Large. Dave Hixson, 59 years young passed away on 9 August from undetermined causes. Dave, one of the original members of the Brevard Users Group (20 years) was a most caring and giving person. He was the "Computer Doctor" and he "Made House Calls". Free of charge I might add. He was always Ready, Willing and Able to help those of us who stumbled, stubbed our toe or fell and couldn't get up. Dave was a good Christian man who was very involved with his church. I personally feel that I am a better person for having had the opportunity to know and associate with Dave. I am sure that a lot of other people share my feelings as well. The following is a verse taken from the Service Folder at his funeral. The Author is unknown.

Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free.
 I'm following the path God has laid you see,
 I took His hand when I heard His call.
 I turned my back and left it all.
 I could not stay another day,
 To laugh, to love, to work or play.
 Tasks left undone must stay that way;
 I found the peace at the close of day.
 If my parting has left a void,
 Then fill it with remembered joys,
 A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss;
 Oh yes, these things I too will miss.
 Be not burdened with times of sorrow.
 I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow;
 My life's been full, I savored much.
 Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch.
 Perhaps my time seemed all too brief.
 Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.
 Lift up your hearts and peace to thee.
 God wanted me now,
 He set me free

Amen and God Bless George

Notice ... Meeting Change
The Monthly Meeting is on Monday September 13th, 7:00 pm at the Eau Gallie Library

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The BUG Newsletter is created on a AMD Athlon XP 1500 Mhz computer using PageMaker 6.01.

Articles, Reports, and new Advertisements should reach the Managing Editor or Desk Top Publishing SIG by 5:00 p.m the Friday before the third Wednesday (Monthly Bug Meeting) of the month. Items received after the deadline will be held for the following month's issue.

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**THE NEXT MEETING OF THE
BREVARD USERS GROUP
WILL BE ON**

***Monday, September, 13th, 2004
AT 7:00 pm***

***IN
the Eau Gallie Library
Visitors welcome!***

**Visit the BUG CLUB web site
for the latest schedule.**

<http://bugclub.org>

**There will be a drawing for Door Prizes!
You must be a member and present to win!**

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Secretary's Report

By: Joan Hefter

BUG MONTHLY MEETING

August 18, 2004

President, George Rymer opened the meeting at 7:02pm. George told us about the passing of our good friend Dave Hixon on August 8th. Dave was our 2nd Member at Large and he always referred to himself at the "Large Member At." He will be greatly missed by us all.

Our President also mentioned that due to Dave's passing that his position will need to be filled. At the same time George mentioned that he will definitely not run again for office in January 2005 and that others may now want to step up and be of service. It is not necessary to know computers to be an officer. I have found that out very fast. New blood is always needed and there is an enormous support from everyone.

Being summer time and most people are on vacation we did not have a guest speaker for a presentation. However, we did have a question and answer period that was of help. George strongly suggested not to get the updates on the XP SP2 until they get the bugs out. As it is now, there are serious flaws that need to be fixed.

Rex Cummings stepped up to the plate with comments on acquiring free software on the web site of Kim Komando. They can also be found on our B.U.G. web site. It was a very informative meeting.

The door prizes for the evening were a Quicken Basic 2004, Jump Drive with 64 MB, Norton System Works and a Color Key Caps for a keyboard. Each member attending was given a ticket for the drawing of these prizes.

The meeting was closed at 8:10 pm.

Respectively given by Secretary, Joan Hefter



Treasurer's Report

By Pete Lehotsky



EXPENSE

Office Supplies \$59.15

Newsletter

Printing \$89.58

Mailing \$40.41

TOTAL \$189.14

INCOME

Dues \$150.00

TOTAL \$150.00

ASSETS

Checking \$474.68

Savings \$2,619.58

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NEW LOCATION!

COMPUTER CORNER

By Jim Jeup

Reprint from: *the Journal of The Computer Club, Inc*

Kill the Sasser Virus (and make it Stay That Way!)

The following information is reprinted from Microsoft's web site:
http://www.microsoft.com/security/incident/sasser_printxp.asp

If you are using Microsoft®, Windows XP® or Windows XP Service Pack 1 (SP1) and your computer has been infected by the Sasser worm, you can take these steps to update your software, remove the worm, and help protect against future infections

Step 1: Disconnect from the Internet

To avoid further problems, disconnect from the Internet:

Broadband connection users: Locate the cable that runs from your external DSL or cable modem and unplug that cable either from the modem or from the telephone jack.

Dial-up connection users: Locate the cable that runs from the modem inside your computer to your telephone jack and unplug that cable either from the telephone jack or from your computer.

Step 2: Stop the Shutdown Cycle

This worm may cause LSASS.EXE to stop responding, which forces the operating system to shutdown after 60 seconds. If your computer starts to shut down, follow these steps to abort any system shutdown that may be in progress.

