

OUR 25TH ANNIVERSARY



NEWSLETTER The Best Accessory for your PC!



MAIN MEETINGS



West SideTue. Dec. 15th

CollegeAmerica, 6533 N Black Canyon Hwy, Phoenix

East SideWed. Dec. 16th

University of Advancing Technologies

2625 W Baseline Rd, Tempe

(One block west of Fry's Electronics)

Fountain Hills ..Thu. Dec. 17th

Fountain Hills Library, 12901 N. La Montana Drive,
Fountain Hills

**This month we celebrate not only the Holidays
but also our 25th year as a Group.**

It's Party Time. Come Join us.

**Check our Website at www.PhoenixPCUG.org
to verify subject matter and time changes .**

Phoenix PC Users Group Officers

President: Dean Botchuck
Vice President: David Yamamoto
Secretary: Chuck Lewis
Treasurer: Lo Hardman

Staff Members

Membership Coordinator: Chuck Lewis
Webmaster: Hank Pearson
Fountain Hills Coordinator: Tj
East Side Coordinator: Marion Smith
West Side Coordinator: Bill Aulepp
Public Relations: Tj
Newsletter Publisher: Steve Semon
Newsletter Editor: Bill Aulepp
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Bill Aulepp: Editor@PhoenixPCUG.org
Hank Pearson: Webmaster@PhoenixPCUG.org

Steering Committee:

**Officers and Members who are present
at the 6:00 P.M. West Side meeting.**

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THOUGHTS FOR THE MONTH

FROM YOUR SECRETARY

Greetings Fellow PCUG Members
I hope you all had a most Happy Thanksgiving!!

This Invitation was sent about 10 days ago to those of you who I had e-mail for. It is included in the Newsletter so that everyone will receive it in time to resopnd.

If you know of friends or other members who do not have email, or have been away for a while, who might like to join us for the end-of-year gathering, we would love to see each other, if at all possible!!! Please be sure to provide as accurate a count as possible of how many in your group will be coming to the meeting you choose.

Full disclosure: You are welcome to join in the food and fun, regardless. Please don't take offense if asked to bring your dues current when you come. Those who are fully current will be entitled to vote in the December election for the Board of Directors (at the WESTSIDE MEETING SITE ONLY - the single site where voting takes place).

See the December Newsletter for more information on that issue, and subsequent email messages.

This email message is your R S V P for the December 2009 Christmas party, to be held at all three meeting venues on each regular night for that venue.

There is no presentation planned. Instead, please join everyone to enjoy pizza, soft drinks, Q&A, and 'hang_out' time!!

What is needed:

First, please respond to this email message with two responses:

- 1) Yes or No, whether you can come.
- 2) If yes, WHICH location?

Second, be sure your response includes the subject line "December RSVP".

E-Mail your response to:

bod@phoenixpcug.org

A count as accurate as possible is needed for each location in order to plan for the quantity of supplies and how much pizza to order.

If you have a preference for a particular pizza, the most votes for a particular types at each site will be given consideration. Just say what you like.

We all look forward to seeing you and everyone in December! Be sure to send back a Yes or No response, regardless! Many thanks .

Members "This coming Tuesday 12-15-09 is your chance to make your wishes known about the future of our group. We need officer nominees. We must conduct officer elections at the west meeting, per our standing by-laws. Please consider running for office! While the pay sucks, the satisfaction of helping your fellow members, and officers more than makes up!!

Also, an amendment to our bylaws was proposed in the November Steering committee meeting and accepted. The By-lays Article 14 states that we must discuss this proposed amendment for 3 successive meetings, provided that the proposal is mailed to you 5 days prior to the first meeting that we begin:

In Accordance with the requirements set forth in Article 14 - Amendments, the following is offered for consideration by the club:

The Bylaws of April 3, 2008, currently in effect:

Article 6 Nomination and Election of Officers

Shall be amended, as follows.....

See Exhibit - 1 , attached

Exhibit-1 Introduced @ the November, 2009 Steering committee meeting.

Article 6 Nomination and Election of Officers

§ 6.1 Nominations

- 1) Nominations for Officers shall be opened in the month prior to the date for the election (which is determined by the Board of Directors), at and only at the General Meeting with Voting.
- 2) A nomination from the floor may be made by a member, and must be seconded by another member. Such nominations require the consent of the nominated person, either in person or in writing.

§ 6.2 Election

- 1) Each officer will be elected by ballot, or acclamation if only one candidate has been nominated, for a term of one year.
- 2a) Persons receiving the highest number of votes win, ties being decided by coin toss. The term of office shall be from ~~January 1 through December 31~~ February 15, First occurring after the election Through February 14, of the following year. All officers must be members in good standing in order to serve.

2b) Officers who are replaced in an election, shall provide transition support and assistance to their successor, during the period between the election and the beginning of the new officer's term of office.

- 3) The Board of Directors shall appoint a replacement for the remaining term of any office vacated due to removal or resignation of the Officer.

