

SONOMA VALLEY COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY GROUP

July Newsletter 2012 **Vol. 5 No. 7**

As always, the Southwest Computer Conference was a lot of fun. I arrived earlier than originally planned and went to the usual conference area. Some of the events for the United States Police & Fire Championships were there. After watching for a while, I located our conference area and asked Judy Talour if she needed help setting up. The goodie bags that make up most of the registration packet always have to be filled. Naturally she put me to work. I broke for a quick bit of food and joined the afternoon walk to the Microsoft store. Our Microsoft tour leader wasn't as good as last year, but playing with the new stuff is always lots of fun.

We returned to the conference area and I was put back to work. Some of the things that went into the goodie bags were:

- ▲ A conference DVD with extras like fun stuff and recipes.
- ▲ A spiral notebook
- ▲ An 8 gig mini flash drive + cord
- ▲ A Southwest Computer conference t-shirt
- ▲ ZAGG foam antibacterial cleaner - 2.7oz bottle & Micro-fiber cleaning cloth (\$9.99)
- ▲ Ai Squared's ZoomText 10 free 60 day trial kit that integrates webcams and MP3 players with ZoomText to give you full access to your digital lifestyle.

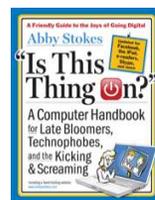


We chatted a lot while we got things done, then had dinner together and chatted some more.

After dinner, it was back to the conference area for the evening tours. I had planned to go to the Apple store, but had been waiting at a table with Rick Edwards, the professional wildlife photographer. Originally from England, Rick has spent most of his life working in Africa. Before he left, he spent two years as the official photographer for the Kenya Wildlife Service. Rick often writes articles to accompany pictures of animals he has followed, so you may have seen his byline in prestigious magazines such as National Geographic.

When the group left, I strayed behind with Rick. The conversation was just too good to leave. It got late, it turned chilly, but we talked on and on. Rick has a lot of interesting stories and freely shares his photography knowledge. It was a most enjoyable evening.

Friday morning I helped out again, talked with folks, picked up Susy Ball's registration packet, and then went to the airport to get Susy. We rushed back, checked in, and just made it to the opening session with Abby Stokes. I love her book, "Is This Thing On?", and now she has a second version that includes security, "netiquette", instant messaging, blogs, and digital photos. Abby is a very entertaining speaker and made some good points. Among them were:



1. When sending email to more than one person use undisclosed recipients or the "Bcc" option with your address or a fake address in the "To" slot.
2. Don't believe everything you see on the screen. Go to the source and check it out.
3. Set up habits in your email so people know what is and isn't yours. For example, if an email from Susy Ball isn't signed "... Thanks, **Susy**" on two lines, or an email from me doesn't have "--" before the Beth, the message is from somebody else no matter what the heading says and you shouldn't click on any link it contains.
4. The ideal password is 8 characters (or more), with letters, numbers, and at least 1 capital.
5. Multiple passwords are easier to remember if you use a root work coupled with something that identifies the website, such as r3gaL-bank ,r3gaLfac3b00k, r3gaL3ma1L, etc.

After a short break Rick Edward shared some of his slide shows and photography tips. He started with pictures he had just taken on the flight deck of the USS Midway. Then he shared the 2011 Roadster Show in Los Angeles. You will find both

these slide shows at <http://www.beechbrook.com/pte/index.asp?categoryid=&page=2> - what you won't get is Rick's comments. He said he could answer questions or show us the revised version of last years slide show. We decided to see the Kenya slide show again. It is at <http://www.beechbrook.com/pte/index.asp?categoryid=&page=11> (The Beauty of African Wildlife). Once again, he does the narrative live, so it isn't on the website. While I am not sure if I learned them from this presentation, from past presentations, or from our long talk; here are some Rick tidbits:

1. Computers are a necessary evil. He has to use them to edit his pictures so they will show what he saw, not what the camera saw. He spends 90% of his time on the computer and only 5% shooting pictures.
2. He goes to Africa every year for the migration. On one 2 week trip he shot about 500,000 images.
3. Photoshop is a graphics editor. Adobe's photo editor is called Lightroom. He makes his slide shows with Pictures to EXE.
4. As a wildlife photographer, he is allowed to adjust (edit) things like color, sharpness, and brilliance, but he cannot digitally alter them (i. e. add or remove objects).
5. All professional photographers edit their pictures, whether they admit it or not.
6. If a picture is too light it is burned out and nothing can be done. If it s too dark, you can always lighten it an bring the picture back.
7. He shoots in RAW, uses a RGB file format, only edits the digital negative copy of his original, and saves everything he shoots. Tomorrow's technology could make the bad pictures useable.
8. He buys 10 megapixel cameras and uses a program (Genuine Fractals) to increase the number of pixels to 50.
10. His cameras have to shoot at least 10 frames a second to stop the action. Also, original first time and exclusive use pictures sell at higher prices.
11. The faster shutter speed, the more the background blurs.
13. His "tripod" mounts in the window of his jeep.
14. He spends his money on high power lenses-up to 600mm. Animals have a "circle of confi-



dence" (I think of it as a personal space bubble). You have to be on the outside of it to take good pictures. A wary animal moves and behaves in an unnatural manner. The size of the circle depends on how well the animal knows you. The cheetah and cubs Rick followed for 10 years would even climb in his jeep.



Courtesy of Rick Edwards

15. Digital images are 2x as sharp as slides and you don't have the expense and trouble of carrying film.
16. Liveview, on most middle to high end cameras, will allow you to take perfect pictures every time.

Currently Rick has two websites where you can look at and buy his pictures. The original one is at www.rickedwardsphotography.com and the new site is at www.fotodimensions.com. Some of his photographs earn between 10,000 and 20,000 dollars apiece every year.

Dinner was provides by AI & Ed's Autosounds. After dessert was served, John Haynes presented a short history of car audio electronics as done by AI & Ed's to what is happening in that field today.

The evening activities included the Hospitality room or a movie with popcorn. Susy and I started in the Hospitality room and caught the last of the movie before heading to bed. Much later I broke my left little toe with the bathroom door. —Beth

Smart Computing Tip Of The Day

Carbon Copy Control

Understanding who's privy to the list of recipients to one of your emails can help you avoid a potentially embarrassing interoffice gaffe. Knowing Cc stands for carbon copy and Bcc stands for blind carbon copy is fairly remedial computing knowledge, but the blind carbon copy can be tricky to grasp initially. When you send an email, everyone will see the recipients in the To and Cc fields, but anyone in the Bcc field will remain hidden from all other recipients, even other recipients in the Bcc field. For example, if you want your recipients to remain unaware of the other recipients, include your own email address in the To field and put everyone else's email in the Bcc field.

Make free calls to landlines, mobile phones with Vonage app

By Rick Broida
July 23, 2012

<http://news.cnet.com/cheapskate>



Normally the app limits your free calling to other Vonage app users, but now you can ring up just about anyone you like -- no strings attached.

Quick housekeeping note: I'll be taking the day off tomorrow, so I'll see you back here on Wednesday. Here's a great freebie to tide you over until then!

Talk is cheap, right? How about this: For a short while, talk is free.

Vonage Mobile (Android/iOS) is a voice over P app that lets you make free calls (and send free texts) to other Vonage app users.

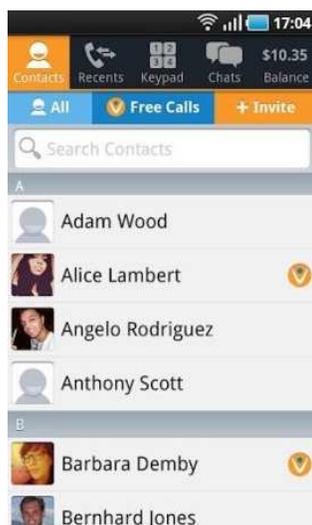
You can also use it to call landline and mobile phones -- but normally this costs money. For a limited time, however, you can use Vonage Mobile to make free calls to landline and mobile phones.