1. On the taskbar at the bottom of your screen, click Start, and then click Run.
2. Type: **cmd** and then click OK.
3. At the command prompt, type: **shutdown.exe-a** and then press **ENTER**

Step 3: Mitigate the Vulnerability

You can temporarily remove the vulnerability that allows the worm to infect your computer by creating a log file.

1. On the taskbar at the bottom of your screen, click Start, and then click Run.
2. Type: **cmd** and then click OK.
3. At the command prompt, type: **echo dcpromo>%systemroot%\debug\dcpromo.log** and then press ENTER. Make the log file read-only.

4. At the command prompt, type: **attrib +R% systemroot%\debug\dcpromo.log** and then press ENTER.

Step 4: Improve System Performance

If your computer is acting sluggish or if the Internet connection is slow, the worm may be flooding your local network connection. This may make impossible for you to download and install the required software update. To improve system performance:

1. Press CTRL+ALT+DELETE, and then click Task Manager.

2. For each of the following tasks that may be listed, click the task to select it, and then click the End Task button to end it.

* Any task ending with **_up.exe** (for example, 12345_up.exe).

* Any task starting with **avserve** (for example, avserve.exe).

* Any task starting with **avserv2** (for example, avserve2.exe).

* Any task starting with **skynetave** (for example, skynetave.exe).

hkey.exe

msiwin84.exe

wmiprvse.exe

Note: Do not end the **wmiprvse.exe** task; it is a legitimate system task.

Step 5: Enable a Firewall

A firewall is a piece of software or hardware that creates a protective barrier between your computer and the Internet. If your computer has been infected, a firewall will help limit the effects of the worm. Windows XP includes the Internet Connection Firewall (ICF). To turn on ICF:

1. On the taskbar at the bottom of your screen, click Start, and then click **Control panel**.

2. Click the **Network and Internet Connections** category. (If the Network and Internet Connections is not visible, click **Switch to Category View** under Control Panel on the left side of the Control Panel Window.)

3. Click Network Connections.

4. Right-click the Dial-up, LAN, or High-Speed Internet Connection that you use to connect to the Internet, and then, click **Properties** from the shortcut menu.

5. On the Advanced tab; under **Internet Connection Firewall**, select **Protect my computer and network**, and then, click **OK**. The Windows XP firewall is now enabled.

Continued on Page 5

Step 6: Reconnect to the Internet

Plug the cable (referred to in Step 1) back into your computer, telephone jack, or modem.

Step 7: Install the Required Update

To help protect your computer against this worm in the future, you must download and install security update 835732, which was released with Microsoft Security Bulletin MS04-011.

To download security update 835732, go to <http://go.microsoft.com/?LinkID=526067>

Step 8: Check For and Remove Sasser

After you have installed the update and restarted your computer, go to the Web page "What You should Know About the Sasser Worm and it's Variants" at: <http://www.microsoft.com/security/incident/sasser.asp>. Use the Sasser Worm Removal Tool to search your hard disk for and remove Sasser.A, Sasser.B, Sasser.C, and Sasser.D.

About Internet Connection Firewall

The Windows XP Internet Connection Firewall can block useful tasks such as sharing files or printers through a network, transferring files in applications, or hosting multiplayer games. Nonetheless, Microsoft recommends that you use a firewall to help protect your computer. If you turn on the Internet Connection Firewall and find that you can't perform some tasks you want to, read "How to Open Ports in the Windows XP Internet Connection Firewall" at <http://www.microsoft.com/security/protect/ports.asp>.

If you have more than one computer, and want more technical information, or want to learn more about firewalls, read "Frequently Asked Questions About Firewalls" at <http://www.microsoft.com/security/protect/firewall.asp>.

Jim Jeup is a Certified Master Technician for Advanced Mobile Tech Computer service. Computer Corner Archives can be found at <http://www.advancedmobiletech.com/computercorner.shtml>



Web Mail

Jim Townsend, BUG member

With most Internet Service Providers, you can log on to WebMail and view your e-mail account, for instance Earthlink is my service provider, if I go to webmail.earthlink.net I can access my e-mail account without downloading it to my computer. If you have RoadRunner type this in your address bar: <http://webmail.cfl.rr.com/>. Check with your provider to see if this is available to you.

Now of course you're asking why do this? Two reasons for me, when I'm away and have to use someone else's computer, I don't download my mail to their machine, and I can leave what I want on Earthlinks server until I get back home, while deleting the junk. This way I don't risk having my mailbox exceeding the allotted space, and I don't have my mailbox overloaded with spam, when I do download it at home. The other reason, I use it at home because there are some virus/worms/trojans that are able to infect your machine through e-mail without being opened.

Through Web Mail I delete anything from people I don't know, and can read other mail to see what it contains. All without downloading it to my machine.