§ 6.3 Disputes

- 1) Any dispute with respect to election procedure, conduct, tabulation, or any other election matter shall be brought to the membership by the end of the next General Meeting with Voting.
- 2) Any such disputes shall be resolved by the members present at that meeting.

Rationale:

Chuck Lewis, Secretary, PhoenixPCUG

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MEETINGS

CALENDAR

For room and time changes,
check your website: phoenixpcug.org .

GENERAL MEETINGS

WEST SIDE: CollegeAmerica (see map - page 16)

- Tuesday, Dec 15, 2009
- 6:00 PM Steering Committee — Officer elections
- Followed by Q and A and Party.

EAST SIDE: University of Advancing Technology (see map - page 16)

- Wednesday, Dec 16, 2009
- 6:30 PM - Q and A
- Followed by Party.

FOUNTAIN HILLS: Fountain Hills Library (see map - page 16)

- Thursday, Dec 17, 2009
- 6:30 PM - QA and
- Followed by Party.

SIG MEETINGS

WEST SIDE: CollegeAmerica (see map - page 16)

- Digital Photography Sig
- Followed by: Digital Video Sig
- On hiatus.

FOUNTAIN HILLS: Library (see map—page 16)

- General Sig Meeting is also on hiatus.

WEB TOUR

December, 2009

This month we are changing the form of the Web Tour website. We still encourage members to submit their favorite websites and tips to:

TipJar@PhoenixPCUG.org

Web Tour appears in the group's website, as here, in our newsletter through the good work of our Webmaster Hank Pearson. As you can see below we now are combining all the WEB TOUR web sites in one place.

INTERNET SECURITY

SiteAdvisor

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

SiteAdvisor from McAfee. For IE and Firefox. Warns users of bad, fair, or good websites. Absolutely a must for every user.

SYSTEM UTILITIES

Belarc

<http://belarc.com/>

Belarc does an "audit" of your PC's hardware, software, installation key codes (for example MS Office and Windows XP and Vista). Save and print these out as you add and remove programs, devices, etc. Even finds your motherboard's manufacturer and serial number. Very helpful when you call tech support.

BACK-UP

SyncBack

<http://2brightsparks.com/freeware/>

Easily configured, does auto backup, synchronizing one directory to another, or bi-directional (be careful in how you choose overwrite options). Configs can backup by date and time, even several per day, week, etc. Not a mirror full drive backup - only directories.

SCREEN SHOTS

CamStudio

<http://camstudio.en.softonic.com/>

Records video, screen shots, audio. If you have trouble or want to document what happens on your PC, this is excellent. The avi files can be sent to tech support to show what happened, or used for training purposes.

CLOCKS

Atomic Clock - Time Sync

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

Helpful if you PC is drifting in time, before you replace your clock battery

AUDIO RECORDERS

· Audacity

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

Powerful audio recorder, editor, amplifier, noise reduction. Great for recording support calls, doing audio note taking, music editing, etc.

GIVEAWAYS

Woot

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

One deal of the day. Some excellent, some goofy. Hard drives, PC's, audio, camcorders, ...

Giveaway of the Day

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

Free daily programs, not restricted for personal use, but no support. Utilities, small programs, often useful, etc.

COMPUTER INTERNET CONNECTIONS

LogMeIn

<https://secure.logmein.com/>

Access and back up your home or work computer from anywhere with an Internet connection.

BROWSERS

Firefox Web Browser

<http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/firfox.html>

The latest security and stability release

Thunderbird Email Program

<http://www.mozillamessaging.com/en-US/thunderbird/>

Includes intelligent spam filters, powerful search, and customizable views

OFFICE SUITES

OpenOffice.org Office Suite

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WEB TOUR

(Continued from page 4)

OFFICE SUITES CONTINUED

<http://www.openoffice.org/>

This complete all-in-one office suite contains all that is needed for a productive day at the office, featuring word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, graphics, databases, and more

MEDIA PLAYERS

Media Player VLC

<http://www.videolan.org/vlc/download-winndows.html>

This is a highly portable multimedia player for various audio and video formats (MPEG-1, MPEG-2, MPEG-4, DivX, mp3, ogg, ...) as well as DVDs, VCDs, and various streaming protocols

BURNING SOFTWARE

Infrarecorder CD/DVD Burning Software

http://infrarecorder.org/?page_id=5

Infrarecorder is a burning solution for Microsoft Windows, offering a wide range of powerful features, all through an easy-to-use application interface with Windows Explorer integration

PHOTO IMAGE SOFTWARE

The Gimp Photo Image Shop

<http://gimp-win.sourceforge.net/stable.html>

An image manipulation program with a new GUI (graphical user interface) that makes it easier to use

ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE

GnuCash Financial Accounting

<http://sourceforge.net/projects/gnucash/>

Complete personal and small-business financial accounting software

PC REGISTRY AND FILE CLEANERS

Advanced SystemCare Free Registry and File Cleaner

<http://iobit.com/advancedwindowscareper.html>

Help protect, repair, clean, and optimize your PC

COMPRESSION (ZIP) TOOLS

7-Zip Zip Compression Tool

<http://www.7zip.com/>

7-Zip is fast, efficient, and free

SEARCH PROGRAMS

Ask Jeeves

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

An older site that just keeps going and going

CUIL - pronounced 'cool'

<http://www.cuil.com>

Less than a year old, it features long entries with thumbnail pictures. Not your usual type of search site, and worth looking into.