The app taps Wi-Fi and 3G/4G networks to make voice calls, thereby circumventing your allotment of monthly minutes (but not your data plan, obviously). Side benefit: owners of iPod Touches and Wi-Fi-only iPads can make phone calls, provided there's an open Wi-Fi network nearby.

As part of the promotion, you can place calls to anyone in the U.S., Canada, and Puerto Rico. The fine print: The service "is for personal, non-commercial calling and excludes calls to certain geographic locations, premium and special services numbers, satellite telephony services and other call forwarding services."

There's a cap of 3,000 minutes per month, which is probably more than ample for most folks, but no indication of how long this free goodness will last. (At least a month, I'm guessing.)

Best of all, you don't need to be a Vonage customer in order to use the app. Another nice perk: it's able to keep your existing phone number as your caller ID.



This couldn't have come at a better time for me, as I'm taking a quick trip to Canada and would like to keep in touch with Mrs. Cheapskate without paying international voice rates. Nothing beats free!



Bonus deal: Calling all baseball junkies! Here's your chance to get a one-month subscription to MLB.TV for 99 cents.

Regular price: \$24.99. The service provides access to regular-season out-of-market games, which you can view on your smartphone, tablet, PC, or Roku box. Just remember to cancel when the month is up, otherwise you'll get billed full price for next month.

Deals found on The Cheapskate are subject to availability, expiration, and other terms determined by sellers.

URLs for Vonage Mobile downloads

Android: http://download.cnet.com/Vonage-Mobile/3000-10440_4-75614068.html

iOS: http://download.cnet.com/Vonage-Mobile-Free-International-Calls-Texts/3000-12941_4-75653374.html

Vonage Mobile: <http://www.vonagemobile.com/apps/vonage-mobile-app.php>

Smart Computing Tip Of The Day

Another Man's Treasure

Almost everyone has at least an old cell phone or two lying around the house. Donating these older gadgets will both declutter your home and help someone out. Many organizations, including women's shelters, provide reprogrammed phones to people in high-risk situations. Secure The Call (www.securethecall.com) is a nationwide organization that collects phones and programs them for 911-only purposes. If your old phone is totally kaput, recycle it. Best Buy, for example, has collection bins for cell phones, ink-jet cartridges, and rechargeable batteries in the front of each of its stores.

Reduce Risk of Dementia: Improve Your Memory, Learn a Language

By Mehmet C. Oz, MD, and Michael F. Roizen, MD

May 19, 2011

www.realage.com

If you learned more than one language as a child or remember enough high school Spanish or French, like Mike, or German, Chinese, and Turkish, like Mehmet, to get the gist of foreign-language TV shows, you've got a powerful anti-Alzheimer's advantage. Being bilingual s-l-o-w-s down the development of dementia. Knowing three or more languages reduces your risk even further.

The ability to chat in Thai, Greek, or Arabic is good for more than ordering coffee abroad. Growing up with several languages builds more brain cells and improves their connections. It also makes your brain work harder all the time as you process information. This adds up to more "cognitive reserve," med-speak for extra mental capacity that allows your mind to continue functioning normally, even when it's developing brain changes that could lead to Alzheimer's disease.

That's great news if you're among the nearly one in four Americans and Canadians who can converse in at least two languages. But you're not out of luck if you can't. Learning a new language as an adult or picking up where 10th grade Spanish left off exercises your brain cells in ways that guard against memory loss and fuzzy thinking. It's a great reason to sign up for Russian 101, check out teach-yourself CDs and computer programs, and take advantage of all the TV movies, news programs, and soap operas available in many languages on cable. (Finally, those 1,500 channels will pay off!) For extra credit, stretch your brain further by picking a language that has little in common with English. Think Chinese, Korean, or Japanese.