Just remember to empty the Trash folder, or you will still be using up the allotted space in your server's mailbox.



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Get Rid of Spyware and Popups

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG BOD; Columnist for The Examiner, Texas; Radio Show Host and Police Officer

Next to spam mail and viruses, one of the most irritating facets of web surfing is the annoying popup ads that so many of us receive. What many may not be aware of is that about 80% of the popups that we get while online, and many that may also appear if we are offline, are generated by spyware that is unknowingly installed on our computers. Spyware are software programs that typically install without our knowledge or informed consent, and may also be a part of a program that we purposely installed. Spyware, as its name connotes, is software that often gathers information on our surfing habits and may send that information to third parties. At its worst, spyware may also be used to gather personal information from our computers, including passwords, user names, and other information, and send it to persons unknown who may illicitly use that information to empty our bank accounts, charge goods in our name, and commit other various forms of identity theft.

Spyware can get on our computers by visiting some unethical websites, or by installing some downloaded or commercial software. Several forms of spyware can infect our computers via viruses and Trojans. Among the most notorious sources of spyware are popular file sharing utilities such as Morpheus and KaZaA. Some of the “cookies” or small text files placed on our computers by some websites can also be used to create personal profiles on us, and distribute that information to third parties. It should be noted that some software titles will no longer function if their attached spyware is deleted, as the spyware is intended to provide a continuing revenue stream for the software publisher.

Fortunately, it is generally easy to detect and kill spyware, or otherwise render it inert. It should be understood at this point that as a general rule, even the best antivirus programs, while effective at detecting and preventing virus and Trojan infestations, are generally ineffective at dealing with spyware. Firewalls, if properly installed and configured, can prevent many spyware types from sending information from the computer, but many spyware programs utilize known security weak-

nesses, and other vulnerabilities in our operating systems. Contemporary thought is that we all need a good anti-spyware program properly installed, configured, and updated, every bit as much as we need updated antivirus software and a firewall on our computers.

One of the top rated anti-spyware programs is the recently updated “Spybot Search and Destroy”, version 1.3, available for free (donations encouraged) at www.safer-networking.org and other major download sites. Spybot can detect and destroy over 13,000 spyware products, and immunize our computers from future infection by almost 1800 types of spyware. Spybot can also prevent some pesky websites from changing our “home” or browser startup pages, and make it difficult for spyware to write itself into our Windows registry. An integral utility makes it easy for Spybot to check for, and install the periodic updates necessary to detect and kill the latest types of spyware.

Another popular anti-spyware utility is “Ad-Aware”, available for download at www.lavasoftusa.com. The free version of Ad-Aware, the “Standard Edition”, is possibly the most widely used anti-spyware program, with over 42 million copies downloaded since July, 2003. Ad-Aware comes in several versions ranging from the “free for personal use” Standard Edition, the \$27 “Plus” edition, and the \$40 “Pro” version. Ad-Aware frequently releases updated “reference files” which contain lists of newly created or revised spyware information.

A popular commercial program, which is a “Swiss army knife” type of program comprising many different utilities, including an excellent spyware (parasite) detector and killer is the “SpyHunter” included with System Mechanic, version 4. System mechanic is available locally at retail (about \$49), and for download at www.iolo.com. A fully functional 30 day free trial version is available for download. As does its free standing competitors, System Mechanic’s SpyHunter also checks for updated spyware listings, and installs them seamlessly. SpyHunter has been proven to be an effective spyware detector and killer, and the other utilities included in System mechanic make this a most useful program.

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Spyware ... Continued from Page 6

While not directly marketed as an anti-spyware product, “STOPzilla” is a very effective spyware remover that specializes in those spyware products that produce about 80% of the annoying popup ads that we may get while surfing the web. A recent update to STOPzilla also includes an integral utility that can detect and kill most other forms of spyware, including tracking cookies. With almost daily automated updates, and excellent 24/7 free tech support, including toll-free numbers, STOPzilla is available for \$30 at www.stopzilla.com.

One of the most comprehensive spyware detecting and killing programs on the market is PestPatrol (\$40), available at www.pestpatrol.com. This is an excellent program that can both detect spyware, and block many types of infection. PestPatrol has an integrated utility that enables all parts of PestPatrol to be updated on a regular basis in order to maximize the detection and removal functions. PestPatrol offers a free online scan that will detect, but not eliminate, almost all known forms of spyware.

While there are several other decent anti-spyware programs available, one caveat is appropriate here. There are some unethical purveyors of some anti-spyware programs that use spam emails, popup ads, and deceptive sales practices, including telling you that your computer is infested with spyware, and charging a fee to remove it.

Any of the titles referenced above will do a reasonable job of reducing popups, and securing your computer from spyware, provided they are frequently updated and run.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



How and when to enable Windows XP's firewall

*by Linda Gonse, Editor,
Orange County IBM Users' Group, California*

Most users are aware of a need for an antivirus program and a firewall in order to be protected from regular, daily Internet threats.