Google

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

The old standby

Bing Search

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

Formerly MSN Search

Yahoo

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

Another old standby

Dogpile

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

A search engine that uses the other search engines for a combined search

PEOPLE SEARCH

<https://www.intelius.com/>

For a price, gives more than you probably want to know about a person. Basic lookup is free.

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WEB TOUR

(Continued from page 5)

ELECTRONIC MANUALS STREET PRICES

Electronic Manuals

<http://www.retrevo.com/samples/index.html>

If you have ever lost the manual that came with one of your consumer electronic items, this is the place to find it. Try it out now! This site also gives street prices for the manuals item.

DRIVER DOWNLOAD TOOL

DriveRMax

<http://innovative-sol.com/drivermax/>

Drivemax is a new tool that allows you to download the latest driver updates for your computer

SWISS KNIFE OF FREWARE

FreewareUpdater

<http://freewareupdater.com>

From this site you can find many, many free download applications. The Web Site describes itself as follows:

Freewareupdater is a small, yet powerful software management tool to help you keep track of the most popular Freeware and Open Source applications. It is provided to you absolutely free. It provides you an interactive list of applications, which you can install just with a click. Currently, Freewareupdater contains about 200+ Freeware and Open Source applications that are presented in a user-friendly interface to ease your search and installation of free software.

SPREADSHEETS

OpenOffice.org Calc

<http://www.openoffice.org/product/calc.html>

OpenOffice.org Calc is a segment of the OpenOffice.org software package. It is similar to Microsoft Excel, with many similar features. Calc is capable

of opening and saving spreadsheets in Microsoft Excel file format. It provides a number of features Excel does not include in the graphical area. Calc can convert spreadsheets to PDF files.

Gnumeric

<http://projects.gnome.org/gnumeric/>

Gnumeric has Windows installers available. It is intended to be a free replacement for proprietary spreadsheet programs. Gnumeric's accuracy has helped establish itself for statistical analysis and other scientific tasks.

Simple Spreadsheet

<http://www.simple-groupware.de/cms/Spreadsheets/home/>

Simple Spreadsheet is a web-based spreadsheet program. It is released under the GNU General Public License, and is thus free software. It includes formulas, charts, formats, cell/row merging, cell locking, keyboard navigation, etc.

wikiCalc

<http://softwaregarden.com/products/wikicalc/>

WikiCalc is a web application created by Dan Bricklin who, 27 years earlier, created VisiCalc, the first spreadsheet. It is currently, as Version 1.0, available for Windows, Mac, and Linux/Unix.

COMODO FREE PRODUCTS

Comodo free products

http://www.comodo.com/products/free_products.html

Website featured in the August Web Tour

Remember

All of the Web Tour sites in the newsletter are archived and instantly available on our website. Don't waste time-consuming typing of the site address.

On the website you can get from here to there with a simple click.

About twice a year we plan to combine the Web Tour sites as we have done here.

Bill Aulepp, Editor

TALES FROM THE PAST

BACK TO THE 80's
(From March 1999 Newsletter)

SOME HISTORY

Our group incorporated March 6, 1984, under the name the Phoenix IBM PC User's Group.

Dues were higher, \$50 a year for new members and \$180 for corporate members. PCUG owned a color projector monitor. Members could rent it for \$75 per day, non-members for \$150.

The newsletter was just beginning to solicit advertisers averaging 2 to 3 ads in each issue.

A Help Line was staffed by volunteers from 7 to 9 pm at one telephone number. Monthly meetings in Mesa were canceled but meetings in Phoenix continued. AUTOMENU was the featured disk in 1985, praised as the solution to the problem of learning all DOS commands. Workshops were held weekly. Registration ranged from \$15 to \$35 and members were urged to bring their own computers.

The group became the Phoenix PC User's Group in 1986 (unofficially) when IBM was dropped from the name. It is our intention to continue this column as a "history" of your user group. Fifteen years is a fair amount of time to "be in business" and the new comers to our group will gain an appreciation of who we are and how we got here by learning more about the group.

As the history unfolds over the next few months, it will become clear that the group was built on volunteerism and dedication to the user group motto "Users helping users to understand computers". We are looking for PCUG tidbits from the past! We know many of you have interesting stories to tell send them in or call a Board member. It is interesting to note that that our records indicate that among the "oldest" members (time in the group) are the following:

Bill Alton #2
Francis Nakayama #39
Grey Staples #53
Robert Wood #104
Mary Fox #140
John Holmes# 153
AlSpeers#165

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The article above appeared in our March 1999 Newsletter. It brought back memories of the start of our group in the early 1980s. To get a more accurate picture on how it all started I called Bill Alton one of the founders. Bill recounted the following. He reminded me that in the early

80s User Groups were not new but were mainly about Apple Computers.

