

August Newsletter 2010

Vol. 3 No. 8

Today Susy Ball, Napa' newsletter editor, and I were talking about putting a newsletter together. WE both agree that it is kind of fun. There is a lot of information to use, you just have to pick which ones to use and fit them into the pages—sort of like putting a jigsaw puzzle together.

Writing my little blurb is the hardest part for me. Unfortunately I have to do it before I can assemble everything else. With everything I've had to do lately I am running a little bit late, so my part is going to be very short. In fact, this is it. I hope you had fun at the Fair - I did.
—Beth

A \$2.50 Pentium 4 Desktop Computer

By Bill Pryor, Internet SIG Coordinator, Lehigh Valley Computer Group, Pennsylvania
bpryor (at) ptd.net www.lvlg.org

From the April 2010 Issue, The LVCG Journal, Monthly news for the Lehigh Valley Computer Group

This article has been obtained from Judy Taylour with the author's permission for publication by user group editors; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

Boy what a beautiful day today was. The sun was shining, the birds were greeting, and the trees and flowers are coming into bloom. The terrific snow banks are gone, and today, believe it or not, all the flea market people were out at the Quaker-town Q-Mart outside.

Around 12 PM today, I came across a table with three CRT monitors, 2 keyboards, a tower PC, and an old Gateway computer, and the guy there said, "Give me ten bucks." I said, "I'll just take the computers." And then he said, "You can take everything for \$5 bucks." And so I did take the two computers, not knowing exactly what I had gotten, or if they would work!

I brought the tower PC home, and took a look at it. I plugged it in, hooked up the keyboard and mouse, and noted the supplied network card, and plugged in my Internet router to it. When it booted up it had an XP operating system with service pack 2 on it with the updates shut-off. It had an Intel Pentium 4, 2.8 GHz, 500 Megs of RAM, and Intel motherboard (which I like best); 4-USB functioning slots, an 80 GB Seagate hard drive, a 50X CD player, 3-1/2" floppy, and lomega floppy drive as well!

When it first booted up it was a little unstable.

But most of the hard drive was open with few programs on it. It even had office 2003 on it, and when I opened up the IE 7 browser that was there, the MSN network came up beautifully, and the Internet runs perfectly on it. First I removed some of the strange looking programs that I did not need or care for. I took off the installed out-of-date Symantec virus checker, along with the "Live Update" which I do not like, and replaced it with the free AVG 9. I then used the free Eusing Registry Cleaner which took off 250 superfluous lines from the Registry, and then ran the Malware cleaner, and the anti-virus 9 that did not detect anything, and then defragged the drive.

Here is a fine machine with an operating system installed, a hard drive, floppies, CD, and USB, Internet ready, with a little software to clean up, and it is ready to go! Something like this is much more powerful than a new \$300 Netbook, and even powerful enough to run graphic programs of this vintage!

I do not know, but I am having more fun lately reviving the dead than buying the latest and greatest every minute. And with all the old parts and software around, almost anything can be replaced with a little patience and very low cost. It is certainly uncanny so much amazing technology is being ignored and discarded everywhere.

Why when \$2.50 won't even get you into a computer show, how about buying a whole computer

INTERNET SHOPPING - A VIEW OF ONE OF THE BEST - Part I

By Ron Hirsch, Boca Raton Computer Society, FL

ronhirsch1439 (at) comcast.com

www.bracs.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).

It's probable that everyone who uses the Internet has purchased online at one time or another. Of course there are many sites where one can shop. Some are well known, such as Amazon. But there are also many sites, possibly numbering into the millions, where one can purchase items of every description. And, it is difficult to know what is really behind the web pages that one can view while on an unknown site.

Remember, anyone can design (or have designed for them) a very elaborate and impressive site, even when there is very little behind the front that is displayed. So, sometimes it is hard to evaluate with whom you are dealing. There are various services where one can get "ratings" of many of these sites, but not all sites are listed or rated. So, what is one to do?

Usually, getting recommendations from friends, or reviews from known sources will aid in this activity. And, your own personal experiences should serve you well here.

The purpose of this article is to give you my recommendation for a particular company with whom I've dealt for many years. While I have always had a high regard for them, my recent experiences totally solidify and enhance my feelings about them. This company is NEWEGG.

NEWEGG - AN EXTRAORDINARY COMPANY

This is the first time I've ever written an article about a supplier that I use. But this company, Newegg, is indeed a one in a million, and I feel that my experiences with them do rate the praise that I will be bestowing upon them. Even though I have been dealing with them for years, recent experiences have given me an added new perspective on their operation, and dedication to customer service, and customer satisfaction.

WHO IS NEWEGG??

If you never heard of Newegg, then you probably have not bought many computer parts in the past. And, if you have bought one or more computers or computer components since you got interested in computers, then they were either

bought at local retailers such as Costco, or large online sellers such as Amazon, or Buy.com.

WHAT DO THEY SELL??

The company probably started out selling parts mainly to home computer builders, but has since expanded to cover far more than that. Their offerings now include just about every computer part that one can conceive, in addition to complete computers. Plus they offer TV's, digital photography items of all kinds, and also many electronics devices currently in the marketplace.

Newegg is a company that only sells online, and only via placing an order on their site. They do not have any retail stores, nor can you place an order verbally by speaking with a representative. But they do have staff with whom you can talk to on all appropriate matters. And, they do have a web site which is actually a great experience. And below I will explain why this is so.

WHY IS THEIR SITE SO GREAT?

When you first log onto their site, their home page will be presented, and you can use their search box to start your activities there. You can type in a product's model number, a manufacturer's name, a product's type, such as "monitors", or a general area such as "cables".

When the search results come up, you can then refine them via a variety of sorting choices, such as "lowest price", "highest price", "most popular", "manufacturer", etc..

Up to this point, other sites do have similar features, but here's where it gets much better.

