microCHIP

the Newsletter of the

Mid-Hudson Computer User Group Inc.

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Google for Everyone

by Linda Ritch

Jamie Yates from the Danbury PC Users Group presented Google and its many new features. Google is not just about searching anymore.

Google is a constantly moving target. It adds new tools and features practically daily.

Jamie discussed many of Google's newest tools that require you to have a free Google account (which may or may not be a Gmail account). To create a new Google account, go to google.com/accounts and click on the "Create an account now" link. Follow the on-screen prompts. If you have a Google account, you can now create (and share with others) your own personal search engine that only searches the sites you specify.

The Google Calculator is used by entering your equation or problem in the Google search box. There is now a Google Dictionary and Google Books where you can download PDFs of public domain/"full view" books. You can also do a search at books.google.com and click on "Full view books."

One of the most popular is Google Map and Google Earth. Jamie demonstrated Google Earth where he zoomed in on the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France. You could see buildings up close and get a street view (walking down the sidewalks). Version 4 adds some new features such as a new, simpler user interface, texturized buildings (based on Google Sketchup, 3D modeling program), built-in drawing tools, the ability to share geographic information with others using KML files and layers. Wiht Google Sky and Google Flight Simulator you can fly over locations, zoom in and out from high level to just about ground level where the detailed pictures exist, rotate the view, tip the view up and down, get a perspective view, see 3D buildings and other sites and landmarks.

Google Music was another feature that was discussed. You can enter the name of a popular artist and click on the "More music results" link on the results page, Google then displays album titles, song titles, user reviews, and links to online stores. You can also download a music player.

Google Notebook is a free research tool, available to everyone with a Google account that lets you create a notebook of your online discoveries – quotes, images, etc. It's like having index cards to keep track of your Internet research.

Jamie asked for a raise of hands of people that had a gmail account. A few people had gmail and with some, their only email account. Gmail is Google's free webmail service that gives you 2.9 gigabytes of storage (as of 10/2007). Google account holders do not automatically get access to Gmail.

To sign up for Gmail:

Ask a friend who has gmail to send you an invitation and get an invitation code sent to your cell phone via SMS

To check your mail:

Go to gmail.com or mail.google.com or download and install the gmail app on your cell phone.

Igoogle is a customizable Web page to create your own Google homepage that can show your latest Gmail messages, headlines from Google News and other top news sources, weather forecasts, stock quotes, and movie showtimes, etc.

There are many more Google Goodies such as the Google Toolbar, Google Chat, Google Desktop and many more that were not presented. There just wasn't enough time to cover all that is offered.

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Nov 8th: Microsoft Office Publisher

November's meeting will feature a presentation about, and demonstration of, Microsoft Office Publisher 2007.

"Office Publisher 2007 is a desktop publishing and marketing materials program that helps you create publications for Print, E-Mail, and the Web.

It enables users to easily and efficiently design, publish, and distribute professional and polished communications and marketing materials that use your own brand elements, including logos, colors, fonts, and business information."

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Monthly Meetings
Scheduled the second Thursday of every month. Check **www.mhcug.org** for possible changes to general and SIG meetings. Local radio stations will be advised if a meeting is cancelled unexpectedly.

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Bits, Bytes 'N Kudos

by Dick Kranz

Our digital photography SIG (Special-Interest Group) under the leadership of Jim Warner III and Dan Sullivan as cochairman, with the help of Les Muldorf and other presenters may appear to have run the gamut of what members expect from that SIG. This writer remembers attending the digital photography SIG for several months prior to purchasing my first digital camera. Those sessions provided enough information to make a knowledgeable purchase of a state-of-the-art (at that time) consumer camera. Others flocked to that special-interest group to learn of the many facets of digital photography. We had many "show and tell" sessions as each of us brought in the latest of whatever various cameras and gadgets we could get our hands on.

We studied various software, learning how to crop, highlight, rotate and layer our keepsake digital photographs. We learned of various (free to expensive) software to manipulate the storage and retrieval of those digital images. Various hardware storage devices and mediums were discussed and considered in our purchasing habits. It seems that the hardware got smaller while at the same time Digital images grew larger. It even came to be that one could put more and more pictures on smaller and smaller storage devices. We learned of ways to import and export images as well as to retrieve lost images. We also learned to send digital images over the Internet to family, friends and business associates.

The digital photography SIG evolved into a LCD projected display of members digital works from various walks of life. Such presentations virtually took us to all corners of the earth, wherever vacationing attendees took their camera's. Submitters often welcomed critique from others in the room to learn how one might improve their camera and digital computing skills. Attendance at this SIG group has begun to wean somewhat.

We are asking members to let us know what their digital activity preferences are? should we concentrate more on presenting photographs, critiquing sessions, investigating latest software choices or place more emphasis on digital technology presentations? There has been some talk of alternating each month with a different SIG group. Members need to let us know what direction this SIG should go. Please think about this and indicate your preference at the next general meeting on the sign in poll sheet, or express yourself in an e-mail to Jim, Sam or myself. **By the way, there will be no digital photography SIG during the months of November and December due to the holidays.**

MHCUG (Mid-Hudson Computer User Group) elections at our Thursday, December 13 holiday meeting are rapidly approaching and we still need a few volunteers to fill positions. Most of our officers and directors have volunteered to remain on the board. However, we are in need of someone to volunteer for the position of VP-Programs. While we can provide the willing volunteer with leads for speakers and presenters, and with those coming from APCUG (Association of Personal Computer User Groups) we need someone who can e-mail potential speakers and coordinate our meeting dates with them. Also open is a slot for VP-Activities to oversee any special activities the club might choose to have. We also need a volunteer to serve on the board as a director.