Bill said we decided to investigate if there was an interest in founding a group specializing in the Dos operating system. A meeting was called at the Valley Bank building on the roof.

Talk about interest! There were more than 2000 attendees. With that kind of interest the Phoenix IBMPC Users Group was started with hundreds of members to send it off.

After several years of successful ad hoc meetings in 1986 IBM was dropped from the groups name and we became known as the Phoenix PCUG.

In 1987 I became the Editor of the Newsletter when the previous Editor, Bob Howard, moved to Oregon. This was an absolutely new venture for me as I had only recently owned a computer and had no background in Newsletters.

I had never used the Ventura publishing software that was in use at that time. Luckily I tracked down the former Editor in Oregon so I at least had a hint on what to do. I remember I would go through a ream of paper each month to construct a 34 or 36 page Newsletter.

We printed 1000 copies each month as it was the practice to not only distribute the Newsletter to each Member but also provide advertisers promotional copies and to other groups as an inducement to provide us with monthly presentations. With no internet and not many other sources of PC information the Newsletter was a hot item. Some local store advertisers (I am not naming names) would request as many free copies as they could get and then turn-around and sell them.

Finding material to put in each edition was a chore. I had a large group working on stories and I put together a network of Newsletters Editors in surrounding States and by phone we would trade our stories for their stories.

Instead of the internet many groups had BBS (Bulletin Board Service) which could be reached by dial up. Ray Moore was the keeper of our BBS which terminated in my bedroom. Ray was the person that kept everything going in that period. There are so many others who worked on the Newsletter. Too many to list.

Well that was then and now is now. Today there are so many sources of PC information that we have lost our monopoly but there still is a place for "Users helping users to understand computers."

Steve Semon

FROM YOUR SECRETARY

(Continued from page 2)

Because of the statutory and regulatory requirements that come with being an Arizona Corporation, there is a significant period of time needed to effect changes of authority from the existing to new officers, who may be elected to replace the current officers. Some of the tasks required include changing official signatures on Bank and corporation records, revising Corporation commission records, as may be required by Law, or rule, and generally providing for an orderly transition from the term of a retiring officer to his or her successor.

First proposed, Nov. 17, 2009 in regular Steering committee session.

Exhibit-1 Introduced @ the November, 2009 Steering committee meeting

Article 6 Nomination and Election of Officers

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1) Nominations for Officers shall be opened in the month prior to the date for the election (which is determined by the Board of Directors), at and only at the General Meeting with Voting.

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<ADD> February 15, First occurring after the election Through February 14, of the following year. All officers must be members in good standing in order to serve.

<ADD> 2b) Officers who are replaced in an election, shall provide transition support and assistance to their successor, during the period between the election and the beginning of the new officer's term of office.

3) The Board of Directors shall appoint a replacement for the remaining term of any office vacated due to removal or resignation of the Officer.

§ 6.3 Disputes

1) Any dispute with respect to election procedure, conduct, tabulation, or any other election matter shall be brought to the membership by the end of the next General Meeting with Voting.

2) Any such disputes shall be resolved by the members present at that meeting.

Members please note that if you adopt this change it cannot become effective until after March 2010 at the earliest.

for your consideration and discussion, beginning at the December Voting meeting.

Chuck Lewis, Secretary

IMPORTANT

This month to celebrate the
Holidays and our 25th year as a Group
we plan to have
pizza parties.
So that there will be plenty of the
pizza you prefer **PLEASE**
E-Mail your response to:
bod@phoenixpcug.org

Please respond with two responses:

1) Yes or No, whether you
can come.
2) If yes, **WHICH** location?

**Be sure your response includes
the subject line "December
RSVP".**

POWER TO THE PIXELS!

POWER TO THE PIXELS !

Written by Dave Christenson, The digital photo guru and member of the Fox Valley PC Association, Illinois www.fvpca.org
Deanholste (at) sbcglobal.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).

I suspect that everyone reading this has at least one digital camera. What criteria did you use when buying it? Size, features, cuteness, need, impulse? Some or all of these? Maybe. But I'll bet that two you definitely considered are price and pixel count. All other things being equal, low price and high mega-pixel count is good! Right? Not always. I'll certainly go along with the low price bit, but let's think about the pixels a bit.

Why do we want more pixels? Obviously, because the picture, or image, is made out of pixels, the more pixels we have the more detail the image can contain and the greater we can enlarge it, or more cropping we can do. If we go beyond the capabilities of the count, we get what's called pixilation, or, more informally, stair-stepping, where a diagonal line zig-zags. Also called, for obvious reason, "the jaggies." So, why don't we necessarily want the most pixels possible for the price?