REVIEWS - on every product page, on the right, there will be an area where you can bring up product reviews, and there will also be a display indicating the average review score of all the reviews listed. And, each reviewer rates the product in question, on a scale of 1 to 5. At the top of this section is a summary of the scores from all the reviewers, and you can also read the complete review. This can assist potential buyers in deciding about the item they are interested in buying.

IMAGES - For most products, there is a small display of thumbnail photo images of the product. These images display the product in various

views, and the other items included in the product package. Clicking on the small thumbnails provides a larger image to view.

SPECIFICATIONS - Clicking here will bring up a list of the specifications for the product involved. This is usually quite complete.

MANUFACTURER - But if added info is wanted, there are tabs to click on, which will take you to that product page on the manufacturer's site, or to the home page there. Also included are phone numbers for the manufacturer in question. Very often, when I am having difficulty locating a phone number for a manufacturer, I go to Newegg's site, and bring up that manufacturer, and then note the phone number.

PRODUCT AVAILABILITY- If the product you bring up is not available because it is either out of stock, or discontinued, there will be an "Unavailable" notation alongside the product. Newegg will not accept orders for a product which is not currently available in their stock. But, you can request an email notification when it does become available, at which time you can then place your order. Often, the product is not available because it has been discontinued. And ultimately, it

will then be removed from their site.

SHIPPING & DELIVERY - Newegg does of course have many products that include "Free Shipping". Those that do not will note the shipping charges during the course of placing an order. Their charges are always reasonable. And the shipping time is usually only a couple of days. And if you are ordering several items, the shipping charges will usually be less the total of the individual charges.

This is the end of part 1. Next month, part 2 will offer you the more details on the cream of dealing with Newegg. There is no question that other companies may indeed share some of the great positive features that Newegg offers. But to find a single company that does all of them, is extremely rare.

If you find this material useful, you may want to download this article in PDF format, from our web site <http://www.brcs.org/hirsch.php>. This allows readers to keep the material either as a PDF file, and/or print it out, and place it in a looseleaf notebook for future reference. Remember, the PDF version offers full color, which could not be used in the Boca Bits hard copy. So, if there are color elements in the original, the PDF copy will display them that way.

Microsoft Offers Free Online Version of Office

By Ira Wilsker, Member, Golden Triangle PC Group, Texas
Radio Show Host on KLVI and Columnist, the Examiner, Beaumont, Texas
wilsker(at)apcug.net



This article has been obtained from Judy Tylour with the author's permission for publication by user group editors; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

WEBSITE: <http://www.live.com> (Click on "Office")

In the over 10 years I have been writing this

weekly column I have used the Microsoft Word installed on my desktop computer for all but a handful of the columns. There were a few columns I wrote while using Open Office as a topic of the column; one column was typed using Google Docs and saved as a Word file to send to my edi-

tor. Today I am using Microsoft's recently released Word Web App, which is one of the several Office utilities now available for free at www.live.com. Since these applications are online, they can be accessed from anywhere the user has internet access, and are utilized in a browser window.

From the live.com webpage, the office applications can be utilized by clicking on the "Office" link at the top of the page. Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote are currently available. Registration is required in order to use the Microsoft Live utilities, but registration is fast and free. For those users who may need access to the primary components of Microsoft Office, but do not have it installed on their computers, this service from Live is a viable alternative.

The default tab on the Word Web App is "Home" which displays the simplified Word 2007 ribbon (menu) with the ubiquitous copy, paste, fonts, formatting, spell check, and another feature which is not in the computer based version of Word, "Open in Word". This "Open in Word" will connect to the Word installed on the computer, and open the document in the computer based Word, but only if a compatible browser is being used. I am using Firefox as my browser as I type this, and clicking on the "Open in Word" icon on the ribbon displays a message that my browser is not compatible. Another anomaly (browser incompatibility) occurred when I tried to copy some text by painting it, right clicking and going to "copy". A window opened that said, "Your browser does not allow access to



I started by using Live's Word Web App to type this column. The "ribbon" or menu at the top of the browser window is reminiscent of the one in Word 2007, but does not have quite as many choices as the full version of Word 2007 on my computer. While all of the major functions are available, many of the enhancements and "bells and whistles" are not available on the web version. The top line menu choices are "File", "Home", "Insert", and "View". Above the ribbon are small icons to save and undo. Clicking on the "File" tab gives the user choices to open, save, share, close, properties, feedback, and privacy. As I am typing this, I am periodically saving the file in the default .docx (Word 2007) format to Microsoft's SkyDrive, which is Microsoft's server sometimes referred to as "in the cloud". Once saved to the SkyDrive, I can access this file from anywhere.

the clipboard. Use the keyboard shortcuts for cut, copy, and paste instead." Using the keyboard commands CTRL-C allowed me to copy the text I wanted, and CTRL-V allowed me to paste it where I wanted it. This inability to work nicely with some

browsers other than Microsoft's lowers my opinions of this product; while it is not a fatal defect, I do not like the idea of being compelled to use Internet Explorer in order to utilize all of the features of the Word Web App. The "Insert" tab on the ribbon allows the user to insert a table, picture, clip art or links. The "View" tab offers the user the choice of an "Editing View" and a "Reading View". One important item missing from the menu is a "Print" button; I could not find any easy way to print a document, other than using the browser print function.

