July Main Meeting—Bruce Preston

by Ray Polivka

Everyone attending this open general meeting of the computer club on July 8 has had, or still has, records, 33 RPM or 45 RPM. Probably, if you still have them, you haven't played them for a very long time. This evening's talk by Bruce Preston and his colleague Mr. Lee was devoted to the topic of converting such records into digital form. The title of his talk was "Converting your LPs and/or tapes to CDs and/or MP3s".

The recording of the human voice and music has come a long way since Edison first recorded the human voice in the 1920s. From the latter part of the 20th century into the 21st century changes have occurred very rapidly.

Long Play "LP" records and cassettes have been replaced by digital technology.

Mr. Preston began by addressing whether making a digital copy of such material was legal. If you own a personal copy, then either "formatting" or "time shifting" for personal use falls under the "Fair Use" guidelines of copyrighted material. However, "Fair Use" does not permit you to make copies for distribution to others. He then proceeded to give a survey of the technologies that predated digital. For example, his slides illustrated the difference between the monophonic and stereophonic recording. After introducing terminology such as distortion and dynamic range, he illustrated how the analog wave forms are digitized. By sampling the signal levels over 44,000 times per second, a good digital representation of the analog records is gained.

The next question addressed was "What do you need in terms of software and hardware to achieve a digital recording?" Two items of software were explicitly mentioned. They were Audacity and Lame MP3 Encoder. They are both open source software from http://audacity.sourceforge.net/. Audacity is widely used and broadly supported today. The Lame MP3 Encoder has to be downloaded separately in order to avoid copyright restrictions. The Audacity site has special plug-ins for developers who have created special facilities. Also, in passing, he commented that Audacity has an excellent tutorial and a wiki. For burning CDs, either Nero or Roxio software products are satisfactory.

Bruce Preston

As for hardware, of course, you need a turntable or a tape recorder with an appropriate cable to connect it to your computer. Such cables are readily and economically available. He illustrated the possible cables that you might need. Since the signal from the needle of the turntable is very small, a preamp or receiver is necessary to forward the turntable's signal to the computer. He did note that the turntable's signal must not be amplified by a "power amplifier". Finally, of course, the personal computer needs a 16-bit sound card with a "mic" (microphone) or "line in"

Jack and a CD/DVD drive. There are several turntables on the market that have built in pre-amps and a USB connection.

Audacity saves its files in the computer in its own ".au" format by default. Alternatively, you can choose the format you wish to save the recording in. Note: In Audacity,if you wish to save the recording in MP3 format you have to export it, do not do a "save as". MP3 does not show up as an option under "Save As".

After this discussion, Mr. Preston moved to demonstration mode. He first discussed parts of the Audacity window. On a more powerful desktop, Audacity allowed you to hear the music as you digitalized it. He was not able to do that at the meeting with his laptop. His first demonstration illustrated what not to do. He started by selecting the recording level to be too loud which resulted in clipping (over modulating). After that he illustrated removing pops and thereby improving the audio quality. He then demonstrated how Audacity removes noise in the digital recording. If you can give it a sample of the noise, Audacity looks for that pattern in the digital recording. In his demonstration he illustrated the choices in saving or exporting the recording. During one of his digitalizing illustrations, the message "You've got mail" broke in, much to the amusement of the audience. That reminded him to remind us to turn off any applications that can produce an audio output. He pointed out that if you want to create a CD to play in your car, then it should be a ".wav" file.

He finished his presentation by moving the digital recording to an MP3 player. Thus ended an informative and entertaining evening.□

August Main Meeting – Rachel Perfecto

by Dan Sullivan

MHCUG was honored to have Rachel Perfecto, a senior at Ketcham High School, give us her award winning presentation called "Fractals and Fugues: Analyzing Music with Math" for our August General Meeting.

Rachel Perfecto was the overall winner at the Duchess County Science Fair in April, where she also received two awards from the Mid Hudson Computer Users Group. In May she competed in the Intel Science and Engineering Fair held in San Jose, California, and placed third in her category.

So what are fractals? Rachel explained them as "an object and or quantity that displays self-similarity on all scales".

Still scratching your head? That's fine, most of this material is quite advanced, but you can read this with an appreciation of the excellent accomplishments of a young local High School student.

Rachel further explained: "the object need not exhibit exactly the same structure on all scales, but the same "type" of structures must appear on all scales".

The term "fractal" shares roots with "fracture" and "fraction", and basically relates to breaking up an entity into smaller and smaller parts, where the parts share the same characteristics as the whole. Fractals can be used, for example, to measure a coastline. Most coastlines are jagged, so when you start taking measurements, you need a measuring device. If you use a long, straight measuring stick, you gain speed, but lose accuracy, because the long measuring stick will "smooth over" the small variations. Likewise, if you use smaller and smaller measuring sticks, you gain in accuracy, but slow down the process. In essence, you've "fractured" the coastline.