Well, everything in this world is a compromise, including us. We all make unnecessary noise, so do pixels. When light from the lens hits a pixel it puts out an electronic signal, proportional to the amount of light striking it. But, there is also a residual signal in a pixel, that is, a signal that it puts out whether or not light is hitting it. This is called noise. This is on top of the wanted signal, and the lower the brightness of the image, the greater the noise appears. Thus, it shows up more in photos taken in dim light. But it's always there, and in all cameras. It appears more obvious in areas of smoothness, such as sky, or human skin, and causes the image to look somewhat rough or granulated. (To those who are used to film, it's more or less the equivalent of

grain.) Altogether, noise is something really undesirable.

What's the easiest way to reduce the amount of noise in a pixel? Easy, make it bigger! Now, do you see the conflict? If we make the pixels bigger to reduce noise, then we have to have fewer of them on a given size sensor. Or, we can have bigger sensors. This method definitely works, but at a price. A bigger sensor means a bigger camera, and a higher price. Large sensors are expensive, huge sensors ridiculously so. (A giant sensor or a new car, your choice!) There is software in cameras designed to analyze the noise and reduce it. It works, but it has limitations distinguishing between noise and signal. Software packages can be purchased at varying price levels to reduce noise, they help but don't cure the noise problem, if you want to get into that.

You would think that camera manufacturers, being aware of the problem, would design their cameras to have a reasonable compromise between sensor size and number of pixels. The designers could, but specifications are given by the marketing group, who are well aware that "Pixels sell!" So, what should you do?

Well, consider how you are going to use your photos. Are you going to print 16" x 20" photos on high resolution glossy paper? Are you going to crop out an itchy-bitsy portion of the center of the picture and enlarge it? If so, I'm afraid you will have to bite the bullet and get a larger sensor camera. But if you are taking photos of birthday parties, vacations, and get-togethers, and want to print them as 4x5's or e-mail them, then I wouldn't be too concerned about pixel counts. Maybe cuteness is more important.

IMPORTANT



***GO TO PAGE 2
READ THE MESSAGE
FROM OUR SECRETARY
CHUCK LEWIS***

PRIVACY AND GOOGLE VOICE

PRIVACY AND GOOGLE VOICE

Written by Michael Gemignani, a member of HAL-PC, Texas
HAL-PC Magazine, May 2009
www.hal-pc.org
[mgmign2 \(at\) hal-pc.org](mailto:mgmign2@hal-pc.org)

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

I had originally intended to follow up on my previous column concerning ways we can get crosswise with the law using our computers, but I decided to postpone that discussion when I saw the announcement that Google is making available a service that will expand our ability to manage our phone service, but, at the same time, will vastly increase Google's ability to know more about us.

Basically, if I choose to use all of the capabilities of Google Voice, Google can obtain a complete record of all of my phone calls, not merely who called me or whom I called, but a recording of each and every one of those calls. Some would say that Google's collecting this much information about me goes far beyond merely recording my Google searches or my clicking on banner ads or on links to other sites. Google might be seriously infringing my "privacy."

Of course, if I choose to use Google Voice, presumably I know what I am getting into. I can voluntarily give up some of my privacy in the interests of convenience. I am under no obligation whatsoever to use Google Voice. But what is privacy, and how much of it have I already lost in this technological age?

Most people, I think, would be surprised to know that the Constitution of the United States does not give anyone a right to privacy. The right to privacy was created by the courts, most particularly the United States Supreme Court, in such cases as *Roe v. Wade*, which gave a woman a limited right to an abortion based on her right to privacy. Privacy has several meanings, but, basically, it refers

to a person's right to control his private property, including his own body, and the information publicly available about him. Immediately, then, we see that the right to privacy is not absolute. My car is my private property, but I am not free to use it however I choose. I am not even free to use my body however I choose; for example, when my body is in the front seat of a car, I am obligated by law to restrain my body with a seatbelt.

The balance to be struck between my right to restrict the information publicly available about me and the government's and the public's reasonable "need to know" is often controversial. If I am a public figure, such as a candidate for high office, I am expected to reveal more about myself so the public can better decide whether to vote for me. But even if I am the humblest of private citizens, if I use a charge card, a record is made not only of my purchase, but of the time and place where I made the purchase. If I make a phone call, the phone company has a record of the number I called in its logs. If I sign on to a website, there is a presumption that I visited that site at the time and from the IP address indicated on the site's log.

Moreover, cell phones are easily tapped, and there is no expectation on privacy when using a cell phone. Even computers that are not properly shielded emit electromagnetic waves that can be picked up with the proper equipment and the computer's activity duplicated exactly on another computer. There are, of course, other means of spying on my computer activity, such as packet sniffing for one. And though such sophisticated mechanisms to invade my "privacy" would hardly be justified in the case of an ordinary citizen, the mechanisms are out there. The only secure computer is one that is shielded against emitting radio waves and is totally isolated from the outside world. And, of course, those who truly want to know more about me, for reasons good or bad, are developing increasingly powerful means to do so.

