



October Newsletter 2009

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Remember that really neat auction website I discovered? Well, while I was at my family reunion I won an auction for a flat screen monitor. It was a ViewSonic VE510s with “minor scratches” only on the casing and no screen damage. I had made an arrangement for a late (more than 10m days) pick up, because I was returning through L.A. With just the small handling fee and no shipping charges, it cost me less than \$55.00. The scratches are hard to find. A bigger screen would have been nice, but all of them had some screen damage. A computer geek friend told me a small screen blemish keeps drawing your attention. My monitor looks new.

I am including a few more articles on speeding up your computer. I don't remember this being much of an issue in the past, but then whenever a new operating system was introduced, most users bought a new computer. All the garbage and old unused programs/files went away with the old computer. The Vista fiasco meant most users held onto their old computers and waited for the next change. This was especially true if your computer ran XP. It also meant you needed to perform more “housekeeping chores” if you to keep your computer from slowing down.

This month we will cover some of the free (make that open source) software. I don't know all the history, but I do know many early computer geeks had to tweak software code so a desired program would run on their machine. My newly acquired brother-in-law was one of them. I'm not sure what flavor his new computer was (Radio Shack?), but it ran dos. Or maybe it was the one before that—I can't really remember. He actually started using computers when they were main frames and ran by punch cards and a bug in the program could actually be an insect.

He had really wanted Print Shop”, so I gave it to him for Christmas. His machine was listed on the box, but it wasn't completely compatible. I don't remember what the problem was, but Dennis just wrote a little program to take care of it. Every time

he wanted to use Print Shop, he had to load his little program first. Problem solved and everyone was happy.

At that time Dennis wrote a lot of little programs that customized what he did on his computer. He actually wrote number programs for a manufacturing company. Later he became a system analysis for Utility Trailer. In those early years many computer enthusiasts wrote programs—I personally think that is why they had computers. They also shared their programs with anyone who wanted to run them. A few actually went into the business of writing personal programs—mostly games. I know Dennis wanted to form a software company. He was going to be the President/developer. My sister was going to be the Vice President/sales team. I was going to be the Treasurer/novice type tester. Everyone knows my aptitude for attracting/finding glitches—I was really good at it then. Dennis didn't even want me to turn off his computer because I always messed the dos up. (No just click on start.) He said if I could use his programs without problems, so could anyone else.

The free programs you could get then were very inferior to those you bought. Most programmers wrote unstructured “spaghetti code”. Some computer “languages” didn't even have looping structures while others were just too wordy and cumbersome. The folks who wrote “real programs” wanted to be paid for them. They also made every effort to write “hack proof” code. People who wrote free programs were “hobbyists”.

That isn't true today. The program languages do have looping structures and are cleaner and a lot easier (in my opinion) to use. Structured, top down development is the preferred way to write. Many software companies have free, less powerful versions of their programs (hoping that you will like it enough to buy the full version). “Freeware” (now often called “Open source”) is often sponsored by software companies and worked on by some of the best programmers in the business.

—Beth

Open Office.Org 3.0 - An Evolutionary Improvement

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OpenOffice.org (OO.o) is Free and Open Source Software's (FOSS) premier alternative to the Microsoft Office productivity suite. It offers a high level of compatibility with many of the ever-changing MS Office formats, provides many of the same features as MS Office, and works similarly to MS Office. This month, we will explore the recently released OpenOffice.org 3.0, which is available for Microsoft Windows, Linux, Apple's Macintosh, Sun's Solaris, and several other operating systems. Many, if not most, users of MS Office who require the broad, deep range of features of MS Office could change to OO.o and become productive after a very shallow learning curve.

If your requirements are more for just compatibility with Microsoft's Word document formats in a word processor, you can consider more streamlined FOSS alternatives such as AbiWord.

OO.o is a full-featured office productivity suite comprised of six integrated applications: the Writer word processor (which also has a Web page editing mode), Calc spreadsheet, Draw graphics program, Impress presentations program, Base database program, and Math equation editor.

OO.o 3.0 is an evolutionary improvement on the application suite, with new features, enhancements, and user interface improvements. Users of Apple Macintosh OS X systems benefit greatly from OO.o 3.0, which will now run as a native OS X application. OS X users will also have support for Microsoft's VBA macro language and the Calc Solver component, which allows solving optimization problems where the optimum value of a particular spreadsheet cell has to be calculated based on constraints provided in other cells. Both of these features are missing in MS Office 2008 for Mac OS X.

All users of OO.o 3.0 benefit from its improve-

ments, including the two above. Another area of significant improvement is one where OO.o is breaking out of Microsoft mimicry mode: support for open document standards. OO.o 3.0 supports the latest OpenDocument Format (PDF) specification. In fact, ODF is the OO.o default document format. ODF is gaining wider acceptance worldwide, being adopted by more companies and governments as the standard for documents, and becoming supported by an increasing number of applications. OO.o will also read and write many other formats, including those of various versions of MS Office and Word, plain text, and several PDA document formats.



Additionally, it will read the newest formats introduced in MS Office 2007. Exchanging documents with users of Microsoft's products should not be an issue. The Writer screen now sports a handy zoom slider control, making it quick and easy to change the zoom level of the view. Additionally, it will automatically display multiple pages of the document as the zoom level is lowered. Writer now displays notes — notations added to a document that are not necessarily meant to be

printed — at the edge of the editing window to the side of the document, making it easier to read them and see their context in the document. In addition, notes from different users are displayed in different colors, together with the editing date and time, facilitating collaborative work on a document.