Fractals are everywhere: in abstract math, and in nature.

Continuing with the analogy of measuring a coastline, the accuracy of your measurement will depend upon the length of your measuring stick.

The following is mostly a direct lift from Rachel's presentation.

A plot on a log-log graph versus scale then gives a straight line, whose slope is said to be the Fractal Dimension.

N = r (raised to the D power), where N is the total count and r is the scaling number.   D represents the scaling number of dimensions (also called complexity).   Solving for D we get that
$$D = (\log N)/(\log r) .$$
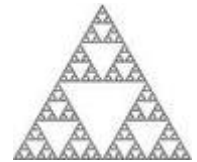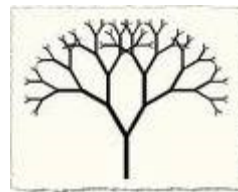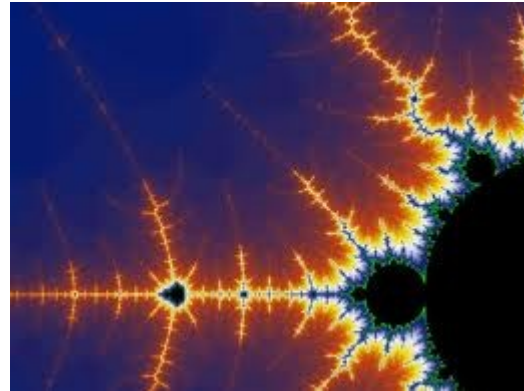
Perhaps the most typical display of a fractal is that of the Mandelbrot Set.

The term "fractal" was coined by Benoît Mandelbrot in 1975. No matter what scale you choose to look at the image it will appear to be identical.

Another image is that of the Sierpinski Gasket, with ever smaller triangles as you go in for a closer look. For those who have looked for fractals in nature: a tree may also appear to be like a fractal; a fern leaf may also appear to be made of fractals.

Finding fractals in music; interval structural or scaling will be required. Because music is not composed of random notes, the pitches in a composition cannot be considered a fractal. Rather, melodies are the ordered arrangement of single sounds of different frequencies in succession.

Can the succession of notes be a fractal?   Yes, by assigning each note a numeric value such as middle C = 0, C# = 1, etc.

In addition, assign the numeric value of an in-

terval between two successive notes. You can define a half step = 1, and a whole step = 2, etc. As an example, she presented a chart for which she had calculated the values for Bach's *Invention No. 1*. The chart contained the following columns: Log interval, frequency, percent frequency, and log percent F. Graphing in log mode the data showed a close linear pattern suggesting that composition has a strong fractal melodic line. Performing the same calculation for *My Compliments to Roger* did not show a strong linear correlation, suggesting that this composition did not have a melodic structure that was a fractal.

Rachel went on to develop the presentation with many charts and graphs expanding on and developing the analysis of fractals and fugues in Music. These gave us a better appreciation of the power behind analyzing music with fractals.

Possible Applications: reducing a piece of music that has a fractal melodic line implies that the melody can be "thinned." Rachel went on to show acoustical graphs with pitch values for Mozart's *Sonata in C Maj., Köchel 545,* movement 1. The first with no scaling, next reduced by ½, and then with the factor equal to ¼; the general outline of the right-hand was still detectable but the left-hand was losing its visual similarity. With the scaling factor set to 1/8, recognition was disappearing. With the factor equal to 1/32, any similarity had been lost.

It would appear that arrangers can use reductions to create "easy versions" of a piece for amateur players. Composers could also take a reduction and then build upon it in their own style to create a piece similar to the original.

Rachel Perfecto

Rachel is extremely well qualified to discuss fractals as they relate to music, as she is a New York State School Music Association all-state oboist and a member of various local musical ensembles including the State University of New York at New Paltz College Youth Symphony.

This summer, she was a part of the Boston University Tanglewood institute wind ensemble in the Berkshires.

Rachel is also a past president of her high school's Rotary Interact club and participated in a panel discussion as part of Rotary Day at the United Nations in New York City in 2008. She is a member of her high school's math team and a member of the Girl Scouts.

Rachel has been participating in science fairs nearly every year since 2002. The past two years she placed in the senior division of the Duchess County Science Fair, winning several special awards.

In the future she plans to continue to pursue her interests in both math and music with a double major in college. Rachel lives in the town of Poughkeepsie with her parents, Eric and Linda Perfecto, and her older sister Hanna, who is a junior at Yale University.