What some may not know is that Windows XP has a built-in firewall. While it lacks the bells and whistles of a full version firewall, such as Norton or Zone Alarm, it is still useful.

You can enable it by going to Control Panel and clicking on the Network Connection icon. In the Connections window, right click on the name of your connection and click on Properties in the drop-down menu. Click on the Advanced tab. Check the box next to “Protect my computer and network by limiting or preventing access to this computer from the Internet.” Then, click OK.

Follow these steps each time you wish to enable the firewall for other Internet connections on your computer.

But, before enabling XP's firewall, you should be aware of these points:

- It must not be used through software or hardware routers.
- It only works on incoming Internet traffic, not outgoing traffic from spy-ware, Trojan viruses, or hacker tools.
- On local area networks (LANs) with other computers, it will block File and Printer Sharing.
- It can be turned on or off for each of your dial-ups, LAN, or high-speed Internet connections.

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Defensive Computing

Whatever Happened To Accountability?

by Alan Luber

Reprinted with permission from *Smart Computing*.

Last month, I wrote about a Norton AntiVirus update that prevented users from opening Microsoft applications for the better part of two days. This isn't the first time a Symantec update has created serious problems.

Symantec isn't the only guilty party. I recently installed Microsoft's Critical Security Update number KB832894. I followed my usual procedure by backing up my hard drive prior to installing the update. The update trashed my computer, and I had to restore from my backup.

When I spoke with Microsoft, they admitted to "...having many issues with this update." When I asked if there was a Web page I could visit to find out about these issues, I was told that the information is "for internal use only." That's just great. Issue an update that creates problems for customers and then keep the information internal. Sound familiar?

(NOTE: Microsoft did eventually acknowledge that this update created problems and issued another critical update, KB831167, to address the issue. For more information, visit <http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?kbid=831167>.)

The ultimate irony here is that these updates are supposed to prevent computer disasters, not cause them.

Four Distinct Problems

There are four distinct problems here.

1. Software companies are issuing faulty updates that cause computer disasters.

2. These companies are not actively communicating

with their customers when they issue a faulty update. Instead, they work behind the scenes and quietly issue another update a few days later to fix the problem.

3. Some of these companies are making it very difficult for customers to obtain free support. In effect, they're hiding from their customers. They want you to pay them to help you fix problems that they created. To quote daughter Jessica, "That's just so wrong."

4. Unaware of what caused the problem, customers spend hours trying to fix it, often exacerbating the situation by making unnecessary, ill-advised changes to their systems.

A Cure For Customer Abuse

Here is my prescription for companies that want to stop abusing their customers.

1. Spend more time debugging your updates before releasing them. The problems you are causing are usually so obvious that any reasonable amount of testing would detect them. Yours is an awesome responsibility. Treat it that way.

2. Take responsibility when you screw up. Issue a press release. Send a newsletter to your customers. Post a mea culpa on your Web site's home page. Don't let people waste time trying to fix your problem.

3. Stop hiding from your customers. Understand that all companies are in the same business: customer service. Implement an online chat tool on your support page that allows customers to get immediate help instead of waiting several days for a response to an online support request. (Symantec used to respond to online requests within 24 hours. Now their published response time is three to four days—another step in the wrong direction.)

Protect Yourself

The only sure way to protect yourself from faulty updates is to back up your hard drive (or system partition) every day. As I've noted previously, this is easy to do if you have two hard drives. If an update trashes your system, disconnect your computer from the Internet (to prevent the update from being automatically reinstalled) and restore your system from the most
Continued on Page 9

Accountability ... Continued from Page 8

recent backup. Most applications allow you to turn off the automatic update feature. You can reconnect to the Internet after you have temporarily disabled this feature.

In the case of Microsoft Critical Updates, configure your system to notify you when an update's available instead of letting Microsoft automatically download and install the update. This will enable you to back up your system right before you apply the update. From your Control Panel, select System and click the Automatic Updates tab. Select the first option: Notify Me Before Downloading Any Updates And Notify Me Again Before Installing Them On My Computer.

Microsoft recently announced that it is considering setting the update option to automatically update your computer in the next release of Windows. I shudder at the thought.

If you feel the same as I do, please second my emotion and complain to these companies. Frankly, I'm surprised that some enterprising young king of torts hasn't already filed class action suits against companies that trash their customers' computers.

Alan Luber is an author and computer expert. His new book, "PC Fear Factor: The Ultimate PC Disaster Prevention Guide" (Que Publishing), provides an in-depth look at disaster prevention and recovery. To learn more about the book or to contact Alan, visit his Web site at <http://www.pcfearfactor.com>.