Note: I know learning a new computer language would fit in here, but I often think that learning a new program or OS would work also. —Beth

Some of the User Group Discounts Available at Southwest



Apress – eBook discounts 50% off entire cart
www.apress.com

O'Reilly User Group Program – 35% Discount

www.oreilly.com
Discount Code: DSUG



Peachpit Press User Group Program – 35% Discount
www.peachpit.com
CODE: UE-23AA-PEUF

Focal Press User Group Program – 40% Discount

www.focalpress.com
Discount Code: MEETUP



Pearson / Que / Informit / Sams Program – 35% Discount
www.pearson.com
Discount Code: USERGROUP
40% 2 Products: IUG240

45% Digital Products: IUGD45



Wiley User Group Program – 40% Discount
www.wiley.com
Promo Code: TS342

McGraw Hill Review Program

Bettina Faltermeier
bettina_faltermeier@mcgraw-hill.com



User Group Relations

– Gene and Linda Barlow

www.ugr.com / gene@ugr.com / linda@ugr.com

UGR offers a ½ price discount on Acronis' Backup Utility, Acronis True Image Home 2012 and Acronis' Partitioning Utility, Acronis Disk Director 11 Home. Visit www.ugr.com to purchase the software at a discounted price of \$25/each.



Smart Computing Tip Of The Day

Smart Computing Magazine sends these tips via e-mail. They also have them archived on their website: www.smartcomputing.com

**Paul from Minnesota writes:
When it comes to anti-virus & spyware programs, just how much difference is there between the paid for versions and the free ones?**

Paul from Minnesota brings up a good question. In the “olden days” when computer viruses were just beginning to hit their heyday, you had to pay for all virus protection software. Nowadays, there are plenty of free virus protection programs available for users to download from the Internet. There are also many paid programs available, so you may be wondering whether you need to pay for virus protection software or if the free programs are adequate.

To answer that question, you need to determine what your virus protection needs are and in what capacity you will be using your virus protection program. For example, the majority of free programs are designed for personal home use only, not for business use. So if you’re looking for virus software for your business, you’ll have to purchase a licensed version. There are several other differences between the paid and free versions as well.

Performance

The main reason you install virus protection software is to protect your computer against viruses, which can harm your computer. Tests have shown that both the free and the paid virus protection programs perform comparably in terms of detecting viruses on a computer. While this is incredibly important, there are other types of malicious programs and components that can infect your computer and cause irreparable damage or steal personal information. Detection and removal of spyware, malware and other nasty items is where the paid programs shine.

Most of the free programs also detect malware, but the paid programs do a better job and detect more of the little nuisances, which means your computer is cleaner and your information is safer if you’re using a paid program.

Additional Features

Another way paid virus protection wins over users is by offering additional features. When comparing virus protection programs, you should take a look at these added features and see if any of

them appeal to you. Examples of added features include parental controls, enhanced spam filters and identity theft protection. Avast’s paid program, Internet Security 6 Package, even opens up a new desktop for sensitive information, such as online banking, so other programs cannot steal account numbers or passwords.

Support

One of the major differences between free and paid virus programs is the customer support. Support is typically lacking or nonexistent with free programs because there is no money being exchanged. You may find a FAQ section on the company’s Web site or a limited help section built into the program, but the companies offering free software typically do not invest much money in support for these free programs. Paid programs, on the other hand, typically offer online and phone support for users. While you may not consider support to be a big deal, keep in mind that the free programs are often a bit more difficult to operate and navigate. If you decide on a free program, but are unable to set it up properly, it is useless.

If you’re still unsure of whether to go with free or paid virus protection, think about how you use the Internet. For users who are frequently downloading files and surfing a wide range of sites, a higher level of protection is warranted. For people who do minimal surfing, do not download many files and do not use credit cards online or engage in online banking, a free version is most likely fine. You could always see if the paid program you like has a free trial and compare it to a free program for yourself. That way you’ll know if it’s worth spending the money each year for the paid version. Good luck, and stay clean from those malicious viruses!

Smart Computing Tip Of The Day

Toggle Cases

How often have you needed to capitalize letter in a word or capitalized a letter by accident? Just highlight the letters or words in question and press SHIFT-F3. The case of the letters will alternate between all lowercase, capitalizing the first letter of each word, and all uppercase.

Amanda's Cool Site — By Amanda, WorldStart Staff Member

This information has been reprinted with permission from WorldStart

Star Car Central

Are you a fan of cars? I am! When I ran across this site I knew I had to share it with you if only for the lovely images of these vehicles! All of these cars are street legal, meaning they can be driven around town and aren't just tucked away in a museum. Navigation is easy, just click on the link of the car you want to check out, and you'll be whisked away to its page. From there you can use the left side menu to check out the other cars (they're listed alphabetically). Another navigation option is to scroll down to the bottom of the main page and select the car you want to check out

from the alphabetical listing located there.