By-laws call for us to announce the slate of officers at our Thursday, November 8 meeting and publish same in our December newsletter. Volunteers should contact nominating chairperson Tom Townsend tomtownsend@prodigy.net or committee members, Martin Feldberg martinfeld@optonline.net or William Collier collier@acm.org or this writer can provide their telephone numbers. Please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns you may have concerning the volunteer positions with myself on 845 896-7376 or by email on our website contacts list to the president. Any member interested in seeing how the board functions is welcome to come to our board meeting on Thursday, November 1 or December 6. We meet in conference room "B" at the Guardian Business Development Center, 3 Neptune Rd. (behind Red Lobster Restaurant) at 7 p.m.

Technology Workshop

by Dick Kranz

Lloyd Quick did a PowerPoint presentation at our Monday, October 15 Technology Workshop concerning various purchase considerations one should take into account when buying a HDTV (High Definition Television). Discussion of the Government mandated transition from analog to DTV (Digital Television) ensued. The following information was extracted from the FCC (Federal Communication Commission) Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau website. It was last reviewed/updated on 10/03/07 and reprinted here to keep our readers apprised of the mandate: On February 17, 2009, federal law requires that all full-power television broadcast stations stop broadcasting in analog format and broadcast only in digital format. Here's what these requirements will mean for you and your television viewing.

Why Are Broadcast TV Stations Switching to All-Digital?

Congress mandated the conversion to all-digital television broadcasting, also known as the digital television (DTV) transition, because digital is a more efficient transmission technology that allows broadcast stations to provide improved picture and sound quality, as well as provide more programming options for consumers through multiple broadcast streams (multicasting). In addition, all-digital broadcasting will free up many frequencies to be used for public safety, such as police, fire, and emergency rescue, and for the provision of advanced commercial wireless services for consumers.

What Do I Need To Do To Be Ready For The DTV Transition?

What you need to do depends on the source of your television programming, whether you receive programming over-the-air or from a paid provider such as a cable or satellite TV company.

How Do I Receive Digital Broadcasts If I Don't Subscribe To Cable Or Satellite?

If you receive only free over-the-air television programming, the type of TV you own, either a digital TV or an analog TV, is very important. Consumers who receive only free over-the-air television may view digital programming through a TV set with a built-in digital tuner (integrated DTV) or a digital-ready monitor with a separate digital tuner set-top box. (Both of these digital television types are referred to as a DTV). The only additional equipment required to view over-the-air digital programming with a DTV is a regular antenna, either on your roof or a smaller version on your TV such as "rabbit ears." If you have an analog television, you will have to purchase a digital-to-analog set-top converter box to attach to your TV set to be able to view over-the-air digital programming (see "What About My Analog TV?" below).

How Do I Know Whether I Own a DTV?

As of March 1, 2007, all television receivers shipped in interstate commerce or imported into the United States must contain a digital tuner. In addition, effective May 25, 2007, the Commission required sellers of television receiving equipment that does not include a digital tuner to disclose at the point-of-sale that such devices include only an analog tuner, and therefore will require a digital-to-analog converter box to receive over-the-air broadcast television after the transition date. Retailers must inform consumers by prominently displaying the following text if they are selling TV equipment with only an analog tuner:

This television receiver has only an analog broadcast tuner and will require a converter box after February 17, 2009, to receive over-the-air broadcasts with an antenna because of the Nation's transition to digital broadcasting. Analog-only TVs should continue to work as before with cable and satellite TV services, gaming consoles, VCRs, DVD players, and similar products. For more information, call the Federal Communications Commission at 1-888-225-5322 (TTY: 1-888-835-5322) or visit the Commission's digital television website at: http://www.dtv.gov. Therefore, after May 25, 2007, all television equipment being sold should contain a digital tuner, or should be identified at the point-of-sale as not having one. Be sure to look for this label if you are purchasing a new TV.

What About My Analog TV? Will It Still Work?

After February 17, 2009, you will be able to receive and view over-the-air digital programming with an analog TV only by purchasing a digital-to-analog set-top converter box. Between January 1, 2008, and March 31, 2009, all U.S. households will be able to request up to two coupons, worth $40 each, to be used toward the future purchase of eligible digital-to-analog converter boxes. Eligible converter boxes are for the conversion of over-the-air digital television signals, and therefore are not intended for analog TVs connected to a paid provider such as cable or satellite TV service. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is administering the coupon program. For more information, visit the NTIA website at "http://www.fcc.gov/fcc-bin/bye and http://www.ntia.doc.gov. The Commission's DTV website, "http://www.dtv.gov/ also provides information for consumers on the upcoming digital-to-analog converter box coupon program. More detailed information regarding NTIA's coupon program, what digital-to-analog converter boxes will be eligible, where and when they may be purchased, and the related costs involved will be provided by the Commission and NTIA as the commencement of the coupon program on January 1, 2008, approaches.

If I Already Have an Antenna, Do I Need a New One to View the Digital Signals?