Calc sees some useful improvements. One is in the charts feature. Now, custom error bars can be included, and regression equations and correlation coefficients can be displayed right in the chart. Another is a new feature, spreadsheet collaboration through workbook sharing. This feature allows multiple users to work collaboratively on a spreadsheet while avoiding editing conflicts. The users share a spreadsheet, each adding their data. The spreadsheet owner can then easily integrate the new data with a few clicks. And Calc now supports 1,024 columns per worksheet.

Draw now lets you crop images the same way that most other graphics programs do, by dragging handles located at the edges and corners of

an image. This same improvement appears in Impress, too. Additionally, Impress now natively supports inserting tables into presentations. Tables can be added directly into the presentation and edited within Impress as native Impress objects.

Improvements affecting the entire suite include a new set of icons, expanded feature support when exporting to XML, and a new gateway to the suite called the Start Center, which makes it more intuitive to get to where you want to go in the suite. There is nothing revolutionary in OO.o 3.0. What is new are several improvements and enhancements that will keep the suite in contention with its competitors. And we have not touched at all on the features OO.o already had before 3.0. If you need a productivity suite with both a broad and deep set of features and, particularly, if you are not married to Microsoft Office, you should give OO.o a look. It costs you nothing to try, you may just like it, so it just may save you hundreds of dollars.

Smart Computing Tip Of The Day

Spot A Scam Email

There was a time when you could tell a fake email from the real thing just by noticing all the spelling errors or carefully examining the return address. Unfortunately, the crooks have become much more savvy about creating email that looks extremely legitimate. They can "spoof" addresses so that they appear to come from real companies. Your best bet now to avoid getting taken in by a phishing email is to be very wary of any message asking you to go online and provide personal or financial information. Avoid clicking links in email messages or filling out forms in messages. Don't reply to mail from someone you don't know. If someone emails you about a supposed "problem" with an account, call the company to verify there actually is a problem.

OpenOffice.org 3.0 — Comprehensive Free Office Suite

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WEBSITE: <http://OpenOffice.org>

INTRODUCTION

Splash Screen



Unlike almost all previous columns, I am not typing this using a Microsoft Office product. Despite not using a Microsoft Office product, I currently feel quite comfortable, and have not noted any learning curve necessary to use this new

product.

I was able to download, install and run this alternative product, and it looks and feels just like the Microsoft Word that I have been using for many years. The only major difference that I can see between what I am using at this instant, and Microsoft Office is the dramatic difference in the price of these two competing products.

The product I am using right now is totally free, and can be downloaded and distributed free without any strings attached.

WRITER (WORD PROCESSING)

The product I am using to type this column is the word processor named Writer, part of the recently released OpenOffice.org 3.0, available for free download at <http://OpenOffice.org>.

For compatibility purposes, I have chosen to save this

- ODF Text Document (.odt)
- ODF Text Document Template (.ott)
- OpenOffice.org 1.0 Text Document (.sww)
- OpenOffice.org 1.0 Text Document Template (.stww)
- Microsoft Word 97/2000/XP (.doc)
- Microsoft Word 95 (.doc)
- Microsoft Word 6.0 (.doc)
- Rich Text Format (.rtf)
- StarWriter 5.0 (.sdw)
- StarWriter 5.0 Template (.vor)
- StarWriter 4.0 (.sdw)
- StarWriter 4.0 Template (.vor)
- StarWriter 3.0 (.sdw)
- StarWriter 3.0 Template (.vor)
- Text (.txt)
- Text Encoded (.txt)
- HTML Document (OpenOffice.org Writer) (.html)
- ApartisDoc (Palm) (.pdb)
- DocBook (.xml)
- Microsoft Word 2003 XML (.xml)
- Pocket Word (.psw)
- Unified Office Format text (.uot)

file in the Word “.doc” format, but I could have chosen from any of about two dozen word processing formats to save this document.

It should be noted that the new OpenOffice.org 3.0 version can now open all of the new data formats used in Microsoft Office 2007, including the new “.docx” and the other new formats.

OpenOffice.org has been around for years, and millions of copies have been downloaded. OpenOffice.org has just released a new and improved version, 3.0, which has many enhancements, new features, and additional format options compared to the previous versions.

Since it can read and write virtually all contemporary office formats from word processors, spreadsheets, databases, and presentation programs, including Microsoft Office products, OpenOffice.org is appropriate for all users of office products, including household use, academic use, business use, and government use.

On the OpenOffice.org website are listings of hundreds of organizations and agencies, including colleges and universities around the world, that have adopted the free OpenOffice.org instead of Microsoft Office, or other commercial office suites.

have explicitly recommended OpenOffice.org as a free alternative to purchasing Microsoft Office, or using the low-featured Works program often included on many computers.

While Writer, the OpenOffice.org word processor, has the same look and feel of Word, it is not alone in the suite, as OpenOffice.org is a comprehensive suite of office utilities. On the opening menu are descriptive icons simply labeled Text Document, Presentation, Database, Spreadsheet, Drawing, and Formula. Additional icons on the menu will open preconfigured templates, open existing documents, and link to additional features.

IMPRESS (PRESENTATIONS)

I do a lot of presentations for groups and organizations, and I have exclusively been using Microsoft's popular PowerPoint program.

As I am typing this, I am opening one of my recent identity theft presentations, made in PowerPoint, in another window using the OpenOffice.org presentation program, Impress. Impress opened my PowerPoint file quickly and easily, and looks just like a PowerPoint window.

Using Impress, which has virtually all of the features of PowerPoint, the user can create and present professional presentations without the expense of PowerPoint.