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. E-mail: editor (at) mhcug.org

Upgrade and Repair—July 2010

by Ray Polivka

On July 15th the Upgrade and Repair Special Interest group met at their regular meeting place. There were 18 persons and 2+ computers in attendance. One of the computers had a peculiar behavior. It repeatedly booted. The PC could boot from a CD, so it was determined that the hard drive was malfunctioning. While that problem was being diagnosed, we also did the usual procedure of asking each attendee what problem they had. The first person said he had a recurring startup problem, having to constantly reboot; the boot order kept changing from startup to startup. The bios would not remember the proper boot order from startup to startup. Again there was a lively discussion. One suggestion that had not been raised before was to plug the computer directly into a wall socket. The rationale behind that was that there were too many items attached to the power strip, and that may cause the voltage level to not be strong enough for the PC. A further suggestion was to consider a power strip. The discussion went on to discuss surge protectors and UPS devices. Further information about power strips will be put on the website later. One person brought in some recent computer magazines to give away. They were circulated. This person also mentioned several interesting articles. He mentioned that there was a problem with Firefox version 3.6.2. The problem was repaired in version 3.6.3. He urged Firefox users to check their version of Firefox.

With the second PC we were able to see the contents of the hard drive through the use of Ubuntu, booted from a CD. Now the question was, could an image of the malfunctioning hard drive be made? Of course, it depended on how long the hard drive could stay up. Regardless, at the current price of hard drives, it was recommended that a new USB attached hard drive be purchased.

In the ongoing discussion, similarities between Ubuntu and Windows were mentioned. The question of Ubuntu documentation was raised. It is always necessary, since there are many things that you do only occasionally. Later when you need to repeat the actions you are not likely to remember how you did them. With respect to Ubuntu (Linux), there seems to be a great deal of information online at Ubuntu.org. It was noted that when you are connected to the Internet, Ubuntu will automatically configure your system. Ubuntu apparently has an extremely large number of drivers. With Ubuntu online at the meeting, several of its features were illustrated. There were favorable comments on Ubuntu all around.

There was considerable discussion concerning copying data off of a misbehaving hard drive via XP, Vista, and Acronis. Also it was reported that Microsoft plans to continue to support XP until 2020. Service pack 4 is under discussion. Apparently support for service pack 2 has just been discontinued.

The final extended discussion of the evening again concerned surge protectors. A surge protector by Belkin was recommended since it provided 3940 Joules of protection. Note that the higher the Joules rating, the better the protection. Once again a lively informative evening ended at about 9 PM. □

September MHCUG Meetings

Thursday, September 2, MHCUG Board meeting 5:30 PM   Guardian Storage Building

Thursday, September 2, Technology Workshop 7:00 PM Guardian Storage -

Thursday, September 9 MHCUG General Meeting 6:30 PM Hudson Room, Mercury Grand Hotel See page 6 for details

Thursday, September 16 , Upgrade and Repair 7:00 p.m.   Guardian Storage Building

Tuesday, September 21 Ulster Computing Workshop 7:00 PM Esopus Library - Canal Street, Port Ewen NY

Thursday, September 23, Digital Media 7:00 p.m. Guardian Storage Building

All meetings at Guardian Storage are in room A23B □

Upcoming September Main Meeting

Master Photographer Frank Dispensa

On Thursday, September 9th, the MHCUG will host master Photographer Frank Dispensa on the topic "Understanding the science of photography and how it can improve the pictures you take." The goal of the talk will be to inspire your photographic creativity to help you take spectacular photos, regardless of whether you are using a point and shoot digital camera or a digital SLR camera. Introductory topics to be covered will include understanding how to select the correct apertures, shutter speeds, ISO speeds, and they relate to each other. Also to be discussed will be adding and subtracting F-stops, the how's and why's. Additional topics will include learning to read exposure histograms, comparing JPEG format to RAW format and perhaps even some more advanced concepts related to color and white-balancing. Mr. Dispensa has had many years of experience in both film and digital photography, including judging photographic competitions. His outgoing nature and willingness to answer audience questions make him a favorite speaker on all levels of the photographic art and science. **See map on next page**.

Mid-Hudson Computer User Group is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit educational organization and welcomes the public to attend this meeting. There is no admission charge. Further information concerning this event, or membership details may be obtained by contacting Dick Kranz at 845 896-7376 or go to www.mhcug.org.☐

Meeting location and map on next page. The main meeting starts at 7:00 PM, with a question and answer session at 6:30 PM. ☐

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

Special Interest Groups are for people with common computer interests—novice through expert. Call the group leader to verify schedule.