A special antenna generally is not needed to receive digital signals. You may have antenna issues, however, if your current antenna does not receive UHF signals (channels 14 and above) well, because most DTV stations are on UHF channels. In such a case, you may need a new antenna or to add a UHF section to your existing antenna system. This equipment should be available at most bricks-and-mortar and Internet consumer electronics retailers.

How Do I Receive Digital Broadcasts If I Subscribe To Cable Or Satellite? *continued on page 4*

continued from page 3

If you receive cable or satellite television service, contact your cable or satellite provider about any additional components, such as a digital set-top box, that you may need to watch digital broadcast programming.

If I Buy a DTV, Will My VCR, DVD Player, Camcorder, Video Games, Or Other Equipment Still Work?

VCRs, DVD players, camcorders and video games will continue to work, even if they are only analog-capable. Such equipment, however, may not provide digital-quality picture and sound. Manufacturers are producing a number of different connectors to hook equipment together and improve picture and sound quality. Check with your equipment retailer to determine the types of connectors that will work with your equipment.

How Much Will DTV Improve My TV Viewing?

While picture quality will vary according to whether you receive digital programming in high definition (HDTV), enhanced definition (EDTV), or standard definition (SDTV) format, all digital programming provides an enhanced viewing experience. HDTV, the highest quality format, provides high resolution, a widescreen format, and surround sound.

How Much Will a DTV Cost?

Prices vary depending on the many features and options available to consumers, including format, display technology, and screen size. Display technology choices include cathode ray tube screens, rear projection TVs, front projection TVs, and flat panel TVs. Flat panel TVs, often the most expensive, can use either a liquid crystal display (LCD) or plasma screen technology. Screen size is measured diagonally across the screen, and the larger the screen, generally the more expensive the TV. To determine the equipment and features that are right for you, learn about DTV from our Web Site and discuss your options with your retailer.

All submissions for the Microchip must be in the hands of the editors by the Thursday following the General Meeting. Any articles or information received after that date will be held for the following month's publication. Send submissions to editor@mhcug.org

Issues of the microCHIP are available on line. Please be sure we have your correct e-mail address so you can be notified when the new edition is available on line.

Special Interest Groups

Special Interest Groups are for people with common computer interests—novice through expert.

Call group leader to verify schedule.

Upgrade/Repair

Leader: Dan Sullivan
Tel: 229-0241
e-mail: *dansull@optonline.net*
Schedule: 4th Mon. 7:00 PM
Location: Business Development Center Conf. Room B

Technology Workshop

Leader: Dick Kranz
Tel: 297-1813, 896-7376 or 265-4169 or e-mail: *president@mhcug.org*
Schedule: 3rd Monday, 7:00 PM
Location: Business Development Center Conf. Room B

Digital Photography

Leaders:
Dan Sullivan
Tel: 229-0241
e-mail: *dansull@optonline.net*
Jim Warner
Tel: 297-3175
jhwiii@optonline.net
Schedule: 4th Thurs. 7:00 PM
Location: Business Development Center Conf. Room B

Ulster Computing Workshop

(formerly HVPCC)
Leader: Robert Morales
e-mail:4bobmorales@earthlink.net
Schedule: 3rd Thurs. 7:00 PM
Location: Ulster Comm College Hasbrouck Bldg. Room 219

Interested in starting a Special Interest Group? contact Neal Christensen

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Q&A

by Hugh N. Ross

Q I am using Win 2000. How do I find out how much memory I am using?

A Windows task manager will tell you a lot of information about the current state of your machine. Do 'CtlAltDel' **just once**. The task manager window will open. There are several tabs at the top of the window: Applications, Processes, Performance, Network, and Users. The Application tab will show a list of all the application programs that are loaded and ready to run. The Performance window will show the main memory usage, the paging (swap) file usage and many other details.

Q I made an image backup of my old machine. I want to copy the information to a new machine, but I don't want to copy the operating system. Can I copy selected programs and data from an image file?

A Most backup/restore programs let you restore selected files. However, you cannot copy applications, you must reinstall them. You **can** copy the data files. You need to know the file names and locations in order to restore them.

Q Using Win XP, I keep getting a message 'Virtual Memory is low'. What is wrong and how do I fix it?

A The message means that the paging (swap) file on disk is nearly full. This can be caused by a couple of reasons: your hard drive partition might be nearly full, or the allocated page file may be too small for the number of applications you have concurrently open. You should remove any unneeded programs from your 'start' list. You can reduce the number of programs you open at one time. Also, if you have plenty of hard disk space, you can change the size of the paging file allocation. To do this, go to Ctrl Panel, System, Advanced, Settings, Advanced, and Virtual Memory. You can set the minimum and maximum space to use on the disk for the paging file on each drive.

Q I have one physical hard drive with two partitions. The C partition is small and almost full. The D partition has lots of space available. The system was supposed to put more files on the D partition, but it is not doing so. What can I do?

A There are a couple of programs that will allow you to change the size of partitions on your hard drive without loosing data. One is Partition Magic. Another that is highly recommended is Acronis. You can move the lower boundary of the D partition up creating unallocated free space. Then you extend the C partition to include the free space. Acronis is available at a discount from Gene Barlow at UGR (User Group Relations).

Q If one wants to have two operating systems on one computer, is it better to use a dual boot system or to emulate one system under the other?

A Emulation always adds some overhead to the execution of the emulated system. Most users prefer the dual boot solution. Acornis Disk Director was recommended to control the boot process. If you have data that you would like to access from both of the operating systems, you must put it in a third partition that can be referenced by both the systems. The system partitions cannot see each other.