Each car page will feature images of the original and the replica of the car you're checking out, and a ton of information! Some of the car pages include video clips of the cars from the movie for comparison. You'll find a 66' Batmobile, Bond Cars, Green Hornet, Herbie, and Kitt just to name a few!

This is a wicked cool car site! What are you waiting for go check it out today!

<http://www.starcarchcentral.com/>

Mojibake: Gibberish Text Explained

From the WorldStart Archives By J. Conboy

January 19, 2012

This information has been reprinted with permission from WorldStart



Surfing the internet, you'll find quite a bit of talk that could be considered gibberish. Internet slang such as "noob," words written in numbers instead of letters ("H3ll0!",) and lots of acronyms that don't make much sense on first viewing, if ever; lolz, wtf, rofl, smh, etc. While this type of "gibberish" could be researched for definitions/translations, there is another kind of gibberish which amounts to a sequence of characters which have no meaning as they are displayed. Such gibberish may look like "æ, ŠèÖí¶«©@%¿™šä," or even just a plain old row of "?????????" Gibberish such as this has its own nickname around the web: "Mojibake."

Mojibake occurs when a computer program, such as your web browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox,) word processor (Microsoft Word, Open Office,) or e-mail client (Windows Mail, Outlook, Eudora,) attempts to interpret and display characters which have a different "character encoding" than that which is available in the program or computer operating system (i.e. Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7, etc.) that is attempting to read said characters.

Character encoding, in its most basic form, is a code which pairs letters, numbers, and symbols with a second descriptive set of characters or actions which act as translation and display devices between two systems. A prime example of charac-

ter encoding can be found in a system invented many, many decades before the advent of the personal computer; the Braille system. Made up of raised dots aligned in varying patterns which correspond to different letters and numbers in the alphabet, Braille can be likened to character encoding on your computer quite easily: dots in a Braille written book represent encoded letters and numbers (i.e. computer encoded letters, numbers, and symbols in web pages on the internet) which are then read and translated into English by a trained hand (i.e. a web browser such as Internet Explorer) and finally processed into meaningful sentences and phrases; in both cases, by our brains.

Just as Braille words with too many or too few dots would be unintelligible when touched, gibberish characters (Mojibake) will show themselves when Internet Explorer attempts to display characters on a web page containing incompatible character encoding. This type of incorrect character encoding, and the gibberish it subsequently outputs, is commonly due to a web page, document, or other file which had been originally written in a foreign language with characters which are not compatible with your operating system or computer programs' default character encoding. For example, if you go to a website in Internet Explorer which has been programmed in a foreign language, using character encoding not supported by your browser, you will see something like this:



So how do you get the web page to show properly? Methods of fixing incompatible character encoding, and ridding yourself of Mojibake, vary from program to program. Fixes usually entail changing the character encoding defaults in your program(s) and/or installing a “language pack” which will allow your program(s) to correctly translate the gibberish on your screen into distinguishable characters, as written in their native language:



And that, in a nutshell, is why our programs occasionally display gibberish-like characters also known as Mojibake.

Job Interview Question - A last laugh from WorldStart

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You are driving along in your car on a wild, stormy night. You pass by a bus stop, and you see three people waiting for the bus:

1. An old lady who looks as if she is about to die.
2. An old friend who once saved your life.
3. The perfect man (or) woman you have been dreaming about.

Which one would you choose to offer a ride to, knowing that there could only be one passenger in your car?

Think before you continue reading. This is a moral/ethical dilemma that was once actually used as part of a job application.

You could pick up the old lady, because she is going to die, and thus you should save her first; or you could take the old friend because he once saved your life, and this would be the perfect chance to pay him back. However, you may never be able to find your perfect dream lover again.

This last laugh is continued later in the SVCG newsletter

Five Tips for IM Safety

By Brandon De Hoyos

About.com Guide



While instant messaging can be a fun way to keep in touch with family and friends, there are unfortunately people online who prey on those who don't know how to protect themselves. Without proper protection, any IM user can become a victim of harassment, sexual advances or even computer viruses and other nuisances.