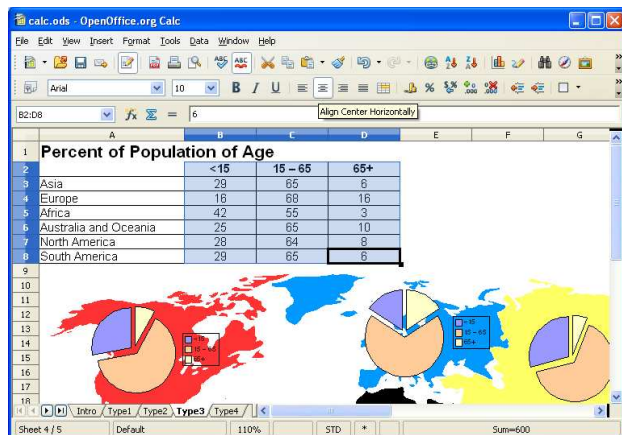
In some ways, Impress may have some features missing in PowerPoint, including an improved list of backgrounds and templates, and tabs on the top of the display to show notes, outlines, handouts, and the slide sorter.

CALC (SPREADSHEET)

Many of us routinely use a spreadsheet for a variety of financial, statistical, or data uses. OpenOffice.org has an excellent spreadsheet appropriately named “Calc”.

I just opened up one of my Microsoft Excel spreadsheets (.xls format) in Calc, and it opened quickly and looks just like Excel.

All of the formulas calculated properly in Calc that were created in Excel, all columns were formatted correctly, and graphs displayed properly.



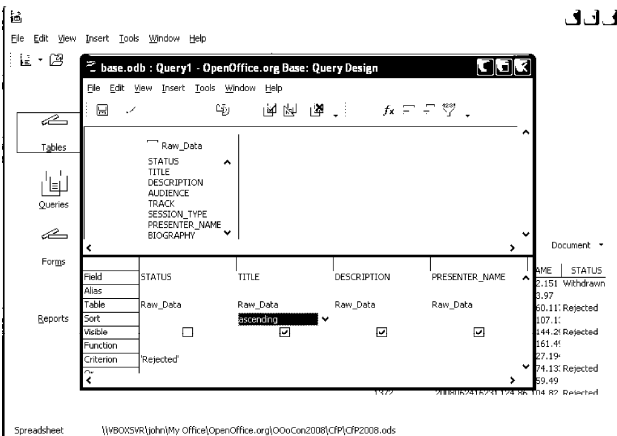
I also opened an Excel 2007 spreadsheet, and a Corel Quattro workbook in Calc, and they both

opened flawlessly.

If someone already knows how to use a spreadsheet, Calc is a “no brainer” in that it is intuitive and requires no additional training or experience to use. As with other OpenOffice.org applications, it can open almost all other spreadsheet formats, and write to many of the contemporary formats.

BASE (DATABASE)

While among the least used office utilities, database programs are an integral part of almost all office suites, and OpenOffice.org is no different. Its database is simple called “Base” and is as full featured as its costly competitors. Base can use wizards to create a database, or utilize the countless templates available either in the program or on line at OpenOffice.org.



Experienced database users will quickly recognize the Base window, as the icons and commands are substantially the same as those used in Access and Approach.

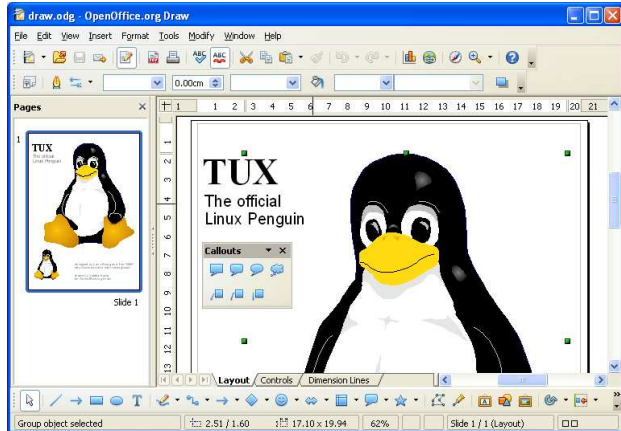
Those who know how to use Access or Approach can immediately use Base without any significant learning curve, and can be productive immediately.

DRAW (PHOTO AND IMAGE EDITOR)

One feature available in OpenOffice.org that is lacking in many competitive suites is a comprehensive photo and image editor, called Draw.

Draw enables the user to create, edit, crop, modify, or other wise change digital images. As is common with other OpenOffice.org utilities, Draw can open almost every common image format, and write to them as well.

Those who are graphically creative will find Draw to be an adequate image editor, that can do



what many of the free standing image editors can do, but Draw does it for free.

For those with digital cameras, Draw can easily edit and crop digital photos, and convert them to any other desired format.

MATH (MATHEMATICAL FORMULA EDITOR)

Some technical users, such as engineers, mathematicians, and physicists may need a sophisticated editor that can process formulas in a variety of formats.

“Math” is the integral utility that performs the function of creating simple or complex formulas that can be imported into other documents or presentations. Math can read and write data formats used by other leading mathematical programs.

CONCLUSION

OpenOffice.org is a large download in Windows format, a 145mb download. In addition to Windows, OpenOffice.org is available for almost all other platforms, including Mac.



For those who need an office suite using a foreign language, this one is available in over 50 languages, making it ideal for a multinational organization that needs a single office suite that can handle multiple languages.

While the dictionary integral with this suite consists of tens of thousands of words, specialty dictionaries in many languages are available as free

downloads from the OpenOffice.org website: (<http://extensions.services.openoffice.org/dictionary>).

In addition to dictionaries, there are also dozens of free, open source templates available, for each of the utilities, that can incorporate multiple languages in a single file, or add functionality, such as a template to create an academic grade book.

In addition to templates, dictionaries, and hundreds of other add-ons, there is also an extensive system of online support where experienced users will offer free support to new users.