Q My system is giving trouble booting. I can get safe mode to operate but not full mode. How can I find the cause?

A It is likely that some system module has been damaged. The first suggestion is to boot in safe mode and execute scan disk. This may take a couple of hours. This may repair a disk error. If this does not fix the problem, turn on the logging function in the F8 options window. The next time you boot, the name of each module will be displayed before it is loaded. When the system hangs, the last name shown is most likely to be the defective one. You can then install a fresh copy of that module from the master CD or another similar machine. 🗀

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Loosely translated, let's say you want to create a set of flyers, postcards, and a Web site to sell your house, that still-in-the-original-box XT, and those cross-country ski's with matching knickers.

This is a Microsoft Mindshare "Presentation in a Box"; club member Peter Dowley is our presenter. 🗀

Pumpkin Patch by Les Muldorf

Oh My Gosh !

Ray Polivka

Have you ever had an "Oh My Gosh" experience on your PC? I just had an "Oh My Gosh" incident. I thought I would share it with you. It is something that doesn't happens everyday but when it does you wish it hadn't.

The voice over the phone stepping through an installation procedure said "Now turn off your computer". OK, without much thought, I reached down and depressed the power button. Yes, indeed the computer powered off immediately. This was an "Oh My Gosh" moment. What was going to happen when I powered up again?

Here is what happened in this instance. The computer went into an endless loop! While I have since with help corrected the situation, I thought that I might share what happened and how I finally corrected it. When I restarted the computer, the normal Windows startup procedure began. However, soon it was interrupted by the screen reporting that the hard drive needed to be checked for discrepancies. When that had finished, the ominous black screen "Window Advanced Options Menu" interrupted the normal start up. This is the same screen that appears when you use the F8 repeatedly at start up time. The selection highlighted was "Start Windows Normally". That is what I wished to do so I agreed and depressed "Enter". By now I'm sure you guessed what happened. The whole process was repeated. OK, I tried the selection "Last good configuration." Gee, that sounded good – wrong. The loop continued. I then tried "Safe Mode". But then what was I to do? I had no clue, this had never happened to me before. If you have experienced this and know the solution well then skip to the next article.

Fortunately, two club members, Dan Sullivan and Jim Peabody, came to my aid. I am relating this story just in case you the reader have not done what they advised me to do. It is certainly worthwhile to know of it and actually step through part of it yourself.

How to break the loop? The way that worked for me in this situation was to do a restore. A "restore"? Gosh, I haven't done that before. Windows XP fortunately does an automatic restore. This broke the loop. Here is the sequence of events that I followed to do a system restore. As you power on the system depress the F8 repeatedly; play woodpecker with it. Eventually the "Windows Advance Options Menu" screen will appear. This time select Safe Mode. When that comes up, click on Start and then All Programs. In the list, click on Accessories. In the resulting window, , click on System Tools then System Restore. At this point a new window will appear containing a calendar with some of the dates encircled in dark black. These are the dates during which Windows XP did a backup. Clicking on one of these dates will bring up another menu since there may have been several restore points done on that date. By selecting one of these times, Windows will restore your system to that time. It worked for me!! 🗀

10 Steps to Safe Computing

by Sandy Berger, compuKISS.com
sberger(at)compukiss.com
www.compukiss.com

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

Unfortunately you must be proactive to protect yourself from today's bad guys. Here is my down and dirty list for PC users.

1. Install a good anti-virus program and make sure that it is updated regularly. While most of today's programs update automatically, you should check occasionally to make sure they are working properly.

2. Don't open email attachments even if they are from someone you know. Open only if you are expecting them, you know the person sending them, and you know what the attachments contain.

3. Don't fall for phishing schemes or other email where they try to get you to confirm or retype your personal information.

4. Update your operating system regularly. In Windows and Mac OS X you can turn on automatic updates, but you also need to download and install the updates as soon as possible. Often the bad guys take advantage of new operating system holes as soon as they are discovered. Companies like Microsoft, Apple, and others find a way to plug the whole and issue an update. If you wait a week or two to install the updates, you are giving the hackers and spammers time to attack your computer.

5. Be careful about the websites you visit. Don't visit porn sites or other suspicious websites. Don't download software from any website unless you are sure it is safe.

6. Use a firewall. As I stated in a previous column, a hardware router is a very good unobtrusive firewall. If you don't have a router, turn on the firewall that comes with Windows. The Vista firewall is pretty good, and the XP firewall is better than nothing. If you are an expert user, you can use a software firewall like Zone Alarm, but for the uninitiated user, these complex software firewalls can be difficult to use.

7. If you are using Vista or Mac OSX, or even Linux you should create an account for daily use that does not have administrative rights. That way, if a piece of malware gets into your system during an average computing session, it will have restricted rights. Using an account with administrative rights, gives the malware administrative rights as well. While this is also a good practice with Windows XP, most users, including myself, find that because of the way XP is engineered, it is almost impossible to perform average tasks unless you are logged on as an administrator. Fortunately, with the Vista operating system, you can easily perform day-to-day operations when logged in as a non-Administrator.

8. Even with good habits, it can be useful to occasionally run a good anti-spyware program to scan and remove spyware from your computer.