While Word may be one of the most widely used

System requirements for opening files from Office Web Apps into Office desktop applications

Symptom

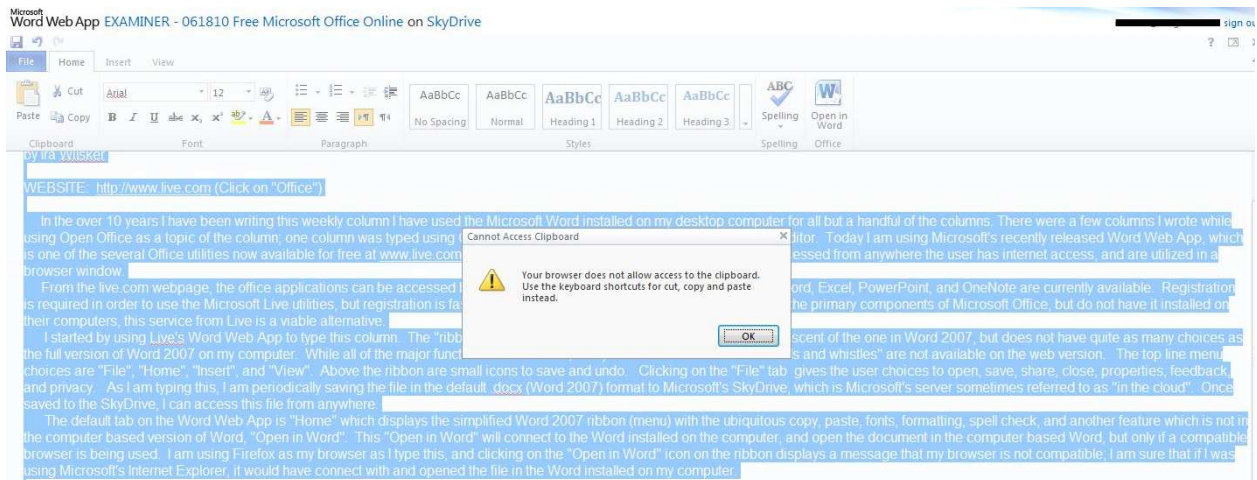
In Microsoft Office Web Apps, when you click the command to open a file in the Office desktop application, a message is displayed, saying that the file cannot be opened in the desktop application.

Cause

The ActiveX control necessary for opening the file in the Office desktop application is not installed or is not running. This can happen under the following circumstances:

- Microsoft Office is not installed on your computer.
- The version of Office that is installed is earlier than Office 2003.
- The SharePoint OpenDocuments Class add-on is not enabled.
- Security settings in Internet Explorer prevent ActiveX controls from running.
- You are using Firefox and Office 2003 or Office 2007.
- Your browser does not support ActiveX, or is the 64-bit version of Internet Explorer.
- You are using a browser other than Internet Explorer or Firefox.

2



applications, Excel and PowerPoint are also very widely used. The online version of Excel can be accessed by clicking on the Excel icon on the Live - Office web page. The Excel Web App looks much like a simplified version of the full computer based version of Excel, and uses the same interface and commands. By default, files are saved to the SkyDrive in the Excel 2007 .xlsx format. The first thing I noticed on the Excel Web App is that the formula bar (Fx) does not pull down to display the list of available formulae. I also found that the auto-fill functions where dates and cells could be auto-filled by clicking on the corner of a cell and dragging does not work, at least when used in Firefox. The ribbon bar on the Excel Web App looks much like a simplified Excel 2007 menu bar, but lacks some of the choices available on the computer installed version. As with the other Microsoft Web Apps, the spreadsheet can be shared as desired. Also as with the Word App, the icon "Open in Excel" will generate an error. According to the online help, none of the Web Apps will open the computer's Office if using Firefox and Office 2003 or Office 2007; Microsoft's recommended fix is to install Office 2010. The online help also says that the 64-bit version of Internet Explorer is not supported, and that browsers other than Internet Explorer and Firefox are not supported at all. That means that it may be

difficult or impossible for the many users of Chrome, Safari, Opera, and other browsers to utilize these otherwise useful Web Apps.

I do a lot of PowerPoint presentations, and I was especially interested to try the PowerPoint Web App. As with the other apps, it saves in the Office 2007 formats, in this case .pptx. The screen looks familiar, but much simplified from the full version of PowerPoint. One item obviously missing from the ribbon (menu) is the "save" button; that is because the PowerPoint Web App automatically saves the presentation. Another feature that is missing is the ability to right click on an image or text box in a slide to add animations or special effects. I easily inserted an image into a slide, and was given a choice of eight picture styles or frames, but could not animate or otherwise add the special effects that I sometimes use in the full version. Other than using some of the more sophisticated features of the full version of PowerPoint, the Web App version is adequate for simple PowerPoint presentations.

I will admit that I do not use Microsoft's OneNote, but it is available as a Web App. Looking much like a Word document, with the addition of a calendar line, when shared, it also shows the other authors and page versions that were accessed and modified. OneNote also allows for images, clipart, links, and tables to be inserted, which can provide a richer user experience. Like Word, the ribbon (menu) in OneNote allows the user to implement traditional formatting and fonts as desired. I could see where OneNote would be useful for taking notes and sharing content. As with PowerPoint, there is no "save" button, as OneNote documents are automatically saved.

If the user desires to import a document or im-



age on his computer in the appropriate Web App, the user would click on the SkyDrive link at the top of the Office page, and then "Add Files". The user can then drag and drop files from his computer into the "Add Files" browser window, or files can be uploaded to SkyDrive by clicking on "Select documents from your computer". Documents and other files stored on SkyDrive can be downloaded individually in native format, or all of the files can be downloaded together as a single ZIP file from SkyDrive. I experimented with SkyDrive and the Web Apps and found that this may be a viable choice either as a primary or backup method of doing presentations or working on documents away from my home or office computer, providing there is good internet access. Clicking on the SkyDrive "More" link allows the user to view a file's properties, or delete it from SkyDrive.

One of the strengths of using web applications like these is the ability to work together or collaborate on projects. By clicking on FILE - SHARE others can be authorized to access the file. The share choices can be controlled with a slider that ranges from "Just me" to "Some friends", "Friends", "My friends and their friends", and "Everyone (public)". Specific people can be added to those eligible to share by name or by email address.

While not as feature rich as the full versions of Office, the free Web Apps versions at live.com do offer a viable alternative to those who do not have Office installed on their computers, or who need a portable version of those applications. Many users will find these Web Apps quite useful.