For the price, free, you will not find a better office suite than OpenOffice.org. With its high level of compatibility with Microsoft office and other office suites, OpenOffice.org 3.0 is a wise choice for most computer users, no matter what the modern platform or language.

Smart Computing Tip Of The Day

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File Management – Part Two

Note: Part One ran in our July Newsletter

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This month's lesson picks up where we left off last month. We're now going to do some file operations on the special file we created for the exercise.

1. First, we're going to set up a new folder, and prepare to move testfile.txt into that folder. In the left hand listing, click once on the My Documents folder. Go to the menu at the top of the Explorer window, and click on FILE>NEW>FOLDER. Now you will see a new folder named "New Folder" directly below My Documents. It should be highlighted. If not, click once on it, and then click on the F2 key. This puts you in "edit" mode, and you can change the name of the folder. Change it to "Files for your name" (type in your name, without the quotes). After typing that in, hit the enter key. Now you have a new folder which is a personalized place for you to store your documents.
2. Next we're going to move the testfile.txt document to the new folder. One simple way to do this is to drag it from its present folder to its new home. Get the listing of all the folders on C: in the left hand window. Then double click on My

Documents. The new folder we just created should be showing in the listing on the left, and also in the right hand section listing the contents of My Documents. Click on "testfile.txt" to select it, and then drag it onto the new folder which you just personalized with your name. The file has now been moved. To confirm that, double click on your new folder, and it should open and list the contents.

Depending upon what Windows version you are using, and what file manager you are using the dragging protocol may be slightly different. Generally in Windows, dragging moves the file, if you're dragging to any folder on the same drive. Dragging to a different drive, copies the file. And holding the CTRL key down while dragging, always copies the file, and using the Shift key always moves the files, irrespective of the target location. To be sure that you move or copy as you want to do, hold the SHIFT key down and drag to move, and the CTRL key down and drag to copy. This will work under any circumstance. Windows does give you a "hint" about this. If you drag and see a small + sign in next to the moving mouse cursor, the process you are doing is copying. If there's no + sign, then you are moving.

3. Next, we're going to copy this file to a floppy

disk. Insert a floppy into the drive A. Left click on testfile.txt in the new folder to select it. Now, hold down the CTRL key while dragging the file to drive A. To confirm that you have copied to file, double click on drive A on the left hand listing of Explorer. It should show the file listed there. Then go back to the original folder for your documents, to see that it is still there also. If it is - you've succeeded. If your system does not have a floppy disk drive, or another hard drive, copy to a flash drive. If you have none, just skip this step

4. Since this isn't a file that you want to keep, let's delete it. Click on it once to select it on, wherever it was copied to. Then hit the delete key and OK. Repeat the process for the other location also.

NOTE: During these activities, you probably have noticed small "+" and "-" signs on certain of the listings in Windows Explorer (or any file manager). The "+" sign indicates that there are subfolders within the folder listed. To expand the listing to show them, click on the "+" sign. The "-" sign indicates that the folder has subfolders, and they are already shown. To collapse that listing, click on the "-" sign. Clicking toggles the situation back and forth. NOTE: Windows Explorer is not "Internet Explorer", so don't get confused here.

This is the end of the exercise on the beginning basics of file management. Obviously you can modify any of the procedures given to suit your specific needs. And, if you are now adept at all the steps, you've got a good start on things. As with most things in Windows, there are generally several ways to do things. Rather than confuse things, I'm keeping things as simple as I can.

If you had difficulty following the previous steps, it might be a good idea for you to consider one of the introductory Windows courses given by various organizations in our area. When someone asks me "what do you mean by 'click'?", I pass for the moment. It's like the person who called Compaq tech support. He couldn't find the "any key", when the instructions said "click on any key", he said his keyboard didn't have an "any key."

Now that you can handle file management basics, you should consider getting a better file manager. There are two good choices out there. As with all things, if you plan on using a file manager often now, you should use a more capable program. It's like a car. If you plan on driving a lot, a new 2008 Lexus is generally more fun than a

stripped down old 1965 Chevy.

I was disappointed when I saw that Microsoft has done very little with Windows Explorer. Of all the good programs MS may have provided, Windows Explorer was not one. Not to worry though - all the things you've learned so far will carry over into any file manager. There are a variety of good and one GREAT file managers out there. Do a general Google search for "Windows file managers", and a bunch of hits will display. Some are add-ons to Windows Explorer, and others are standalone programs. If you want the finest file manager ever created for Widows, look at Opus 9 at <http://nudel.dopus.com/opus9/>. Be warned however, that this is not a cheap program. It costs about \$57 (US), but it is without peer. If you are an advanced user, this is the one to get. For others, there are lots of freeware and shareware programs. Review the Google search results to see what will fit you best, assuming you would like to work with something superior to Windows Explorer.

Another good (and free) choice is PowerDesk . You can get a free copy of version 7 of the program by downloading it from <http://www.snapfiles.com/get/powerdeskfree.html> <http://www.snapfiles.com/reviews/powerdesk/powerdeskfree.html> . ZDNet should also have it available. If you like the program, you can purchase a registered version, with a few more features, and no nag screens.

With any of these file managers, or Windows Explorer, the best way to learn is to "browse around", and play with things. Click on various menu items, practice copying and moving files, and be inquisitive. And, REMEMBER, all the things you learn in these exercises apply to all the programs you'll be using on your Windows computer.

Computer learning can be likened to taking piano lessons - you can't learn to play if you don't practice. Maybe someday we'll be able to get a "chip" that we can plug into our brains to acquire all sorts of capabilities without the time consuming old-fashioned learning process. But for now, we have to rely on present techniques which take time and effort. But, in the long run, the effort is well worth it

Learning to manage your files is a very important activity for all computer users to learn. So, how about getting started on that right now. Remember, you don't always have to be doing a formal lesson. Start exploring and investigate all the areas where you haven't been before. Instead of



surfing the Internet, surf your own computer. You'll find lots of exciting things. And remember, any time you want to get help on something, just press the F1 key, and a help window should pop up.