Just as the notion of intellectual property has had to be rethought in the light of modern technology, so, too, does the notion of privacy. Just as there is the balance to be struck between my right to control

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PRIVACY AND GOOGLE — A NEW SPYWARE THREAT

(Continued from page 10)
PRIVACY AND GOOGLE

what is mine, including information about me and the limitations on my control based on the legitimate needs of society, I can often decide what personal balance I am willing to strike. I can pay cash for all my purchases so there will be no records from my charge cards. I can use a pay phone, if I can find one, so I cannot be traced to the numbers I called. I can forego use of the Internet so that not even cookies will find their way to my hard drive. And I can refuse to use Google Voice.

Where I draw the line concerning my privacy is one of the choices left to me, or is it? Access to the Internet is almost a necessity for much of our work and leisure. Cell phones are beginning to replace land lines, and many people already use VOIP for their phone service. Perhaps Google Voice is a bridge too far, or maybe it is simply just another milestone on a road we have been traveling for decades. Are we still controlling technology, or is technology controlling us?

The Rev. Dr. Michael Gemignani, an attorney and Episcopal priest, is also a former professor of computer science who has written extensively on legal issues related to computers. Although he is now retired, he enjoys writing and speaking about computer law and security. Contact him with any questions or comments about this topic.



STEALTH SPYWARE: THE NEW SPYWARE THREAT

Written by Kristofer Simon, a member of the Fox Valley PC Association, Illinois
 Fox Tales, Volume 22, Issue 6, June 2009
www.fvpca.org
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For most of us, the word spyware is not an unfamiliar term anymore. It can mean cookies that track your movements on web pages or other little programs that put garbage applications on your machine. While spyware intentions have not changed much over the past few years, their infection practices appear to be doing so. The newest kind of spyware, which I personally came in contact with a few months ago, should be referred to as "stealth" spyware. What I mean by that is that this spyware installs on your machine without you even knowing about it. You do not become aware of the spyware infection on your machine generally until the next time you reboot and the spyware program activates. In this short article, I will describe my experience with a piece of this spyware and what I had to do to get rid of it so that, hopefully, none of you have the same experience that I did.

The piece of spyware that infected my machine was called "XP Police Antivirus." I became infected, I believe, after visiting a third party website that provided updated information and screen shots for Nintendo Wii games that were about to hit the market and that were in development. As I said earlier, this program was a piece of "stealth" spyware and installed on my machine without my knowledge. It did not slow down the performance of my machine at all (at least not that I was able to notice), nor did any installation screens pop up during the install. The next time I booted up my machine, an icon appeared on the lower right hand part of my screen that looked like the XP Security Center shield. When I put my cursor over it to see what it was, it said "XP Police Antivirus." For just a split second, I wondered if maybe Microsoft had tried to install a new version of

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STEALTH SPYWARE

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STEALTH SPYWARE

an antivirus program they created on my machine, but I quickly realized that this was a piece of spyware that had infected my machine without my knowledge.

The program tried to fool me into thinking that anonymous users from the Internet (it would put public IP addresses in the warning dialog boxes) were attempting to access my computer maliciously and it recommended that I install the full program to prevent these attacks. I wasn't going to do this because I had the full and up-to-date version of McAfee Security Center so I knew this was bogus. When I tried to remove the program through the Add/Remove Programs option in the Control Panel, I was able to wipe out the program temporarily but the next time I rebooted my machine, the application

icon was in my system tray again and I was getting the same bogus dialog boxes about people trying to access my computer. This spyware also put another program on my machine called Security Center 2009 that also was made to look as realistic as possible.

Finally, I went on my Motorola Q Smart Phone and searched on the XP Police Antivirus program. Immediately, I got a link to a page that told me that this was a piece of stealth spyware and told me how to get rid of it. I actually had to go into the computer's registry (kind of like the computer's brain) and delete the entry that the spyware had made there, as well as delete a number of files the program had put on my machine. Once I did that, the spyware programs (both XP Police Antivirus and Security Center 2009) were finally gone but I still had one more hurdle to overcome from this program.

The spyware also installed a software program known as a "browser hijacker."

For those of you who don't know what this is, let me explain. Let's say you launch a web browser and you want to go to www.cnn.com to see the latest news. You type www.cnn.com into the address bar of your browser and either hit "go" or hit return. The browser initially begins to go to that page, but suddenly the browser gets "redirected"

to another page. This happens every time you try to access a web page. These programs are EXTREMELY hard to get rid of but I was able to get rid of the one on my machine using a third party program that found the program and removed it.