Ira Wilsker is the Director of the Management Development Program at Lamar Institute of Technology, in Beaumont, TX. He also hosts a weekly radio talk show on computer topics on KLVI News Talk AM560, and writes a weekly technology column for the Examiner newspaper <www.theexaminer.com>. Ira is also a police officer who specializes in cybercrime, and has lectured internationally in computer crime and security.



How do you connect to the Internet?

By Constance Brown, President, Canton Alliance Massillon User Group, Illinois
 constanceb(at)camug.com

www.camug.apcug.org

From the June 2010 Issue, The Memory Map

This article has been obtained from Judy Tylour with the author's permission for publication by user group editors; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

Do you use dial-up, DSL, cable, satellite, mobile broadband, wireless or a combination of the above? Your answer likely reflects the availability of services in the area where you live and whether you use a laptop, personal computer, netbook or smart phone for email and Internet access. Let's take a look at some of these services.

Dial up service has been around for a long time. If you are running equipment using a 56K modem, theoretically you could have a download speed of 56K (56000 bits per second). Rarely do you achieve this speed. Many of the dial-up services are low-cost and overwhelmed with clients, resulting in slow connection speeds and dropped connections with no warning. Also the transfer rates

usually are much below the theoretical speeds. I have often seen 24K connections. Anyone using dial-up also has the frustration of not being able to take calls while on the Internet or checking email.

A few things can be done to maximize the connection speeds for dial-up. If you are using Windows 98, updating your software may help. Call your phone company and ask them to test for interference on your line. If it is within acceptable limits, you can request them to turn up the gain on your line. This is similar to turning up the volume on your CD player in the car when the noise of the rain striking the windshield makes it difficult to hear the music. You can also trouble shoot the devices plugged into your phone line. First, unplug all the devices—all your phones, fax machines and satellite TV. Then check your connection speed. If it has increased, you know that some device was interfering. Re-plug the devices one at a

time and re-test your connection speed. When you find the troublesome device, leave it unplugged until you need to use it. You can also try adjusting flow settings using your modem software.

In some areas the telephone company offers DSL, a plan that splits your phone line in such a way that voice and data packets flow separately. This allows a person to be on the phone while surfing the Internet and checking email. The speed is usually much faster than dial-up. In fact, it can outperform cable speeds if you are close to a repeating station. If you are distant, the speeds may not be significantly higher than dial-up. The costs are reasonable, considering the benefits.

Cable access is very popular. It does not in any way interfere with telephone use. In fact, speeds are high enough that many people have fired the phone company and now use voice over internet protocol (VOIP) to make phone calls. In many cases, this saves a significant amount of money each month. Cable speeds can slow dramatically, however, if all the neighbors decide to get it! When the youngsters get home from school, the information flow backs up and access slows down. It is almost like trying to flush a large amount of debris through a small pipe. The pipe doesn't change size. The person flushing the debris has to slow to a speed that the pipe can handle. When this problem becomes significant and enough people complain, the cable company may add additional lines to service the needs of the community.

Satellite access is costly and used in areas where no other high speed access is available. HughesNet and Wild Blue are two large providers and are available in this part of Ohio. Smaller companies retail the HughesNet service in the Akron Canton area. There may be providers available as well as these two. Costs can be hefty for installation and may run significantly higher than \$80 per month depending on the bandwidth you desire.

Wireless Internet and Hotspot services are ways the traveler can connect. Here in Canton, wireless is provided at no charge at all the public libraries and many business locations including Panera Bread, Starbucks, some of the McDonalds and the airport. If you live in downtown Canton, you can often connect to the Internet through wireless access provided by the city and businesses. Often the connection is limited unless you are near a business that has decided to increase the signal for the area surrounding it. You will want to safe-

guard your private information when using public Wi-Fi. Some businesses provide secure Wi-Fi to their customers. In order to use their service, you have to be provided with a password. Commercial Hotspots may direct the user to a login screen where access for a specific amount of time may be purchased for a fee.

Mobile broadband wireless is gaining in popularity and we will see more and more people moving in that direction as standards are adopted between companies and networks expand. Cell phones with Internet and email access use this service. So do netbooks. You can also access mobile broadband through a USB device that connects your laptop to the Internet. Some of these combine wireless hotspot services with broadband wireless. Plans run in the \$50-\$60 range monthly with limitations on the amount of usage. You do not want to use mobile broadband service to play games or watch videos. T-mobile's device allows you to monitor your use and to determine whether a hotspot is available that doesn't count against your mobile data flow allowance or whether mobile broadband is your only choice. Most likely other companies provide similar monitoring software. Mobile broadband is not available in every place where your cell phone works, but coverage is available in all heavily populated areas and is growing. At this point Verizon has the largest network based on my personal research and that conducted by Encyclopedia Britannica when they selected a carrier for their sales and training teams.

We have many more choices of services than used to be available to us. Periodically it is wise to review all of your communication services and see whether something is available that can save you money while decreasing frustration.

Smart Computing Tip Of The Day

Memory Card Shopping Tips

There are several different types of memory cards, so be sure to consult a users manual before you purchase one for your camera or camcorder.

Your level of photo or video quality and how much you will use your camera or camcorder will determine your storage needs.

D-SLR camera and high-definition camcorder users should consider getting a high-speed, high-capacity memory card.

Can You Really Watch Free TV on Your PC?

By Ira Wilsker, Member, Golden Triangle PC Group, Texas
Radio Show Host on KLVI and Columnist, the Examiner, Beaumont, Texas
wilsker(at)apcug.net



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

WEBSITES:

<http://toolbar.tv-fox.com>
<http://www.watch-live-online.tv> (Live TV)
<http://www.hulu.com>

You may have seen ads on the internet or on TV that tell you that you can watch free TV on the internet, and that you do not need cable or satellite to watch thousands of TV channels. Some even go as far as to say that you should cancel your cable or satellite, and use the free services, rather than paying for expensive TV service. Several others advertise software or hardware devices (for a fee) that allow you to watch hundreds of TV channels online for free. There are even websites that allow you watch TV in your browser or on your desktop, either for free, or for a subscription fee. While these offers are generally real, they should not be confused with the selection of channels available on your local cable system or satellite service as they generally do not offer the major commercial channels, and rarely offer the major local channels. Some services, generally located overseas, offer illegally pirated feeds for a fee, and should always be avoided. Other services, such as the well respected Hulu (hulu.com) legitimately offer thousands of already broadcast and older TV shows and movies provided by the networks and movie studios that are either advertiser supported (for free), or without commercials (by subscription, sometimes for a fee).