This concludes the brief learning experience of file management. Remember, you've only scratched the surface here. This is similar to learning chess. Many people think that when they have learned to move the pieces, that they know how to play chess - but they are a long way from

being a "chess player." The name of the game is practice. This lesson is just a start towards a better understanding of that marvelous machine you have at your fingertips.

If you find this material useful, you may want to download this article in PDF format, from our web site www.brcs.org. This allows readers to keep the material either as a PDF file, and/or print it out, and place it in a loose leaf notebook for future reference.

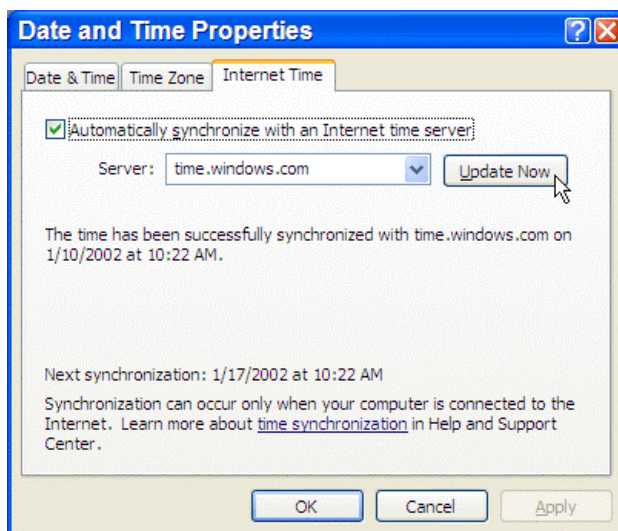
Xp and Vista Clock Trick

By Andrew, WorldStart Staff Member

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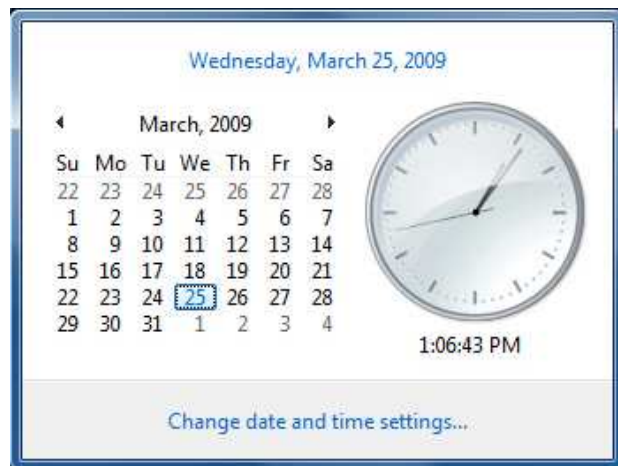
If you are running Windows XP or Vista, you'll never have to worry about manually setting your computer's clock again! Of course, you have to be online for this little trick to work, so keep that in mind.

For Windows XP: Just double-click the little clock in the System Tray and it will bring up the **Time and Date Properties** screen. Click the **Internet Time** tab and you'll see a button that lets you instantly synchronize your clock with one on the internet.



For Windows Vista: Just click the clock in the

system tray once to bring up the time. At the bottom of the box is says **Change Time and Date Settings**. Click on that, and then on the **Internet**



In both cases, you'll notice that there's a check box that says **"Automatically synchronize with an internet time server."** If you uncheck that box, you won't be able to do a manual synchronization. However, with this feature enabled, not only can you do our little trick, but your computer will automatically update its time once a week - all by itself.

Anyhow, no matter how it gets updated (manually or automatically), it's still a handy way to keep your computer's clock right on time.

Microsoft Releases Internet Explorer 8

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WEBSITES:

<http://www.microsoft.com/ie>
<http://www.ieaddons.com/en>

Microsoft has released the latest iteration of its ubiquitous browser, Internet Explorer version 8 (IE 8). This browser is for all versions of XP and Vista, and is a 16.1mb download for XP.

I had tried one of the early beta (pre-release) builds of IE 8, and was impressed by its features and speed, a substantial improvement over what I felt was a lethargic Internet Explorer 7. Now I have downloaded and installed IE 8 on all of my computers, and my first impressions of it are quite positive. I have been using Firefox, IE's major competitor, almost exclusively for several years. I was not alone in using Firefox instead of IE, as Firefox has been taking market share from IE for years as it has generally offered more speed, features, and security than IE. Now with IE 8, Firefox has a worthy competitor which has added features, speed and security to challenge the gains made in the marketplace by Firefox.

Within minutes of its release, I downloaded the new version of IE 8 on my work computer. I went directly to Microsoft's IE website at www.microsoft.com/ie to download IE 8. Microsoft identified my operating system, and proceeded to connect me to the proper variety of IE 8, which I downloaded. The installation process was smooth, with several informational windows appearing with install options. One of the first windows to appear was a statement that the IE 8 install utility was going to download the latest version of Windows Malicious Software Removal Tool, and scan my computer for malware prior to the installation of IE 8. My computer was free of any detected malware, and the installation continued. A reboot was required in order to complete the IE 8 process, which I allowed. After the reboot, a small window appeared displaying the setup sequences of the new software. Subsequent windows offered me the opportunity to install add-ons, and select default search engines. IE 8 imported my selections from IE 7, and asked if I wanted to keep my IE 7 defaults and use them in IE 8, which I did. The fi-

nal window displayed correctly identified that I had other browsers installed on my computer, including Firefox, Opera, and Safari, and asked if I wanted to import bookmarks (favorites) and feeds from them; I selected yes, and data was imported from my other browsers into IE 8, making them immediately available on that platform. IE 8 did indeed load faster than IE 7 ever loaded, and web pages appeared to load faster, but I have no empirical data to corroborate that.