Technology Workshop

Leader: Dick Kranz

Tel: (845)297-1813, (845) 896-7376 or

(845) 265-4169 or e-mail:

dickkranz (at) optonline.net

Schedule: 1st Thursday , 7:00 PM

Location: Guardian Storage (Neptune Road)

Room A23B

Ulster Computing Workshop

Leader: Robert Morales

Schedule: 3rd Tuesday 7:00 PM

Location: Esopus Library - Canal Street, Port Ewen NY

Upgrade/Repair

Leader: Jeff Dowley (845) 453-2754

e-mail: j.dowley (at) hotmail.com

Schedule: 3rd Thursday 7:00 PM

Location: Guardian Storage (Neptune Road)

Room A23B

Digital Photography

Schedule: 4th Thurs. 7:00 PM

Location: Guardian Storage (Neptune Road)

Room A23B

Interested in starting a Special

Interest Group?

Contact Jack Marsella

MHCUG MAIN MEETING LOCATION
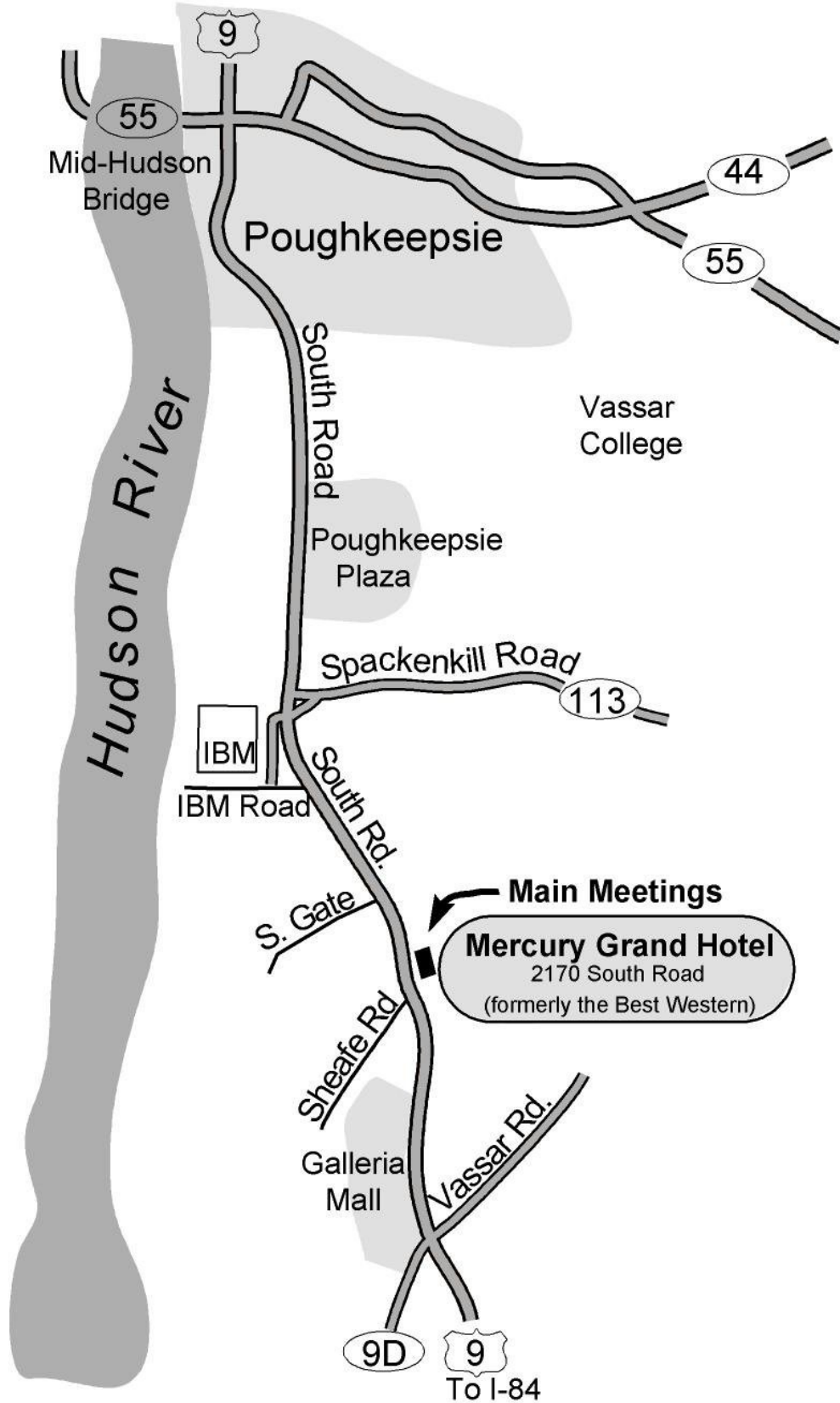
9

55
Mid-Hudson
Bridge

44

Poughkeepsie

55

Hudson River

South Road

Vassar
College

Poughkeepsie
Plaza

Spackenkill Road

113

IBM

IBM Road

South Rd.