One service that I frequently use is TV-Fox, or its sister product, LIVE TV. The selection of channels on LIVE TV is virtually identical to those on TV-Fox. Alternatively, for those who do not want to download a toolbar or plug-in, these same channels can be viewed directly online at watch-live-online.tv. It may be necessary to have Windows Media Player (or some similar compatible player) installed to view these stations. Most of the stations can either be viewed in a small window, or opened to full screen by double clicking on the video.

TV-Fox is a free plug-in for the Firefox browser

(toolbar.tv-fox.com), and currently offers "2780 Live TV Channels sorted by country & category, the TV-FOX allows you to watch thousands of TV channels freely available on the internet." It is installed as a short toolbar, and includes a pair of directories that display the available channels. The first icon (purple) opens a directory containing a listing of about 100 countries; moving the mouse cursor over the country displays the currently available TV stations that stream online. If the selected station has a circle icon with a right arrow (triangle), that indicates that the selected station is always online; if the icon is a small clock, that means that the station is only available for specific hours. The viewer should be aware of the time differences around the world, as what is prime time in the mid-east, for example, may be the early morning here. While I enjoy watching live foreign TV, I am not capable of understanding all of the languages, so I prefer the English language stations available in many of the countries listed. Under the listing for the United States is approximately 60 stations, all but a few being broadcast in English. These US based stations include such well known stations as Bloomberg Business, CBN, CNBC, Home Shopping Network (HSN), Fox News, MSNBC, NASA, NBC News, and several prominent local stations from a variety of cities.

The second icon (green) on the TV-Fox toolbar opens a directory based on genre'. Categories include sports, news, business, music, kids, lifestyle, government, religious, education, shopping and weather, as well as a listing of about 50 live web-cams from around the world. Personally, I am a news and information junkie, and spend significant time on the news listing, which has live news feeds from about three dozen news sources from about 20 different countries, many of which are in English. Sports fanatics may enjoy the sports selection, consisting of 28 stations from about a dozen countries. While I may not under-

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

stand the announcer on many of these sports stations, the live or recorded sports events are often quite understandable to the viewer. Music fans would appreciate the almost 50 TV stations that stream music. While many of the music stations are from France, Italy, Poland, and India, the viewer will almost always find music of interest. I have found that many of the foreign music stations which play their native music are very intriguing and entertaining.

Investing and business is of universal interest. TV-Fox offers 19 business channels, including Bloomberg-UK, Bloomberg-Asia, and Bloomberg-USA. Those stations, along with CNBC and NBR can provide business and economic information for the majority of investors and others interested in business.

Sometimes we need content to entertain our children, or the child in us adults. The kids section contains a dozen channels, three of which are American, two of which are cartoons. My favorite kids channel is the "Classical Cartoons" which shows old time cartoons, many of which are from the 30's and 40's, most of which today's children would not otherwise have an opportunity to view.

There are 22 movie channels listed, of which eight are from the US, and include sci-fi, comedy classics, thrillers, and WSTV (White Springs TV, also known as "The Golden Age of Movies Channel") which is a Florida and Oregon based network that streams old movies over satellite and on the

air in about a dozen cities, as well as online. If I feel like watching a movie stream on my computer, I can usually find something of interest on one of these movie channels.

The two dozen religious TV channels that stream over the internet cover almost all of the world's major religions, in a variety of languages. There are 27 educational channels available, many from major universities around the world, including Texas A&M's KAMU-TV. Shoppers may like to see what the 22 shopping channels offer, including the six American shopping channels. Some of the products promoted on the foreign shopping channels are very interesting, despite the frequent language barrier; the foreign sales techniques are often very entertaining as well. The 14 weather channels, including nine American weather channels provide more weather information than most viewers can utilize.

Sometimes it is interesting just to see a live webcam from some notable location. The live webcams available on TV-Fox include such diverse places as Times Square (NYC), the Hogs Breath Saloon in Florida, France, Germany, Kathmandu (Nepal), Israel, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, and other US locations.

While not a complete substitute for local TV and the domestic cable and satellite services, there is enough free TV available online to entertain and inform almost everybody.

Website Discoveries

By Steve Bass, Publisher and Self-appointed Chief Content Officer, TechBite
Stevebass(at)techbite.com

www.techbite.com



Author of a well read column, newsletter and blog plus many feature articles at PC World Magazine

This article has been obtained from Judy Taylour with the author's permission for publication by user group editors; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

I spend lots of time patrolling the Internet, looking for sites that can help me with my life. Some are pin-pointed to something I might need right away, like Contact Help, a way to get the phone number of a company. Others are spots I know I'll need someday, such as instructions for recovering a ring from a drainpipe or how to wrap an extension cord like a pro.

I've got a stack of these places for you; some may hit your nail on the head, so to speak; others won't do a thing for you.

Get Me Some Help

I used to rely solely on [GetHuman](#) to find a company phone number and get the skinny on the menu prompts for quick navigation. Now GetHuman has an ally: Contact Help, a relatively new site with contacts GetHuman doesn't list.

www.gethuman.com
www.contacthelp.com

Image you're trying to choose between two companies, say, satellite TV services, or maybe banks. Consult with CustomerService Scoreboard and get some background before you sign up.

www.customerservicescoreboard.com

Photo Retouching You Won't Believe

This video of the upcoming Adobe Photoshop upgrade's *Content Aware Fill* feature is something you *have* to watch. Even if you don't use Photoshop, you'll be blown away by what it does. It's a long [video](#) -- but stay until the end when you'll see a spectacular modification of a panoramic image.
<http://tinyurl.com/ydoa2od>

You might never ever consider buying Photoshop. Even though it can work miracles on photos, it's a PITA to learn. Instead you might want to send some of your photos to Master Photo Repair and let my buddy [Chuck Hazendl](#), a professional, have a go at them. For instance, he can remove people from photos -- or seamlessly add them.
www.masterphotorepair.com/

Feed Me!