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9. Shop at Secure Sites. If you shop on the Internet, enter your personal information and credit card number only on a secure Web page. If you use Internet Explorer, a secure site will show a yellow padlock in a closed position on the toolbar at the bottom left-hand side of the screen. Netscape will show a closed darker colored padlock somewhere on the bottom toolbar. In both browsers, a secure site will have https: rather than http: in the Web site address at the top of the page.

10. Don't give your Social Security number out on the Internet. Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes because computers and the Internet make stealing an identity from an unsuspecting victim easy. So don't be an unsuspecting victim! Your social security number is the golden key to your identity. Never keep your social security number anywhere in your computer. Never give it out over the Internet, even in a secure site. Some sites, like online banking, may require you to use your social security number as a password. Take a pass on any such site or service that makes you send your social security number over the Internet. Keep your identity secure by keeping your social security number as private as possible.

One more thing– don't buy anything from spam or unsolicited email. While this won't keep your computer any safer, it might help to lessen or eliminate spam. If no one bought anything from spam, it would take away the financial incentive to send spam and it would probably disappear.

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Irfanview 4.0 – Freeware Image Editor and Media Player

By Ira Wilsker

WEBSITE: http://www.irfanview.com

Imagine a free (for non-commercial use), full featured utility that can display and edit almost all known image formats, and convert from any one format to any other. Imagine a utility that can play almost every known audio and video format with its free "Plugins" file, all in a small and very efficient software package. Some skeptics may say that this sounds too good to be true, but lucky for us, it is indeed true. The program that can do all of the above, and more is the very popular Irfanview, version 4.0 (www.irfanview.com), written by a Bosnian named Irfan Skiljan. This outstanding program is not a well known secret, as the popular download site Download.com alone reports over 26 million downloads of Irfanview (including previous versions), with probably tens of millions of copies downloaded from countless other download resources, and over a million additional copies downloaded every month.

People send me several emails every day with images or videos attached, and I have Irfanview set as my default viewer and player for almost all images, audio files, and videos. Using Irfanview is fairly simple, straight forward, and somewhat intuitive. After downloading (www.irfanview.com) and installing the file, I recommend that the companion file "Irfanview Plugins" also be downloaded and installed. After installing the "plugins" the user is given the option to selectively choose Irfanview as the default for any or all of the file extensions it supports. It may not be a bad choice to allow Irfanview to be the default for those extensions, but the decision can be reversed if decided later.

One frequent function that I use Irfanview for on a regular basis is image editing. Recently, a relative sent me several unedited JPG digital photos of her new puppy taken at maximum resolution with a 6 megapixel digital camera. Each image was huge both in file size (several megabytes), and in viewing size. I have a big-screen monitor running at a high screen resolution, and still could not view the entire image without scrolling, as the image size was greater than my monitor resolution. Since I opened the attached images in Irfanview, it was but a few mouse clicks to edit them down to a more manageable size; I clicked on IMAGE – RESIZE/RESAMPLE and then selected a percentage of the original size, and then saved the image in its reduced size. It is good netiquette to reduce the size of multi-megapixel images, and then email the digital images in a more reasonable size such as 800x600 or 1024x768. It is also good netiquette to crop the image, which can be dome simply by clicking and holding the left mouse button on a corner of the desired image, and then dragging it in a frame to the desired borders of the cropped image. EDIT – CROP SELECTION will instantly produce the cropped image which can be saved or further edited.

Another purpose of Irfanview is to improve the quality of digital images by enhancing the colors. The command IMAGE – ENHANCE COLORS opens a dual pane window that shows the unedited original image and the new image with the changes applied. Possible changes that can be made include brightness, contrast, color balance, gamma, and saturation. By using a slider or manually entering values allows the user to see the effects of any changes before saving the edited image. Another selection I often utilize is the "sharpen" command on the image menu; this automatically sharpens a fuzzy image. Other image commands include red-eye reduction, and a panorama function where separate images can automatically be knit together to make a larger panoramic image.

While there are many other image editing features included in the program, Irfanview also shines as an audio and video player if the plugins are installed. Popular audio formats, such as MP3, RA, and WAV are fully supported, allowing this single program to play almost any audio format, with full control of volume and other technical details. There are many video formats in common use, such as MPEG, AVI, and WMV that are often used for the videos that people email or display on a webpage, and Irfanview can handle almost all of them interchangeably, and can serve as an able substitute for Windows Media Player, and most other media players. Audio and video on CDs and DVDs can also be played with Irfanview.

Irfanview 4.0 will work well on all versions of Windows from 95 to Vista, and is simple enough for beginners, and sophisticated enough for professionals. The software is free for non-commercial use, and the author encourages purely voluntary contributions via PayPal. I suggest that readers of this column download it and try it. There is no adware or spyware embedded in it, and the program has a clean and uncluttered interface. Try it, and you may end up liking it as much as I enjoy Irfanview.

Attack Of The Clone

by Mick Topping, a member of the ICON (Interactive Computer Owners Network), Missouri
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Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

I have been dragging my feet on Vista. I really don't see much in it that I think I need. However, it is getting time for a new laptop, the hard drive on the old one is getting a little crowded, and a little busy, and slow on startup. What I really needed was a way to distract myself from how much I wanted a new LT, and maybe delay getting a new one until Vista gets a little more debugged.

Here we go—a really good deal at a local store on a laptop hard drive, I never could resist a good deal. The staff guy had a hard time finding the special.