Here are five important tips for keeping yourself safe while using your favorite IM client:

Keep It Private. While your online buddy on the other side of your instant messages might seem legitimate, it is always better to err on the side of safety. Never reveal your last name, contact information, account passwords or any other identifying factors to anyone over an instant messenger conversation.

Hold on to Your Screenname. Just as you should never give out your personal information online, never give your account information to other people you know in person. While you may trust your friends, they may use your account to practice cyberbullying, possibly hurting others and putting yourself at risk for blame.

Avoid Harassment. Regardless of how you might feel about someone, cyberbullying or the use of crude, violent or sexual language towards another person online is a serious offense. Never engage or participate in any online discussions which make you uncomfortable or are otherwise negative in nature. If you are the user who is practicing harassment out of anger or even a practical joke, know your actions could bring possible legal consequences, in addition to hurt another person.

If you are a victim of harassment online, know you can fight back.

Beware of Links, File Transfers. Practice care when clicking links or accepting files over IM in an effort to keep your computer free of viruses and other nuisances. While your friends and family may often forward great resources, there is always the possibility their screenname has sent a link to a virus without their knowledge. Always scan articles transferred from an online contact for viruses before opening.

When in Doubt, Get Help. While IM is fun, it can also be corrupted by people to do harm to others. If you even find yourself in a situation you are uncomfortable with, tell your parents, a school coun-

selor, a teacher or an adult you can trust. You should also report issues with another user to your IM client provider, local law enforcement and also reporting sexual advances to the CyberTipline

WorldStart last laugh continued:

The candidate who was hired (out of 200 applicants) had no trouble coming up with his answer.

He simply answered: "I would give the car keys to my old friend, and let him take the lady to the hospital. I would stay behind and wait for the bus with the woman of my dreams."

Never forget to "Think Outside of the Box."

Will deleting cookies free up room in my computer's memory?

By Leo Notenboom

Leo (at) ask-leo.com

<http://ask-leo.com/newsletter.html>

Occasionally, you'll want to delete unwanted files to free up space on your hard drive. It is usually easy to choose which .jpg, .doc or .xls documents to throw away. However, what about the many gigabytes of .dat files? Are these safe to delete, or will it cause your computer to crash? The extension .dat stands for data file. These are used by many applications so you can't know what it stands for without knowing the application that created it. Thankfully, even if you don't recognize the extension, the following steps can help determine if any file type is safe to delete.

1. Back up the File: Copy it to a hard drive, CD, another computer, anything. Just make sure to save the file first so you can get it back if you actually needed it.
2. Rename the File: After you rename the file, (remember to record the original name), use different applications on the computer and then reboot. If an error occurs due to the missing file name, you know what the file did and you can decide if you need to replace it. If no error occurred, move on to the next step.
3. Delete the File: First, make sure you've saved the file in step #1. After that, delete the file in question. Then, use your computer for a while, reboot, and experiment with different applications. If an error occurs, you know what the file did and can assess the situation from there. If no error appears, you're probably off the hook. Still it is important to keep the back up. An error

may occur later if the file is connected to an application you rarely use.

4. The computer may not allow you to delete or rename the file. This indicates the file does matter. Use a tool, such as Process Explorer, available from Microsoft's website, to learn which application is using it. Then you can decide if you need to keep the file.

Bottom Line? Always back up any file in question before you delete it and remember where you saved the back up. You will save a lot of unnecessary time and money if you need the file later on.

Get more free tech help and advice from Leo Notenboom by visiting <http://ask-leo.com> With over 30 years of industry experience, including an 18 year career as a software engineer with Microsoft, Leo gives real answers to real questions from ordinary computer users at Ask Leo! Subscribe to Leo's weekly newsletter now and receive a free ebook: "Internet Safety - Keeping Your Computer Safe on the Internet", a collection of steps, tools and concepts you need to know to keep your computer and your information safe.

Article Source: http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Leo_Notenboom



Ask Leo!
by
Leo Notenboom