I love to cook. It lets the creative part of me play around in the kitchen. Now I know it's April, and carving a turkey has nothing to do with technology. Yet, here's something I found incredibly useful: A [video](#) with a professional showing the right way to carve a turkey. <http://tinyurl.com/383kujy>
With the turkey in the fridge, there's one question that always seems to come up: How long we can keep things in the fridge before they go bad. As a confirmed cheapskate, I often argue with my wife about whether something's still edible if there's fur growing on it. [StillTasty](#) has the answer. (That ground turkey? You have two days, pal.)
www.stilltasty.com

If you're traveling and need restaurant advice, or need a second opinion on a recipe, log on to [Chowhound](#). Select a location on the forum board and browse around -- or fire off a question. Who knows, you may bump into me (I use my real name) or Judy (as Judybird).
<http://chowhound.chow.com/boards>

Take Charge of Your Household

Besides cooking, I enjoy my role as Bass International handyman. (Since graduate school, I've also been the Laundry Queen, finding ways to remove spots and stains like you'll never believe.)

I was looking for some [I'm-going-to-save-thousands-and-paint-the-house-myself](#) advice when I ran across the household section of Family Hack . Oh, is it cool. The first video I spotted was [Something Down The Drain? Retrieve it Without a Wrench](#). Absolutely brilliant for retrieving a ring, but a contact lens? I dunno...
<http://www.familyhack.com/category/household/>

<http://www.familyhack.com/2007/08/29/drain-tip/>
<http://www.familyhack.com/2007/08/29/drain-tip/>

Just as valuable is WonderHowTo. I built a clay pot fountain (and found a bigger project: an outdoor fountain) and learned how to adjust the sprinklers.

www.wonderhowto.com/
<http://tinyurl.com/y8cfvaw>
<http://tinyurl.com/35hvlqd>
<http://tinyurl.com/ye2rj9t>

One big thrill was discovering how to wrap a power extension cord without it getting tangled or squirrely. (I've got to get a life, I know.) I watched what felt like hundreds of videos. This first video -- [No Tangle Extension Cord Storage](#) -- is the best of the bunch. This next technique is a favorite of roadies, people who handle sound equipment and cables for performers on the road. Here's another roadie technique.

<http://tinyurl.com/lz8q7y>
<http://tinyurl.com/34ftzjs>
<http://tinyurl.com/2v8wh7j>

He asked his readers to send him Web sites that give a boost to the quality of your life. Here are some that he forgot to put in his column and a few that readers sent in.

Last week I offered you bunches of Web spots I found useful, many of them having little to do with technology. The feedback was amazingly positive -- and many of you sent your faves.

One site I forgot to mention was Appliance Junk , a site that doles out repair advice. The forum members -- most of them repair people -- helped me resurrect my 23-year-old dishwasher and fix an icemaker. (It doesn't help the economy, sure, but I'll still try to get another 20 years out of them...)

<http://appliancejunk.com/forums/>

Another favorite is Ask the Builder , with a slew of videos. One of the many I found useful was a house gutter issue -- whether to protect gutters or clean them. (I'm the guy on the ladder -- still cleaning.)

www.askthebuilder.com

One more site: The Power Wash Network lets you eavesdrop (okay, *lurk*) on professional cleaners -- window washers and wooden deck restorers, for instance -- and get their insider tips. (I got a terrific formula for a window washing solution.)

www.powerwashnetwork.com

After reading last week's TechBite, subscriber Rob Carpenter said, "I didn't realize you were a do-it-yourself fan. If you haven't been there before, I think you'll find Instructables useful." Not everything on the site's a fit for me, but some of the instructions were useful, like working with PVC pipe, for instance (I'm designing a hothouse), and building a chicken coop (stop laughing).
<http://www.instructables.com/>

David S. reminded me of a technique for adjusting your side-view car mirrors. We've been using it for years because it can actually let you see cars in your "blind spots." This video explains how to do it.
<http://tinyurl.com/2bm9en3>

One surprise is that lots of you spend time in the kitchen, carving turkeys, I think. Here's another tip: How to cook the perfect poached egg (I tried it and this is a keeper). BTW, if you've never done this at a party, here's how to peel a hard boiled egg and amaze everyone.
<http://tinyurl.com/24zousa>
<http://tinyurl.com/5dlifx>

Finally, Phil Davis told me he's learned how to

pack a suitcase from YouTube vids. (I just wear T-shirts and short pants. Here's where I learned *my* folding technique .) For wrinkle-free packing, try the slow and studious butler's method . If you're just overnighting it, here are written instrux , or if you prefer a video, a moribund butler shows how to cram everything you can into a suitcase.

<http://tinyurl.com/yfsbmzh>
<http://tinyurl.com/2ock3m>
<http://tinyurl.com/33co2v>
<http://tinyurl.com/2ct99vo>

Steve Bass is the publisher and self-appointed Chief Content Officer at TechBite; he continues to experience the cool feeling of having his own newsletter. Send him your feedback at TechBite. To sign up for TechBite's free Steve Bass Technology newsletter, head for our signup page.

www.techbyte.com

Steve's also the author of "PC Annoyances, 2nd Edition: How to Fix the Most Annoying Things About Your Personal Computer," available on Amazon. It covers XP, but not Vista. If you haven't purchased your copy today, don't wait, supplies always seem to be limited..

www.amazon.com

Free Utilities from CPUID Describe System Details

By Ira Wilsker, Member, Golden Triangle PC Group, Texas
Radio Show Host on KLVI and Columnist, the Examiner, Beaumont, Texas
[wilsker\(at\)apcug.net](mailto:wilsker(at)apcug.net)



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

WEBSITES:

<http://www.cpubid.com>
<http://www.cpubid.com/software.html>

As regular readers of this column know, I am a fan of utilities, especially if they are free! Frequently, situations arise where it is necessary to know the details of a computer, including specifics about its software, hardware, drivers, and other components in order to diagnose a problem and make recommendations. There are several fine utilities that can perform these functions, but several that I have been using recently come from the historical city of Dunkerque, France, courtesy of their publisher CPUID Software.