Perfect Web Printing:

Open Internet Explorer's File menu and select Print Preview. The current Web page will appear on-screen exactly as it will print on paper. If some of the page will be cut off click the Page Setup button. Adjust the left and right margins so that each is set to 0.25 inches. The extra inch of space you gain by resetting the margins should provide just enough room to accommodate all of the content on most sites. Click OK to save the changes and return to the Print Preview window.

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Practicing the Black Art (02/04)

Understanding USB

*by Vinny La Bash, vlabash@home.com
Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.*

Hail USB! Until a few years ago if you wanted to add an external device to your computer, such as a scanner or a Zip drive, it needed your one and only parallel port. The trouble with this was that your printer had already staked out that territory. One way of getting around the problem was installing an A/B switch. However, if you needed more than one device, you had to install an A/B/C/D switch. Sometimes moving among these devices meant having to turn one off before you could use another, and often you had to reboot before your machine would recognize another device on the switch.

Early Palm Pilots and digital cameras sought your serial port. Computers had, and most still have two serial ports, but they were slow and almost always involved installation of controlling software.

There were also devices that came with their own controller cards. This meant you had to open the case and install the card in an expansion slot, provided you had one available. Things could get crazy quickly, and you had to handle IRQ conflicts, more cables, and additional power cords.

Rescue arrived with the introduction of the USB port (Universal Serial Bus) that lets you attach almost anything to your computer quickly and easily. Windows XP is designed to support USB so device conflicts are gone. The standard allows up to 127 devices on a single USB port. In practice, no one uses that many devices. USB connectors let you attach everything from TV tuners to modems. It's an amazingly flexible technology. If you had a toaster with a USB connection you could hook it up, but it's doubtful you could watch bread turn brown on the screen.

Installing a USB device is incredibly simple.
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Understanding USB ... Continued from Page 9

Windows XP senses it through a process called auto-detection, and asks for the driver disk if it's needed. If you have previously installed the device, XP activates it, and it's ready for use. Part of the beauty of USB is that you can connect and disconnect devices at any time without having to reboot your machine or change any options. If a cable is built-in to a USB device it will connect to your computer with its own "A" connector. Otherwise it will connect with a "B" connector. "A" and "B" connectors are of different sizes and shapes so there is never a question of getting them mixed up.

Today, most desktop computers are built with at least four USB ports. That is inadequate, but there are relatively inexpensive USB hubs available that act as expansion devices. The number of ports available on an expansion hub can vary from as few as two to as many as seven, depending on your needs and how much you care to spend. Plug the hub into your computer, and then plug your devices into the hub. You can chain hubs together, and build dozens of available USB ports on a single computer.

The USB standard lets USB connected devices draw their power from their USB connection to the PC. This works well for mice, digital cameras, web cams, and other devices that use small amounts of power. Printers, scanners, and other high power accessories require their own power supply, and they can be plugged into hubs that do not have their own power supply. If you run out of USB sockets and you have a lot of low power devices, get a powered hub so you don't overwhelm the PC bus.

Inside your computer the USB bus lets the computer act as a host to all USB devices attached to it. If you have the up-to-date USB 2.0 standard, data can be transferred at up to 480 megabits per second. If you were moving text, that works out to about 30,000 pages of documents per second. That's a maximum rate, not typical of actual use. Nevertheless, it's impressive.

USB has other advantages. You can plug in or remove USB devices without having to reboot your machine, and the computer can put USB devices into an inactive state when conserving power. XP queries all USB devices when your machine powers on, assigns

each one an address, and determines what kind of data it needs to send or receive. XP keeps track of the total bandwidth of all the attached USB devices. If the combined devices reach 90% of the 480 megabit maximum, XP denies access to any additional devices. The remaining 10% is reserved for transmitting control characters, stop and start transmission codes, error checking, and other overhead.

USB 2.0 encourages the development of innovative products that would be impossible to develop with the older standards. It's the solution for all PC users who want an instant, no-hassle way to connect new hardware like digital joysticks, scanners, digital speakers, digital cameras or a PC telephone to their computer. Plug and Pray has truly become Plug and Play. :

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Practicing the Black Art (06/04)

Finding Hidden Programs

*by Vinny La Bash, vlabash@home.com
Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.*

Sometimes I get questions from my students about programs on their new machines. The general form of the question is "I found this program on my system that does such-and-such, but nobody at the computer store knows anything about it. What should I do?" Like my students, you're probably unaware that your computer may contain valuable programs that you have never heard of. Of course you know and understand your internet browser, your email program, and the programs you use most frequently. Have you ever taken the time
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HiddenPrograms ... Continued from Page 10

to explore your system other than look for mundane applications like your word processor? If you have, you found some bundled software that allows you to play music and video clips.