IE 8 is more feature rich than IE 7, and in many ways appears to emulate the finer points available in Firefox. One feature in IE 8 that offers improved possibilities is "Accelerators" which provide quick access to information by simply highlighting a word, phrase, address, or other item on a webpage. If the proper accelerators are installed, then appropriate information in the form of maps, web searches, translations, email, blogs, and other relevant resources and outputs are immediately displayed.

Another interesting feature in IE 8 that may be of interest to many users is "Web Slices", where the user can automatically monitor desired information, displaying updated information as it becomes available. Web Slices can monitor auctions, sports scores, weather, stock quotes, and other dynamic content, and can directly provide that updated information, without user intervention. If a Web Slice is available on a web page, a green icon will appear in the top right corner of the page; clicking on this icon will add the "slice" to the favorites bar, enabling real-time tracking of the selection. When new information is available about the selected web slices, the relevant web slice will be highlighted. Clicking on the highlight will take the user directly to the updated information.

IE 8 offers a "Smart Address Bar" which displays recommendations as a web address is typed in the address bar. The suggestions are distilled from the browsing history, favorites, and previously selected feeds, as well as Windows Live Search. If a single word is typed in the address bar, the Smart Address Bar will reach out and try to match the term against domain names, making web surfing faster and more efficient.

I frequently go online to show my L.I.T. students

information on the web. Sometimes the fonts on the web pages are so small, that students in the back of the classroom can not view the displayed content. IE 8 solves that problem with its enhanced zoom feature, "Improved Zoom". This feature improves the resolution and readability of a webpage, while maintaining the desired layout. Clicking on VIEW – ZOOM allows the user to zoom in or out on a webpage, from 50% (zoom out, smaller text, more information displayed) to 400% (zoom in, larger text, less information displayed).

Web surfers are often concerned about their personal privacy while browsing on the net. IE 8 offers a feature, "InPrivate" that allows the user to control the protection of his personal information while online. When selected, InPrivate deletes the browsing history, temporary internet files, filled forms, cookies, usernames, and passwords when closing the browser, leaving no traces of browsing or search history on the computer.

Sometimes a website appears to crash the browser while being viewed, shutting down all of the opened tabs, and requiring a reloading of the browser. IE 8 offers "Automatic Crash Recovery" where if the content in a tab crashes, the other opened tabs are unaffected, such that other opened pages are not closed or lost unexpectedly. IE 8 will attempt to recover the lost tab once it has identified and resolved the problem.

Phishing, identity theft, and web-borne malware have become endemic, and a threat to web users. IE 8 includes a "SmartScreen Filter" which incorporates anti-phishing tools to protect the user from imposter websites designed to trick the user into entering his personal information. The SmartScreen Filter also incorporates sophisticated anti-malware capabilities to help prevent web-borne adware, spyware, and other dangerous software from installing itself on the users' computer. If a dangerous website is opened and detected, the address bar and window will turn red on the page, and a prominent warning will be displayed on the red background. Other protection is provided by a cross site scripting (XSS) filter, which can detect and protect from malicious code execution while online, providing additional protection. A cute feature, which can help protect from phishing and identity theft is "domain highlighting" which highlights the domain name in the address bar, with the remainder of the address string in gray, displaying the true identity of the website.

Internet Explorer 8 is much improved over version 7, with improved security and enhanced features. Users of earlier versions of IE should upgrade to IE 8. Users of other browsers should give IE 8 a try, as they may be pleasantly surprised. Even though I have been a loyal Firefox user for several years, I will be using IE 8 far more than I ever used IE 7.

Mozilla Releases Firefox 3.5 Browser

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WEBSITE: <http://www.getfirefox.com>

Introduction

It is no secret to regular listeners of my weekly radio show (KLVI 560AM 6-7pm Mondays) that I have been a longtime user of the Firefox browser. While Windows may come with Microsoft's Internet Explorer (IE) installed and an integral part of the operating system, I and millions of other computer users have chosen to use an alternative browser, such as Firefox, to provide features and security lacking in IE.

There has been an active war between browsers for market share for several years, led by IE,

with its deep pockets, capable of carrying on its battle though the use of prodigious commercial advertisement, backed by the financial clout of Microsoft. Firefox, from an open source, non-profit organization, Mozilla, lacks the financial capital to compete in the commercial marketplace, but has developed a loyal and expanding user base based on its quality and features, rather than its advertising.

Mozilla's Firefox has been successful at capturing an estimated one-fourth of the browser market from IE, and as spawned competition from other non-Microsoft competitors, such as Google's Chrome, Apple's Safari, Opera, and several other browsers, all of which offer features and benefits lacking in IE. While IE, Chrome, and Safari have substantial financial backing behind their respec-

tive promotions, Firefox is forced to compete based on its merits and performance, and not the dollars behind it.

Due to the competitive nature of the browser business, and the fact that when Microsoft developed IE and announced that it would be a free browser, despite many millions of dollars in development costs, all of the other major browsers now currently available were also provided for free.

Firefox in its earlier versions has been around for several years, and attracted the interest of the computer press pundits who have recognized the superiority of Firefox over the 800 pound gorilla in the room, Microsoft's IE. What Firefox has lacked in financial capital, it has more than made up with its feisty adherence to innovation and performance.

Recently, Mozilla released version 3.5 of Firefox, a substantial update and upgrade to the not-so-old 3.0 series of releases. Over five million copies were downloaded during the first 24 hours of its release. It is available as a free 7.7mb download from getfirefox.com and available for most contemporary operating systems including XP, Vista, Mac and Linux.