CPUID software is best known for its namesake product, CPUID, which is as it says, a utility to identify the details of the CPU chip installed in a computer. This is often necessary to know if the

computer is being benchmarked (performance measured), upgraded, or undergoing major repairs. The latest CPUID software is named CPU-Z, version 1.55. This small utility displays the processor brand and model number, the type of socket it uses (necessary to know for replacement or upgrades), speeds, and other details about the CPU chip, which is the central "brains" of the computer. Sometimes it is desirable or necessary to replace a motherboard, or determine the BIOS on the motherboard. The motherboard is the central platform on which most of the other internal components are either directly attached to, or otherwise connected to, and provides much of the internal communication between the components. While generally very reliable and long lived, sometimes it is necessary to replace a motherboard. The BIOS, an acronym for "Basic Input - Output System" is typically attached to the motherboard, and contains the first code run by a PC when it is initially powered on. The BIOS identifies and initializes the video card, keyboard, mouse, hard drive, CD/DVD drive, and other key components.

Smart Computing Tip Of The Day

Create Personalized Shortcuts

You can gain easy access to any application by creating your own keyboard shortcuts. For example, you could open Microsoft Word by using a simple keyboard shortcut command such as CTRL-ALT-W. To create a personalized shortcut, right-click an application shortcut icon and choose Properties. Click the Shortcut tab, click in the Shortcut Key field, press the keys you want to use for your shortcut (such as CTRL-ALT-S), and click Apply. Now when you want to open the application, all you have to do is enter the keyboard shortcut you chose.

The BIOS contains software in a non-volatile ROM chip, and is typically firmly attached to the motherboard. Most BIOS chips can be updated and upgraded with software provided either by the BIOS manufacturer, motherboard maker, or computer manufacturer. CPU-Z identifies the brand of BIOS, the version of its software, and the date of the software stored in it; with this information, it is somewhat easy to determine if the BIOS contains the latest software. Keeping the BIOS updated is not a critical task if everything appears to be working OK, but for those of us always trying to tweak our computers and capitalize in the latest offerings, this is good information to have. One warning is appropriate here; if the user is considering updating the BIOS, be absolutely sure to explicitly follow the manufacturer's directions to the letter! In a worst case scenario, failure to do so will result in an expensive paperweight, but in many cases, there is a procedure to "roll back" or restore the BIOS to its earlier status.

When I ask people how much memory they have in their computer, they are often clueless, or erroneously confuse the memory with the storage capacity of their hard drives. Clicking on the "Memory" tab of CPU-Z displays the type of memory, the amount of memory, speed, and other characteristics. The "SPD" tap allows the user to cycle through the memory stick installed in his computer, displaying the capacity of each stick, the type, manufacturer, part number, and other information. This information may be necessary if the user wants to add or replace memory in the computer.

The "Graphics" tab displays information about the display device, including the brand, model

number, chipset, speed, and memory. Since the video card makers often release updates, enhancements, and new features, this information could be very useful.

CPUID also publishes several other utilities, and another one that I found useful is PC Wizard 2010. PC Wizard was first published in 1996, and is considered one of the most comprehensive system information utilities available. Since the hardware industry is very dynamic, with new hardware being introduced on a daily basis, PC Wizard is frequently updated, typically monthly. In addition to identifying and displaying the details of the hardware and software on the computer, PC Wizard can also benchmark the performance of the individual computer components, as well as the entire computer. By noting which components and software are the performance laggards, the user can then determine what, if any, practical solutions may improve performance. PC Wizard utilizes a series of icons representing each of the components or software titles installed on the computer, and can determine the hardware, configuration, system files, and resources used by the computer. The benchmark selection can test and display the performance of the entire computer, the CPU (processor chip), memory, video, hard drive, external storage devices (like CD/DVD and USB drives), and other hardware components. In addition to displaying the performance of the hardware itself, a "Compare Results" shows how the user's computer compares to others. The results are also displayed and announced (audio) using the wizard avatar and voice synthesis similar to the "Vox Proxy" PowerPoint accessory. PC Wizard provides the user with a wealth of information.

Smart Computing Tip Of The Day

Backward & Forward Shortcuts In IE

As you move from one Web page to another by entering new URLs or clicking hyperlinks, the Back button (an arrow pointing left next to the word Back) is the handiest way to retrace your steps. Click it once to go to the previous page, or click its down arrow and select one of the last nine pages you visited. Pressing ALT-Left arrow on your keyboard has the same effect as clicking the Back button. The Forward button (just an arrow pointing right with no words to describe it) works in the same fashion to bring you back to where you were after using the Back button. Pressing ALT-Right arrow does the same thing as the Forward button.

While CPUID has several utilities available for free download, one of those that I also found very useful is HWMonitor, which is a shortened "Hardware Monitor". This utility is also available in an enhanced commercial version, HWMonitor Pro, which adds additional features and functionality. HWMonitor (the free version) can identify the power supply in the computer, and display the real-time voltages, temperatures, and fans in the power supply. This is important to monitor the health of the power supply, and consider a replacement or upgrade if necessary. Many users are unaware that their computers report the temperatures of various components in the computer, which is important in that heat is one of the big killers of components. Being somewhat colonial, I selected to display the temperatures in Fahrenheit (F) rather than Celsius (C). Usually there are some fans in each computer which are critical in exhausting the heat from the components, and bring in cool outside air. HWMonitor tracks and reports the performance of the fans, which can enable the user to easily and quickly see if a fan is failing; a dead fan can lead to overheating and damage or destruction of the computer's components. This utility can also track and report on the

temperatures of the motherboard, CPU chip, video card, and hard drive.