A bit of confusion on the sale circular. But finally found it. Then he says "you are not going to install that by yourself?!? We have a fine technical staff that can do that sort of thing for a small fee". I had done a similar install before, and did not remember much of a problem, so I politely declined.

The first surprise on opening the box was, right on top, a big yellow card, with bold print: READ THIS! Q. Can I install this drive myself? A. This kit is designed for professional installation ONLY! None of the temporary storage devices, hardware, software, specialized tools, or instructions that may be needed to install this drive is included in this kit.

All right, a challenge–the only thing I love more than a good deal, is a technical challenge. I then worked about 4 hours on studying, preparing and executing stuff like partitioning, formatting, managing, drive-imaging, copying, followed by several more hours of FIXMBR, FIXBOOT C:, copying NTLDR…and generally suffering extreme frustration. Things that worked in years past seemed to no longer work.

After I slept on it, I realized, there may be an easier way. This new drive is a Seagate Hard Drive, a product of the most advanced HD company on earth! (says so right on the box) They must know that they could sell more HDs if they make it easy to transfer stuff to the new HD! Off I go, to http://www.seagate.com/www/en-us/support/downloads/ after a bit of poking around, I find MaxBlast 5, a Maxtor program. (Maxtor is now a Seagate subsidiary) However, MaxBlast looks really promising. It is a free download; it is a product of Acronis who makes several high quality disk cloning and data-backup products.

Now we are making progress. I download and install Maxblast 5, Maxblast has a 60 page manual on line, which I read thoroughly (OK, maybe 10 minutes) then run it. One of the choices is Bootable Media Builder. This allows the creation of a CD that is "bootable". Flash or other USB also supported—but your BIOS must support USB booting to use it. Note that Windows is ALWAYS using the disk it is booted from, making this disk hard to copy, but by using a bootable CD it is possible to start the computer while the existing hard drive is not in-use by Windows, so it can be more easily copied. Maxblast has two modes for Bootable Media Builder: The Full version, and the Safe version. The "full" version seems more appropriate for using USB devices, which I will need to use, (for externally attached USB drive) so that is what I choose. And since I wish to make a bootable CD, I choose the ISO image, which is the standard format for this capability.

About ready to make a clone of my hard drive. Since the laptop has no capability to add additional internal drives, the new drive is connected externally through a USB-IDE cable (under $20 for a cable that will interface with 2.5 and 3.5 internal drives).

After the bootable CD is created, Power off the computer, then connect the cable to the computer, and the new drive. Put on your good glasses, and examine the large end of the cable closely. There is a set of holes that match the pins on the disk drive, and where is one pin missing on the drive, there is one hole that is plugged on the adapter. If you have an adapter for 3.5 as well as 2.5 drives, there will be one set of holes for either type of drive. Some (about 4) of the pins will remain exposed. (no holes)

In theory, this setup should work when plugged in after the power is on, but with a weak USB power, there have been reports of the drive not spinning-up fast enough and the drive logic indicating a bad drive. Turn on power, and quickly insert the CD. If the computer boots to Windows, you can shut down and retry. Note that you may have to change the BIOS set-up to boot from the CD before the HD. BIOS setup procedures are different on every machine, but are usually accessed by hitting F2 or Delete while booting, but before windows starts. (Check your user's manual)

The Clone Disk is the choice, and if you are happy with your existing disk setup (no partitions, or like the existing proportions) the default may be best. I was able to increase several of my partitions for some slack, and have room for a 20GB spare.

After you have finished the cloning process, it is time to swap the internal hard drive with the external drive.

Remember that laptops have a battery–don't do ANY work on the inside of the laptop without first removing the battery. In fact don't do anything without reading the appropriate sections of your particular laptop's user manual. They are all a little different.

Laptop HDs are usually in a small slide-out tray, my tray was held in place by two screws. The drive is held in the tray by two more screws. If you try really hard, the removal and replace process can be extended to 10 minutes, but most folks will finish the task

in about 5. Note that these screws are frequently tiny, so it is a good idea to do this work on a light-colored surface, in a well lit work area.

In addition to the screws holding the drive in place, there will likely be a small adapter that fits over the pins on the IDE drive and makes it compatible with the connector inside the laptop's tray holder. This figure shows the HD naked connector pins, on the left, and the pins with the adapter installed on the right. This adapter has the same hole pattern as the USB-IDE cable adapter. Note that there are two groups of pins, the 4 pins (on the right) separated from the larger group (on the left), and the 4-pin group is not used in this application, either for the internal drive adapter, or the USB-IDE connection.

Be careful when handling the drive to avoid static discharge. Hardwood floors and leather soled shoes are preferred over carpets and sneakers in the work area. Also, the drives should never be squeezed on their flat surface–when inserting the pins in either the USB-IDE connector, or the internal adapter, grasp the drive by the edges to avoid placing too much pressure on the flat surfaces of the drives.

The ability to easily replace a HD is very valuable. This gives you a way to do risky experiments, such as using questionable or incompatible software, or perhaps editing the registry while minimizing the risk of having to do a total system reinstall.

The MaxBlast program, system requirements states: At least one Seagate Technology or Maxtor disc drive, as well as several other pretty easy-to-meet requirements. I did not try to see if it would work on other drive brands, and I don't know if it checks. It is a pretty nice feature though, particularly for laptops, where there is no space to add a HD, only to replace a HD.