Most computers have many applications that their owners don't know about because these goodies are stored in unlikely places. It doesn't matter if you buy an off-the-shelf model or a custom built super-performing monster. If you add anything at all such as video editing software, a web cam, a printer, PDA or any kind of program or device, you have almost certainly added some new helpful application programs.

With only a small amount of effort, you can discover all the programs that you downloaded and forgot about, and the programs that came with your machine.

We'll examine several methods to find these hidden gems. You can use all of them or only the ones you feel most comfortable with. These methods work best with Windows XP, but can still be useful with other versions of the operating system.

It's amazing how often we fail to notice the obvious, so start by browsing the Programs menu.

1. Click Start.
2. Move your mouse pointer to the green arrow labeled All Programs and the Programs menu will appear.
3. Move your mouse over the main menu and submenus. Items with submenus are indicated by a black triangle pointing to the right.

Most installation setup routines install somewhere in this area, making this method a good way to get a broad overview of what's installed on your computer.

After exploring the Programs menu, examine it to find Windows Explorer. Be careful you don't select Internet Explorer or MSN Explorer. They do very different things. With Windows Explorer, you can look for application files in your folders. Your higher level folders are the ones most likely to contain program files, but the sheer number of them makes this method clumsy, unwieldy, and time consuming. It's useful in giving you a good overview of how information is structured on your disk drives.

Probably the best way to find programs is to use the Search utility to look for all application files residing on your machine.

1. { short description of image } Click Start.
2. Select Search.
3. In the top box type *.exe. The asterisk is a global search or "wild card" character which masks the name of the file. The ".exe" portion stands for executable, and is the standard designation for application files.
4. Click the Search button.

The Search engine scans your disk drive, looking only at the file extensions. It then lists only the program files it finds on the disk.

Many of these file names can be murky enough to the point of being downright cryptic, making it quite a challenge to identify what they do. Here are several things you can do to reduce the level of obfuscation.

1. Right click on the file name or its icon.
2. From the popup menu select Properties.
3. Examine the information in the General tab. In many cases, the Description area will give you the name of the company that published the program. If Nvidia is there, you can conclude that the application file is used to control a graphics module on your video subsystem.
4. Click on the Version tab if it's present. You can usually find some information about the company that created the file. At the very least, you will know the program's size and location. If you are still clueless, there is one more trick in your toolbox of ideas.
5. Open Google and type the name of the file in the text box.
6. Press the Google Search button.

You will often be amazed at the search results. You can still come up empty even after all this, but you will succeed far more often than you will fail. :

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Ink Cartridges And Razor Blades

By *Charlie Semple, LACS*

My printer died, (like 3 or 4 others in the last 2 years). I bought another BUT, I'm angry! The printer manufacturers are now doing to us like the candy bar and coffee producers have been doing for the past decade or more, reducing the contents of the package. Ink cartridges seem to contain less and less ink.

My most recently demised printer used a black ink cartridge that contained 28 ml. of ink. That cartridge cost about \$27. The printer I bought today (same manufacturer) uses a black ink cartridge containing 10 ml. that cost \$19. Without being really precise, the new cartridge provides about 1/3 the ink at a cost of \$1.9/ml compared to about 96 cents/ml for the old cartridge. A quick check of some other cartridges shows similar results.

We've suspected for some time that the printer manufacturers use a razor and blades philosophy; selling printers at very low prices and probably depending on ink cartridge sales for profit.

IS IT ANY WONDER THAT MANY OF US HAVE BECOME ARDENT CARTRIDGE REFILLERS?

Is it any wonder that the printer manufacturers are working very hard to prevent us from refilling? Is it any wonder that numerous alternate suppliers and cartridge refillers are appearing in the marketplace? What if a printer manufacturer offered a "family" of printers that all use the same cartridges and those cartridges contained 40 or 50 ml. of ink and were priced about \$42 - \$45 each? I, for one, would be more attracted to buy those instead of refilling 8 or 10 cartridges/year.

Until printer manufacturers treat us users in a more reasonable and enlightened manner, I predict that more and more of us will refill more and more cartridges and alternate suppliers will become increasingly attractive.

*Reprint from: User Friendly
The Journal of the Los Angeles Computer Society*



Practicing the Black Art (05/04)

Choosing a Power Supply

by *Vinny La Bash, vlabash@home.com*
Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

The power supply on your PC is like Rodney Dangerfield. It gets no respect. High powered video and sound cards get all the attention. People get excited about CPU speed, virtually no one gets wound up about a power supply. Even most geeks ignore it nearly all of the time. The power supply is essentially a device made up of a group of electrical parts that converts 120 volts alternating current into the 12 volt, 5 volt and 3.3 volt power that your motherboard, disk drives, and other components require to operate.