While this may sound like a dire situation, the most important thing you can do as an end user in these situations is to remain calm and scrutinize every program that you see on your machine, that you haven't specifically downloaded (ex. a game, a patch from Microsoft, etc.). If you do get infected by stealth spyware and can't seem to get rid of it, go to a non-infected PC or web enabled cell phone and do a search on the program's name. You will almost always get a link telling you how to get rid of the program. Also, never send personal information over the Internet to any site that you cannot confirm is a legitimate site that you use (ex. Amazon.com, Paypal, etc.). Using these steps you can help eliminate most of the problems caused by spyware, but you should always

remain vigilant. You can get infected with a stealth spyware program from just about any website, so be careful out there!

PPCUG's Ride Sharing Program

Bill Aulepp, long time group member has volunteered to coordinate member communication for those who need rides and those who can provide them.

To join the program for either side, email Bill at bill@aulepp.com Provide your name, your address, a way to contact you, and whether you can give or need a ride. Please do not wait until the last minute to request a ride,

Bill will gather the information from everyone who responds and connect up drivers with riders. It will be the responsibility of the individual members to organize the actual rides, dates, and pick up information.

Able to Provide a Ride?

Are you willing to pick up, transport and drive another member to one meeting a month? As an added bonus, any driver participating will receive one extra raffle ticket each time they drive a member to a meeting.

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For questions please contact David Yamamoto 602 418-1249 or write to above.

Submission deadlines are the 25th of each month prior to month of publication. Prices subject to change without notice.

COMPUTER TIPS

Jim's Computer Tips

Compiled by Jim Paton, a member of the Perth PCUG, Australia
 June / July 2009 Issues, Axxess Magazine of the PPCUG
www.perthpcug.org.au
 editor (at) perthpcug.org.au

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Q:
 Every time I start up my computer, it says Check Disk and takes forever. How do I stop it?

A:
 Sometimes this is the result of a previous improper shutdown, sometimes this is the result of an error on your disk. To find out if your disk is really ok or not, run a good third party utility like Fix-it Utilities 5. If this is happening consistently, your computer has been otherwise behaving absolutely normally and your PC checks out ok with the utility, your computer may just have a dirty volume bit set. By that I just mean that a chunk (one volume, like a volume in an encyclopedia) of your disk's data doesn't look quite right to the Autochk program. The Autochk program then takes its time going over every square inch of that entire drive. To stop this from continually happening, you can exclude volumes from the Autochk. This does involve the registry and is serious, serious business. If you mess this up, you can give yourself one world full of possibly irrevocable hurting. This is an advanced user tip only. It's somewhat more user friendly than most registry tips because it runs from the command prompt, but the risk is equal.

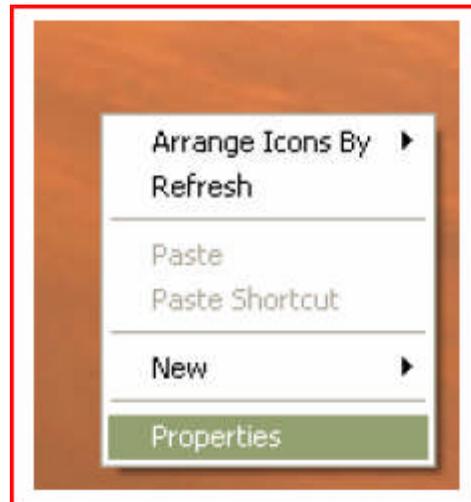
First, as with any alteration of the registry, you should back up your registry, back up the rest of your computer, and set a Restore Point. Go to Start, Run, and type in cmd Then type in `chkntfs /x c:` This will stop Autochk from scanning drive c. If your main drive is the D:\ then type `chkntfs /x d:` Close out of the command window when the next prompt appears, and that's it!

To undo this setting at a later point: Go to Start, Run, and type in cmd Then type in `chkntfs /d` Remember, this is only a solution for otherwise well-behaved systems whose drives check out clean with a good utility program and who are consistently running lengthy checks during bootup. If your system does not meet all of these criteria, it's likely that something else is actually wrong.

Redecorating Windows

Themes are complete redecoration packages for your desktop. A typical theme will contain a coordinating screen saver, icons, fonts, colours, window borders, cursors, and sometimes even sounds. XP offers the Windows Classic and Windows XP themes automatically. You can find others online or install them from CDs.

Right-click your desktop and choose Properties. The Display Properties window will appear. Click the Themes tab and choose one from the list. If you like what you see in the sample box, click OK to apply the theme to your computer.



To delete a theme from your hard drive, follow the above routine to get to the Themes tab, then highlight the theme you want to delete and click the Delete option. I would recommend against deleting the Windows Classic or Windows XP themes. Yeah, you might think you're never going to use them again, but we've noticed that some tips work only for the

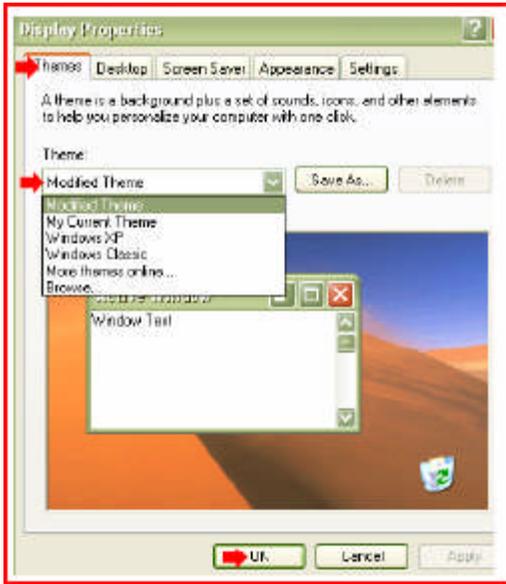
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XP view on some folks' systems. Don't redecorate yourself into a corner.