Firefox 3.5

The new version 3.5 of Firefox has some dramatic improvements over the older versions of Firefox, many of which have increased the performance, features, and security advantages of Firefox over IE, and makes Firefox more competitive with the advanced features of its competing browsers.

SPEED

One notable improvement in 3.5 is its rendering speed, the time it takes to display web pages being downloaded. One example of dramatic speed improvement is in displaying web pages containing Java, a very common form of coding on web pages today.

In comparison testing on an XP machine using different versions of Firefox, 3.5 was about twice as fast as version 3, and 10 times faster than version 2.

In comparative tests performed by some of the leading computer magazines, Firefox was much faster than IE in loading a variety of web pages. To be fair, Safari and Chrome were also faster than IE 7 and 8 as well, with IE sometimes being very sluggish in loading and displaying websites

by comparison.

Firefox 3.5 has improved memory management which minimizes memory leakage, and also uses fewer system resources than IE, still another reason for improved performance.

AWESOME BAR

Firefox 3.5 is very feature rich with security and conveniences that makes it a very attractive alternative to IE. One is the "Awesome Bar", also known as the address bar, where an intelligent wizard makes it easy to locate websites without typing or knowing the URL (internet address).

Simply typing a keyword term in the address bar will cause Firefox to instantly reference the browsing history searching and then displaying web addresses with similar keywords, and then interactively searching the web for popular websites with that key word.

The Awesome Bar is intelligent in that it learns about your surfing interests in order to make more relevant recommendations. Of course, if you know the web address, just simply type it in as always, but if you have been there before the auto complete feature will display your potential choices as fast as you can type. If a desired web address is displayed by the Awesome Bar, simply click on it to open the page.

TAGS

Many of us have developed a large collection of favorites and bookmarks. Firefox 3.5 offers an improved version of its "Tags" feature where terms can be added to a bookmark for rapid sorting and display of appropriate links. For example, if I labeled the bookmark for THEEXAMINER.COM with the tag "news" (there is no limit on the number of tags that may be added to any bookmark), and typed "news" in the address bar, the Examiner link would be among the top placements instantly displayed in the address bar for immediate selection.

Adding new links to the bookmark list is a simple one click operation; simply click on the star at the right side of the address bar to create a bookmark with the currently displayed website.

SPELL CHECKER

One cute feature in Firefox 3.5 that has been continued from the earlier versions is a built in spell checker.

When filling in online forms, blogs, Tweets, web-

mail, or other forms of text, Firefox will check the spelling of words entered in real-time, and underline any misspelled words with a red dotted line.

Simply right clicking on the word will display the correctly spelled recommendations, and another mouse click will replace the erroneous word with the correctly spelled term.

TABBED BROWSING

Another useful feature is the tabbed browsing. While other browsers, including IE 8, have tabbed browsing, Firefox 3.5 tabs can be dragged and dropped wherever desired.

I have been guilty of closing a tab, only finding later in the session that I want to go back to the now closed tab; Firefox saves closed tabs under the History menu as "Recently Closed Tabs", where a mouse click reopens the closed tab.

A similar benefit is the ability of Firefox to remember where you have been; when closing Firefox, the user is given the choice to remember the open tabs, and automatically reload them the next time Firefox is opened.

SEARCH ENGINES

Since Firefox is not beholden to any other software company, there is no prejudice in the selection of search engines accessible from the integral search bar. In fact, there are literally hundreds of search options available, many with an integral smart search function that makes recommendations of search terms as they are being typed.

The search selection does include not just the typical Google or Yahoo, but also hundreds of other domestic and foreign search engines as well as commercial resources. In addition to Google, Yahoo, and AllTheWeb (my personal favorite), I also have EBay, Amazon, and other shopping sites in my search list where products can be entered in the search box, and the results quickly displayed.

LOCATION AWARE BROWSING

One interesting feature in 3.5, which can be easily selected or disabled at will, is "Location Aware Browsing" where capable websites will provide relevant local information such as restaurants or events based on the current geographical location of the computer.

Firefox emphasizes that no personal information is disseminated when using this feature and it can be turned off at will.

SECURITY AND PRIVACY

One of the top selling points of this free product is the security of the browser. Integral with the browser is an anti-phishing feature which will prominently warn the user if he attempts to connect to a known phishing identity theft site.

Firefox also protects against websites containing viruses, Trojans, and malware in their code. Since Firefox runs on top of the operating system, and not as a part of it, Firefox is inherently more secure than IE, and less vulnerable to attack.

While no browser is absolutely secure, in penetration testing, Firefox has proven to be more secure than IE. If any serious security vulnerabilities are detected, Firefox is quick to release and distribute software updates, typically much faster than most competing browsers, and almost always faster than IE. Firefox offers an automatic update feature which can download updates as soon as they are released, keeping the browser up to date with the latest security fixes.

EXTENSIONS

Firefox 3.5 is totally adequate as downloaded, and includes abundant features. For those who like to customize their browsing experience, Firefox has compiled a catalog of over 6000 plug-ins and add-ons.

I use add-ons for a variety of purposes, including downloading and converting YouTube videos, color coding my tabs, and "IE Tabs" which will run IE only websites that require Active-X from inside Firefox, without loading IE.

CONCLUSION

I strongly recommend Firefox to everyone. It is easy to install, and will happily coexist with IE and other installed browsers, and not interfere with them. Firefox offers an option during installation to non-destructively copy and import favorites (bookmarks), cookies, passwords, and other information from IE, such that Firefox is ready to run and complete as soon as it is installed. If upgrading from an older version of Firefox, the newer version will perform some housekeeping tasks and install itself over the older version while maintaining all bookmarks, passwords, cookies, and other information.