Power supplies are rated by Watts, a measure of the amount of electrical power the unit can deliver. The label should tell you how much power can be delivered at continuous and peak performance levels. You will most likely need a unit that can provide 400 Watts of continuous power without excessive noise or heat. Its peak should be at least 100 Watts above its continuous rating. Think of it like an automobile where you generally drive within the middle range of your speedometer, but you could get more if you need it.

Labels will also give you information about how much current each of the output lines can support. Output lines are the connectors that hang off the unit. Let's say one of them is rated at +3.3 Volts @ 30Amps. That line can handle any device that requires 99 Watts or less to operate. It's not enough that the unit can deliver sufficient power. Take another look at the label to see how much the output tolerance can vary. A good quality power supply will have +/- 3% variance or lower. Insist on this to minimize harmful effects brought about by variations in line voltage. A poorly designed or manufactured power supply will eventually lead to system crashes, application hang-ups, and other assorted failures.

A good power supply unit will have a balanced combination of capacitors and inductors. Working together, these two devices protect your PC from both drops (SAG) and surges in voltage. These surges and drops tend to be brief, but if your power supply can't compensate for them, your PC could be toast.

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Power Supply ... Continued from Page 12

You still need an external surge protector or a UPS for full protection. If you suffer a power failure, the sag protection in your power supply protects your PC until the UPS can kick-in and give you time to perform an orderly shut-down without losing any data. Surge protection helps to overcome power spikes that could fry your PC's electronics.

Your power supply needs a high quality reliable fan to keep it cool. Get a unit with a ball bearing fan. They are less likely to fail than any other kind of fan, and they offer an additional benefit of running quietly. They cost more than other fans and that's why manufacturers make a point of having this information on the label. Newer models have a connector that allows the motherboard to control the fan using its own temperature sensors.

Some power supplies come with adjustable voltage potentiometers. Slight variations of input voltages are inevitable, and these controls allow fine tuning of these minor differences. They don't do much for the average user, but if you're an over clocking fanatic or hardware nut case, twiddle away.

There is more than one type of power supply and it must comply with your motherboard's form factor. Unless you're putting together a slim line or mini-pc, you will need an ATX form factor compatible unit. Be aware that Intel has recently updated the ATX standard by adding a four-pin 12V connector for the motherboard.

If you are evaluating a unit from a manufacturer you never heard of, pick it up and judge its sturdiness. You're looking for heavy. High quality capacitors and heat sinks weigh a lot for their size. If the unit is light compared to others that have similar ratings, it's probably made by a manufacturer who is using substandard materials to increase profit margins. While everyone loves a bargain, it's wise to stay with reputable manufacturers such as PC Power & Cooling, Antec, and Enermax. :

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Newbies Corner

by Jim Hally B.U.G. member

Continuation.

You may have noticed the small font used in last month's column. I knew how much space I was going to get and tried to get it all in to the allocated space. In doing so I really didn't get to finish the column as I think I should have. I was thinking along the lines of a two part column and our editor thought it best to retain the continuity by doing it in one edition. He was right but, in doing so I really didn't finish the column as I think I should have.

The advantage I had that another user may not have is the ability to get on the Internet with another drive. I will say that I probably didn't need to have the other drive but it did give me the comfort and confidence that I could search out the problem without messing with the infected drive. Warning: The following is something to consider. There are caveats in the last paragraph.

It is probably a fairly good bet that most computers given away stay in the family someday or another. Grandparents give to grandchildren, children give to parents and parents hand me down to children.

There are several reasons for getting a new computer but the main impetus always seems to revolve around speed and hard drive capacity. Let's consider the hard drive for now. If the hard drive is almost full you are going to start deleting files and uninstalling programs so the recipient of the computer has some space to save files. Of course you will have made a back up of your data, whether it be on floppy or CD.

Before you give away that computer, think about pulling out that old hard drive and installing a larger one for the new owner.

This will allow you to do a couple of things. First of all it allows you to keep all of your data on the hard drive and if you play your cards right you can still access this data. This of course saves a few tasks that used to lie ahead of you. The recipient of the computer will think you are a real hero by giving them a large clean hard drive.

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Newbies ... Continued from Page 13

Unless you are buying a real rinky-dink computer you will be able to use the aforementioned hard drive as a fully installed O.S. as well as a backup.

All motherboards have two IDE (Integrated device electronics) connectors. These are for your hard drive on the main channel and a second one for your CD-ROM. Each comes with a cable with three connectors. One end plugs into a connector on the motherboard and the other end of the cable has two connectors one of which is connected to your hard drive. The last connector sits idle until you use it. In conjunction with each cable you are afforded a power cable with the same configuration.