Most of these utilities are available for 32 and 64 bit Windows PCs using recent versions of Windows such as XP, Vista, and Windows 7, although some of the utilities also have builds that are explicitly for Windows 98. The files are relatively small and fast to download, and consume minimal system resources, such that they do not noticeably degrade system performance. These utilities could be a useful asset to anyone who wants to keep up with the performance, condition, and health of his system.

Smart Computing Tip Of The Day

Back Up Your Digital Photos

If you frequently take photographs of your family, friends, activities, or special events, back up your digital shots often. Set monthly reminders in your computer's organizer or personal calendar so you remember to back up your work from your hard drive onto long-lasting media such as Photo CDs or DVDs. Your kids and grandchildren will appreciate your forethought.

The Control Panel -- Extremely Useful

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS

sandy(at)compukiss.com

www.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).

Just as you can use a car without manipulating anything under the hood, you can also use a computer without changing any settings. However, at a certain point you will want to correct a setting, uninstall a program, change the way your mouse works, or add another user to your computer. All of these functions and many more are found in the Windows Control Panel. Don't worry though; the Control Panel is much easier to navigate than the cables, wires, and mechanisms that you find under the hood of a car....and you can use the tools in the Control Panel without getting your hands dirty.

In geek-speak, the Control Panel is the central location for all of the Windows operating system configuration needs. In everyday terms, it the place where you can work with the many tools that Windows offers to change and customize all of the settings. The Control Panel is part of the Window's operating system's graphical interface. As such,

you will find that it consists of easy-to-understand icons that are each labeled as to their function.

The Control Panel has been around since the first version of Windows. Over the years, it has morphed into a very useful set of management tools for your computer. In a car you need to know where the hood release lever is, in Windows, you need to know how to access the Control Panel. Windows Vista and Windows 7, you can access the Control Panel by clicking on the Start button and choosing Control Panel from the right column of choices. In Windows XP, you will click Start, then choose Control Panel from the left column. If you don't see the Control Panel listed, click on Settings from the left column and then click on Control Panel.

The Control Panel is a little different in Windows XP than it is in Vista and Windows 7. So let's talk about XP first. By default, the Windows XP Control Panel appears in what is called "Category View". This means that various functions have been put into Categories. Previous versions of Windows showed a list of icons, one for each

Do you see GOOD....or EVIL?



function, in Windows XP, this is called the "Classic View". When you open the Control Panel in Windows XP if you see several categories listed you are in "Category View". If you see a window full of individual icons, you are in "Classic View". You can change the view by clicking on the words "Switch to Classic View" or "Switch to Category View" which is on the left side of the screen. Check out these two options and see which one you like. You can switch between them quite easily at any time

In Windows Vista, you have the same choices, but you may have to click on "Control Panel Home" on the left side of the screen before you can click on "Classic View" or "Category View".

Microsoft made some changes in the Control Panel in Windows 7. They have eliminated the name Classic View. In Windows 7 you will see the words "View by" on the upper right side of the screen. Click on the down arrow next to those words and you will have three views to choose from: Category, Large Icons, or Small Icons. This Icon view is really the same as the Classic View. I prefer to use the Classic or Icon view, but again, you can check out all the views and see which one you like best

There are 45 icons in the icon view in Windows 7 and about the same number in previous versions. If you look at the Classic or Icon view, you will see that the icons have labels, like Display, Sound, Power Options, Mouse, Keyboard, User Accounts, Folder Options, and Devices and Printers. You can click on any of these icons to open a window that will allow you to adjust, correct, and/or customize the settings of these areas. Take a look around. Check out Mouse area first. When you click on the mouse icon a windows with options will appear. It will have tabs at the top. You can click on each tab to see even more options. If you have never looked at these before you will be amazed at the number of things that you can do to customize your mouse. You can switch the buttons if you are left-handed. You can speed up and/or slow down the double-click speed. You can

change the looks of the pointer. If you are using a mouse with a scroll wheel, you can even change how the wheel behaves.

Try a few things. The only caveat here is to document the changes that you are making so you can change them back if you want to.

Each of the items in the Control Panel allows you to change the settings in your computer. Look through and open up a few of them. There are hundreds of things that you can change and/or customize in the Windows operating system. Some of the Control Panel items are very useful for everyday tasks in Windows. Be sure to take a look.

Smart Computing Tip Of The Day

Don't Click That

Automated spyware and antivirus tools are great, but they're no substitute for a little bit of vigilance on your part. A little watchfulness goes a long way. Got an email from someone you don't know? Immediately trash it without opening it. Even if your email program automatically opens your new messages in a reading pane, it's a good idea never to download an unexpected attachment. Consider using Yahoo! Mail (mail.yahoo.com) for your personal email, as it adds an extra layer of protection by immediately scanning all incoming and outgoing attachments for virus threats.

Also, no matter what the pop-ups tell you, don't click anything that jumps unsolicited onto your screen claiming to be able to fix a virus or spyware problem. These pop-ups themselves are more often than not carriers of spyware and viruses in the guise of an actual message from your operating system. A general rule of thumb is that if it opens in a browser window and you didn't specifically point your browser toward it, don't click it. Just close the window and go about your business.

Thankfully, the newest version of Internet Explorer, IE7, blocks most of these pop-ups. If you have not already upgraded from IE6, take a few minutes and visit www.windowsupdate.com. If you prefer to use Mozilla's Firefox browser instead, drop by www.mozilla.com and pick up the latest version of the browser. Both IE and Firefox offer excellent security just out of the gate, and both are great at making sure you never see those pop-ups.