I use IE for less than 5% of my browsing tasks, choosing to use Firefox for almost all other web browsing. Other than the fact that it is already installed on Windows computers, I sometimes find it

hard to understand why so many would still use such a slow, vulnerable, and insecure browser as IE, when a reasonably secure and fast browser such as Firefox is available for free.

Go ahead and download Firefox right now (getfirefox.com). Play with it for a while, experimenting with its myriad of features unavailable on IE. If you like it, go ahead and make it your default browser (I did). If not, either keep it as a secondary browser, or uninstall it (Add/Remove Programs).

Once you try Firefox 3.5, I really do not envision many of you wanting to uninstall it, but I can see many more of you choosing Firefox as your primary browser, rather than the cumbersome IE.

Free of charge

It's hard to believe that high quality, easy to use software like OpenOffice.org 3 can really be free. But thanks to contributions of time and money, from individuals and companies (large and small), OpenOffice.org is free for you to use today. Furthermore, the open-source licence used by OpenOffice.org 3 means this freedom can never be taken away. The OpenOffice.org community are delighted if you find our software of use. Please help us by telling people about OpenOffice.org 3, and if you can, pass them on a copy. More people use OpenOffice.org 3 as a result of personal recommendation than any other route.
From the OpenOffice website

Wolverine F2D Slide Scanner

by Joe Nuvolini, Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, Colorado

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<http://ppcompas.apcug.org>

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Over the years, I have amassed about 3,000 color slides. I have been wanting to scan them into my computer, but up to now, had not seen a scanning product that would allow me to get the job done in a reasonable time. One day I came across the Wolverine F2D 35mm Film to Digital Scanner while surfing the Internet. It looked like the answer I was looking for.

I read a number of reviews and found a wide variety of opinions. People seemed to love it or hate it but the positives were greater than the negatives so I decided to try it. I was not disappointed. The unit is self-contained, though you can connect it to a computer USB port for power. However, no computer is required to use it. In fact, I am using it on an island in my kitchen. The unit comes with two film holders; one for slides and one for color or black and white negatives. The unit saves the images to an SD card in JPG format. Before saving the images, they can be mirrored or rotated, if necessary.

The package includes the unit, the two film holders, an AC adapter you can plug the USB connector into for power, a brush to clean the internal screen, a 1-GB SD card, and a 19-page manual. The first thing I did was go to the Wolverine Website (<http://wolverinedata.com/f2d>). I downloaded a PDF copy of the manual so these

tired old eyes could better read it. I also downloaded the latest firmware update and installed it. I then started my project. I can scan 125 slides in about 30-35 minutes. The more images that need to be rotated before saving, the longer it takes. They advertise 5-MP images and I found the file sizes ran from 900 KB to just over 1 MB.

There are a couple of things to watch out for.

The most important is to make sure your slides (up to 4) are properly seated in the tray. If they are not, the tray will bind up in the scanner. I have had a couple of close calls on this one.

Also, I have found

that for no good reason the image on the screen of the unit will shift to black and white or have some goofy colors. I have found in most cases pressing the mirror button twice will fix the problem. If not, turning the power off and back on will do the trick for sure. There is one other item the manual warns about, and that is not to tip the unit backward to better view an image on the unit's screen. The reason is that the connector on the USB power cable plugs in near the bottom on the back of the unit. The connection is a small USB connector, like the one on your camera. Repeated tipping can place stress on the connector



causing it to fail.

Pricing varies. A Google search for "Wolverine F2D" brought a range of prices from \$119 at the Wolverine site to \$99.99 on the Costco site. I am quite satisfied with the product. If you take care in using it, you will be too.

 User group members SAVE 35% on all titles Enter Discount Code: DSUG	 oreilly.com
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Smart Computing Tip Of The Day

Sort The Start Menu

After a few months of adding new software to Win XP, the All Programs list probably looks like a chaotic mess. Some newly installed programs end up on the bottom of the list, while others seem to slip themselves into the middle.

To sort the list into alphabetical order, simply right-click any of the programs or folders in the All Programs menu and activate the Sort By Name command. This will reorganize the entire All Programs menu.

Red, Green and Blue Squiggles?

By April, WorldStart Staff Member

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Typing at a furious pace can have some undesirable effects, let me tell you. I've often finished a page or two, only to look back and see a variety of colorful and revealing mistake warnings that MS Word has left behind in an attempt to correct my incorrectness.

Okay, so we're all familiar with MS Word's red squiggle, right? When you see it, you know Word is letting you know you have a spelling error.

They are a grat group of people.
They is a great group of people.

We've all seen the green squiggle as well, meaning there's a grammar issue.

But if you're using Word 2007, you may begin to run into a brand new one. That's right, a blue squiggle!

They're a grate group of people.

So, what's up with that?

Well, Word 2007 is using the blue to notify you of words that may be inappropriate in the context where it's been found. You know, you have the

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

right word, but the wrong spelling for the sentence you're using..

It alerts you of problems like this:

Their a great group of people.

So, you can correct it to say:

They're a great group of people.

Finally, a little help with the old "there, their and they're" problem!

Smart Computing Tip Of The Day

UPSes

If you don't have one already, consider investing in a UPS (Uninterruptable Power Supply). A UPS protects your computer by providing battery power after a power outage or electrical surge. This enables you to save your work and shut down your system safely.

Suitable for home use, a standby UPS uses utility power under normal circumstances, but when that power is interrupted, it will use a backup battery. A continuous UPS will run off constant battery power.

Depending on how many devices you have connected to the UPS, battery power can last approximately 15 minutes or longer. There are UPSes built to sustain power for longer amounts of time.