Tear it apart

In most instances your new computer will have two empty 5 1/2" bays which are identified, by the blank plates on the upper portion of your case. Take the sides off your case and you will have a clearer picture of this. Head down to your favorite electronics store and purchase two mobile rack drawers. Turn off and unplug the computer as a first step. Now, remove two of the blank plates. Behind these plates you will see a metal plate that is part of the framework of the structure of the case. With a little effort you can twist out these plates. Locate the hard drive and with the help of some masking tape indicate how the cable plugged into the hard drive and how the power source went in. Remove the two items from the back of the hard drive and stow them where they will be out of the way. Unscrew the 4 screws that hold the hard drive in place and work it out the back of the slot it occupies.

Slide one of the housings into the lower bay where you removed the plates. Now you want to plug the cable and power source into the back of the housing. Use 4 of the screws that come with the mobile rack to secure the housing in the drive bay. You can use the same four you just took out, to remove the hard drive. Follow the same process with the second housing. This will be the end connector and the spare power source. Once again watch what you are doing so the cables fit securely. Make sure you are using the proper thread screws because you will get an assortment with the mobile racks.

Take the removable covers off the drawers themselves. Connect the short cable and power source within the drawer to the hard drives. They will only go in one way. If you are unsure of yourself, just refer to the little book you got with the larger capacity hard drive you purchased. Once connected, just work each hard drive into the drawer and reinstall the cover. From here you use the proper screws to secure the hard drive to the drawer. Upon completing this, slide each drawer in the housing until it is almost all the way in. You will notice that each drawer has a little handle on the front of the drawer. Lifting the handle will allow the drawer to slide into the housing. Pressing down on the handle locks it into place in most instances.

You will have noticed the little keyhole on each housing. The keyhole acts as an On/Off switch just like a common household light switch. You can only use one drive at a time. Do not try to use both at once. You can try your drives one at a time. Remember to shut down each one properly. I use colored stickers to indicate XP with one color and ME with another.

For those who feel they will be switching drives fairly often, an idea is to take the set screw out of the housings that make the key turn the power on and off to each drive. The way I use the drawers to my advantage is that I use the handles to engage or disengage each drive. (Many of the drawers work like this but not all.) In other words the housings are hot all the time. I just slide the inactive drawer out 1/2" so it is not active.

Now you have all your old data on one drive and a clean one to work with. As for the old computer, just install an operating system and the new recipient is ready to go.

This is a more involved process than it appears. You have to consider the size of your case and its set up, availability of motherboard drivers, sound drivers and such. Look for a more detailed article in the coming months. The gist of this column is to get you thinking of the possibilities that are before you.



Special Interest Groups

WINDOWS SIG

Meets 7:00 PM Thursdays

1st & 3rd Thursday at Eau Gallie Library.

All Other Thursdays at Melbourne Library on
Fee Avenue.

BEGINNERS SIG (Newbies)

Meets at 6:30 pm. The 2nd and 4th Thursdays,
at Fee Ave. Library, before the Windows SIG.

***** NOTICE *****

The 2:00pm meeting at Glenbrooke Retirement
Community Club House has been canceled due to
lack of participation.

IMAGING SIG

Meets at 7:30 PM the second and fourth
Thursdays, after the Windows SIG, at the Fee
Ave Library in Melbourne.

NEWSLETTER SIG

Meets twice a month on the Saturdays before
and after the BUG monthly meeting.

Members interested in helping develop the
newsletter are welcome.

Place is Jim Townsend's home
call 728-5979 for directions.

TINKERS SIG

Meets on most Sundays at Bob Schmidt's house.
Call 952-0199 to verify meeting and directions.

BUG Club Information

BUG E-MAIL LIST

To be included in the BUG E-Mail roster, send
an E-Mail to George Rymer at:
grymer@cfl.rr.com.

We will need your full name, E-Mail address and
your BUG membership number. You will then
receive notices and updates on BUG activities,
special events, changes to schedules, etc.

BUG Officers

Meets the second Wednesday of the month at
the Fee Ave. Library, in Study room 1
Time 6:00 pm to 7:00pm

Sponsorship Rates

	4 Months	8 Months	12 Months
Full Page	\$ 160.00	\$ 305.00	\$ 440.00
Half Page	\$ 85.00	\$ 162.00	\$ 232.00
Qtr Page	\$ 45.00	\$ 86.00	\$ 123.00
Bus Card	\$ 25.00	\$ 48.00	\$ 68.00

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Meetings:

Are held at the Melbourne Library on Fee Ave. the third Wednesday of the month at 7:00 PM.



Membership:

Is by application and payment of \$25.00 annual dues. Membership is for 12 months from receipt of dues and includes a year's subscription to the newsletter.

Mentor Program

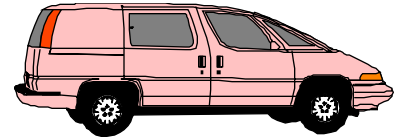
John McNeil 723-5550 AutoCad

Al Buchanan 728-2789 Works 6.0

Bob Staples 255-2623 Win9X/XP

Bill Ranck. 676-7908 Word Perfect

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