I would personally not recommend this as a primary data backup, as it is a little tedious, and backups should be as easy as possible. So, HD replacement could be thought of as a way to upgrade the system, as well as a sort of super system-restore. If your laptop is seriously important, such as work related, for a business, get it set-up well, functioning smoothly, and then (after making a separate back-up of your data) create a clone of your hard drive, and swap it to make sure it is a good copy. Then, if the worst happens, your hard drive dies, just swap in the original. Maybe even take the spare with you on trips, along with a little screw driver…

Just don't loose it!

References:

http://www.harddriveupgrade.com/
http://www.fonerbooks.com/laptop_1.htm
http://www.seagate.com/support/maxblast/mb_ug.en.pdf

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The Harvest by Les Muldorf

Minutes of the Mid-Hudson Computer User Group Board of Directors

by Jim Walsh

The monthly MHCUG Board of Directors meeting held on the first Thursday of the month in Conference Room B of the Guardian Center at 3 Neptune Road, Poughkeepsie was called to order by Dick Kranz, President, at 7:08 p.m. Officers and Board members in attendance were: Peter Dowley, Dick Kranz, Les Muldorf, Jim Peabody, Hugh Ross, Dan Sullivan and Jim Walsh. Jack Marsella attended as a guest.

A motion from Hugh Ross to accept the Minutes of the September Board meeting as published in the microCHIP was seconded by Jim Peabody. The Board unanimously approved the Minutes as published.

Eli Cohen, Treasurer, was unable to attend the meeting, but mailed a preliminary Treasurer's Report to the Board to acknowledge one-time expenses for the Ulster SIG and the MHCUG picnic. Since these expenses were expected, Hugh Ross moved that the Board table the review of the Treasurer's Report until next month when the full report would be available. Dan Sullivan seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by the Board.

Dick Kranz, acting for VP/Programs, confirmed that Jamie Yates of the Danbury Area Computer Society would give a live Google presentation at the upcoming general meeting. Peter Dowley then confirmed that he was ready to present the November program.

Dick Kranz began his President's report by reiterating the need for a VP/Programs. He next noted the extensive coverage in the APCUG Quarterly Report of the symposium that the MHCUG had helped initiate in August. He stated that there is a great amount of interest being expressed for the follow-on event - the APCUG 2008 Leadership Conference to be held at the Palisades Mall on May 17, 2008. The theme of that conference will be: "Growing Your User Group in Today's Digital Age".

Hugh Ross, Membership, stated that the renewal notices for the current quarter had been set out and that there were currently 105 paid members. Hugh also stated that he would be surrendering his seat on the Board as of December to pursue other endeavors. The Board expressed its gratitude for his many efforts on behalf of the MHCUG throughout his long association with the organization.

Les Muldorf, Newsletter, reported that he was moving away from PageMaker to In-Design for preparing the newsletter. He also reported receiving favorable comments on the change to a single column format that produces a document that is more easily read online. Les pointed out that the article exchange through APCUG member user groups was providing the microCHIP with a wealth of articles on timely topics.

Dan Sullivan, delivering the SIG report, had no problems to report. He mentioned that members of the Digital SIG were exploring the development of a presentation on free or low-cost hardware and software resources.

Dick Kranz, reporting for Publicity, stated that Ed Morzen had completed the sending of the MHCUG publicity releases to the media on time.

Jim Peabody, Webmaster, had no problems to report.

Under unfinished business, Peter Dowley reported that his total expenditure for the MHCUG Picnic had been $219. After determining that the cost of the items that had been consumed and the items that had been opened and could not be salvaged was $100, Peter generously offered to retain the remaining picnic items and personally absorb the residual cost. The Board thanked Peter and accepted his offer.

Under new business, Dick Kranz outlined the necessity for allocating seed money for the APCUG 2008 Leadership Conference. This initial $150 expenditure by the user groups organizing the event would establish URL's, advertising, etc. for promoting and conducting the event. The money could be expected to be returned when it is reclaimed from registration fees. Hugh Ross moved that the MHCUG appropriate $150 to provide startup funds for the APCUG 2008 Leadership Conference. Les Muldorf seconded the motion and the Board unanimously agreed.

As a final item, Hugh Ross sought someone to take over the responsibility for regularly checking the MHCUG Post Office box. When Les Muldorf offered, Hugh stated that he would deliver the key to him.

At 8:54 a motion by Dan Sullivan to adjourn the meeting was seconded by Jim Peabody and unanimously approved by the Board.

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www.mhcug.org
Hosted by BSD WebSolutions as a public

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Poughkeepsie, NY 12603
Telephone: 845 485.4818
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Help Line

Having a problem? Volunteers have offered to field member's questions by phone. Please limit calls to the hours listed below. Days means 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Evenings means 6 to 9:30 p.m. Be considerate of the volunteer you're calling, remember this is a free service. If you'd like to have your name added to the list, call or e-mail the editor, or see us at the next meeting.

Need help on a subject and there's no name listed for it here? Try contacting one of the SIG leaders or post a message on our Website FORUM. Simply go to ***www.mhcug.org*** and click on the "Forum" menu item, then follow instructions. Answers will be returned to you by e-mail, as well as being accessible via the Website.