In MS PowerPoint you can select several objects with one click and drag of the mouse.

Replacing the old "Shift + mouse click (repeated over and over on each individual object) routine" we have the lovely and wonderful one click and drag option.

Most people are aware of this neat little trick on the desktop. Where you click on the desktop, hold down the left mouse button and drag. A dotted line rectangle is drawn and everything in the rectangle is selected once you release the mouse button. Well, as I was working on a PowerPoint presentation the other day I accidentally figured out that I didn't need to waste all that time holding down the Shift key and selecting each item. (I had something like 30 separate text boxes and was frustrated with all the selecting. In my fit of frustration I clicked and dragged a rectangle and much to my surprise all the objects in the rectangle were instantly selected. Yeah!)

I tried this in Word and got nowhere, but, for those of us who use PowerPoint with a lot of objects, this is a huge timesaver. (Just a quick note here: I did find that you must have the object completely in the

rectangle—if an object is only partially in the rectangle it will not be selected.)

New Word AutoText Without Retyping

So, you're working on your Word document and you realize that you frequently use a certain word or phrase and you think that maybe it's time to create an AutoText entry.

That entry combined with Word's ability to show AutoComplete suggestions of the AutoText could really save you some time.

What do you do?

Well, one way would be to go to the Insert menu, AutoText submenu, AutoText choice and begin typing the word or phrase that you want to add. (While you're in the AutoText window, double check that the "Show AutoComplete suggestions" option is checked to take advantage of that feature!) This method works, but it seems to be a bit of a pain to navigate into the window just to retype the text anyway.

What if you could use the text you already have in the document to create the AutoText entry without all the menus and submenus? Sounds like a plan to me and you're not going to believe how quickly it can be done!

First, highlight the text for the AutoText entry.

With the text still highlighted, hit the Alt + F3 keys.



The Create AutoText window will open with the highlighted text (or part of it if it's a long string) already in place as a suggested name for your entry. You can choose to keep

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the entire suggested text string as the AutoText name or you can change it to something smaller at this step.

Click OK when you're satisfied with the name.

That's it! The AutoText entry is complete without re-typing any text or a menu in sight!

Q:

I'm going on vacation next week and I don't really want a bunch of e-mail piling up in my Inbox while I'm gone. What can I do to prevent this?

A:

I'm sure several of you have been asking this very same question recently. If you get lots of e-mail (or even if you get a little e-mail) everyday, it's going to build up while you're away and you'll be bombarded with it all when you get back home. What to do?

Well, this may surprise you, but my advice is to just let it pile up. If it's too much, just use your delete key when you get back from vacation. Besides, if you see something good,

you'll be glad you didn't miss it. You can also try telling everyone that you share e-mails with that you're going to be gone for awhile, so if they can resist sending you emails,

it would be best. Just send a quick e-mail to everyone you think will write to you while you're gone and tell them your vacation dates and to please refrain from e-mailing

you. Reassure them that you'll get back to them when you get home. That will save you from any Inbox mania issues when you return. If you are signed up for newsletters,

you can contact each list and see if they have a "vacation" mode they can put you into. Otherwise, you can unsubscribe and then rejoin when you get back.

A final suggestion is to have your e-mail account disabled. That will cause any e-mail you get to bounce back to the sender. The only bad thing is that you may be removed

from any e-mail lists you're on (most good e-mail software removes addresses that bounce too many

times). So, you may want to keep this one as a last resort.

Make it Stand Out in Excel

Every once in awhile, we all have data in MS Excel that just needs to be presented with some "oomph." right? Do you like to use AutoShapes or text boxes to draw the reader's

attention to specific information? Maybe you'd be interested to know that the two can be combined. That is, you can put cell data into a text box or AutoShape with a direct reference to the cell.

What's so good about a reference to the cell, you ask? Since you reference the cell, you don't have to retype the information and the cell reference will provide automatic updates as the data changes. Happily, this merge of ideas can be done with very little work!

First, you need to draw the AutoShape or text box you want to use.

Now, with the AutoShape or text box selected, click into the formula bar and type an equal sign (=). At this point, you simply need to click on the cell with the data to

display in the AutoShape or text box.

Press the Enter key.

The data is now displayed inside the object. From here, it's just a matter of formatting the text and business as usual!

These tips are provided by our members for the interest of our members. Original source is not known.

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