Program	Name	Phone #	E-mail	Time
Access (MS)	Eli Cohen	897-5921	mhcug@yahoo.com	(e)
APL (all flavors)	Ray Polivka	462-2698	polivka@acm.org	(d e)
CAD	Fred Krasselt	565-5622	krasselt@aol.com	(d e)
Database	Hugh Ross	462-3309	bytewise@optonline.net	(d e)
FlightSoft	Clark Zeaman	814-663-0538	zeamanc@juno.com	(d e)
Internet	Art Scott	849-1378	artscotti@gmail.com	(d)
Lotus 123 Macros	Ralph Pollard	462-3389	ralphpollard@verizon.net	(e)
Lotus for DOS	Bill Rogers	452-9104	—	(e)
MS Office	Bryan Rifenburgh	590-0092	MCPro20@yahoo.com	(d e)
Paradox 4.5	Jim Warner III	297-3175	jhwiii@optonline.net	(d e)
Partition Magic	Dan Sullivan	229-0241	dansull@optonline.net	(d e)
PC/AT Hardware	Phil Van Itallie	462-3924	pvanitallie@yahoo.com	(e)
Personal Finances	John Bickford	435-8615	johnbick@us.ibm.com	(d)
SAS	Ralph Pollard	462-3389	ralphpollard@verizon.net	(e)
Symphony 3.1	Jim Warner III	297-3175	jhwiii@optonline.net	(d e)

*Please help us to keep the **Help Line** current by advising us about changes.*
If you have particular knowledge or expertise about a program or product, please ask to be listed here.

All members of the MHCUG are encouraged to take photographs of any club activity for publication in the MicroChip. Now that we are in a digital format on the web, photographs can be displayed in glorious color or stunning black and white. In addition, we would also like you to exhibit your photographic skills and submit photos of the beautiful Hudson Valley. Here is an easy way to get your name in print. Please forward any pictures to lesm1@optonlilne.net Give me your name and the title or subject of your pictures so I don't have to make anything up.

Wanted New Members

Bounty Hunters Needed

Sponsor a new member

Get a 3-month membership extension

For each new member you bring in you receive a three month extension on your current membership.

Ask the new member to name you as sponsor on their application.

❑ New Appl. ❑ Renewal ❑ Addr. Change

The MHCUG is a nonprofit educational organization which promotes activities encouraging the use of computers by its members. The MHCUG encourages professionalism and the development of technical skills.

A **Member** may be anyone with an interest in computers who supports the purpose of the MHCUG.

A **Student Member** must be under 25 years of age and attending an educational institution full-time.

If new applicant or renewal, please check one:

❑ **Member:** dues: $35 per year

❑ **Student:** dues: $15 per year

Full-time ID (reqr'd) _____

I am enclosing a check for ❑ 1 ❑ 2 ❑ 3 yrs (Students renew yearly)

Check No._____

Mid-Hudson Computer User Group, Inc.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

City State Zip: _____

Telephone: ( ) _____

E-mail: _____

Would you like an e-mail reminder of upcoming meetings? ❑ Yes ❑ No

How did you hear about us? _____

If sponsored by a member, please provide name: _____

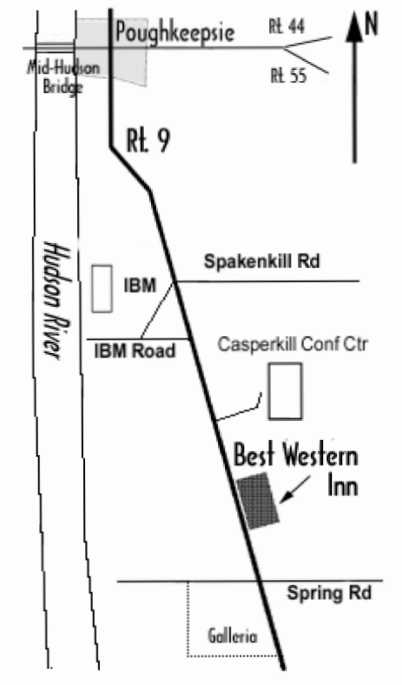
Dues Amount _____Additional Contribution Amount_____ Total _____

Make check (on US bank only) payable to:

Mid-Hudson Computer User Group

Send form and check to: Attn Treasurer
Mid-Hudson Computer User Group
PO Box 1962
Poughkeepsie NY 12601-0962

How to find us on the night of the meeting



☞ *Our Next Program* ☜

Where: **Best Western Inn & Conference Center**
Rt. 9, Poughkeepsie
When: November 8th, 2007
6:30 – 7:00 Q&A Session: Questions from the floor
7:00 – 7:30 Regular Business Meeting
7:30 – 9:00 Program
Program: Microsoft Office Publisher 2007.

November's meeting will feature a presentation about, and demonstration of, Microsoft Office Publisher 2007.
"Office Publisher 2007 is a desktop publishing and marketing materials program that helps you create publications for Print, E-Mail, and the Web. Peter Dowley will deliver the presentation.

Coming Events November 2007

First Thursday Nov. 1st, MHCUG Board meeting

7:00 p.m. at Guardian Storage Building

Second Thursday Nov. 8th, MHCUG General Meeting

6:30 p.m. at Best Western Inn and Conference Center

Third Thursday Nov. 15th, Ulster Computing Workshop

7:00 p.m. at Ulster Community College

Third Monday Nov. 19th, Technology Workshop

7:00 p.m. at Guardian Storage Building

Fourth Monday Nov. 26th Upgrade and Repair

7:00 p.m. at Guardian Storage Building

Digital Photography SIG -
will not meet in November of December because of the Holidays. Meetings will begin again on the fourth Thursday in January