S. Gate

Main Meetings

Mercury Grand Hotel
2170 South Road
(formerly the Best Western)

Sheafe Rd

Vassar Rd.

Galleria
Mall

9D   9
To I-84

July MHCUG Board of Directors Minutes

The July 1st, 2010 meeting of the MHCUG Board of Directors was called to order at 6:05 pm by Jeff Dowley, the MHCUG president. The meeting is held regularly in conference room A23B of the Guardian Storage building on Neptune Road. In attendance were Jeff Dowley, Dick Kranz, Bob Morales, Ron McDermott, Rolf Nijhuis, Dan Sullivan, Bob Gieseler, Ray Polivka, Harry Elder, and Jerry Clark.

A motion to approve the corrected previous minutes was made by Rolf Nijhuis and seconded by Dan Sullivan. It passed unanimously. The treasurer's report was presented by Jeff Dowley since Eli Cohen was absent. A motion concerning a graphical presentation of the club's net worth was made by Rolf Nijhuis and seconded by Dan Sullivan. The motion reads as follows;

      "Request that a line graph of the previous twelve months of the club's net worth be provided by either Eli or an appointee of the board".

Dick reported that Rachael Perfecto will make a presentation concerning her Science Fair project at the general July meeting. It may only be a half hour presentation. Several felt that audience questions would fill in the time.

Jeff Dowley is to investigate and assure that sound equipment will be in place for the July general meeting. Lloyd Quick will moderate the Q&A session. Dan Sullivan and Bob Morales will act as substitutes of necessary. A 50/50 auction will be held.

Rolf Nijhuis proposed a four part question to be asked when they sign in. The question was: "For your principle computer: State the type, age, hard disk size, and Operating system used".

      Dan Sullivan reviewed the membership status. Currently there are eight renewals making for a total membership of seventy-two. There are eight memberships due to expire in the third quarter.

Jeff Dowley reported that attendance at the special interest groups is holding steady. The Special Interest Group meeting attendance were Technology -17, Upgrade and Repair -13, and Media-10.

A concern was raised about an overlapping problem in advertizing since both Edward Morzen and Bob Gieseler were involved. Jeff Dowley said that he would contact Edward to discuss details in avoiding duplication with Bob Gieseler.

Harry Elder reported that the MicroChip went out for review during the last week of July.

Jerry Clark reported that the web site is always looking for content. This lead to a discussion about including a section in the Microchip for selling items. It was agreed by all that a "For Sale" section could appear in both the web site and the microChip newsletter. Details were not too clear about the process. Harry Elder offered to coordinate the posting on the microChip.

Finally, the proposal to have Gene Barlow do a Webinar program for the September general meeting was raised. A further discussion was needed at the next meeting.

A motion to adjourn was made at about seven PM by Dick Kranz and seconded by Ron McDermott.

June Upgrade and Repair

by Ray Polivka

Once again the Upgrade and Repair Special Interest group met on the third Thursday of the month, June 19th. There were about 15 persons in attendance, some with questions or problems, others offering support, solutions, or sharing information. Yes, I'm sure there were some who were saying "Boy I'm glad I don't have that problem."

Our first mystery of the evening concerned a system running under XP with AVG in place. It took a very long time to come up. It may be that a scan ran at start up time. It was also possible that there were a fair number of unnecessary programs running at start up. In this case, to determine what programs were running at start up, go to the Start button and enter "msconfig" in the search area. In XP, Start > Run, enter "msconfig". You will get a system configuration window. Depress the tab labeled "StartUp".

Also, it was suggested that SuperAntiSpyware

was a very good antispyware program that was superior to AVG. Now another person running SuperAntiSpyware reported getting a lot of cookies. Coincident to this he had trouble booting up his system. In fact, it would not startup. It just hung up with a blank screen. He had to go into Safe mode and do a System Restore. After restarting his system, he found he had over 623 cookies. Macro Media and Firefox seemed to be infected. In exploring how he had so many cookies, it was mentioned that FaceBook, Twitter, and other social networking places were sources of a large number of cookies. Deleting the cookies should not cause any problem. No one could offer any reason for such a large number of cookies.

Someone asked for the name of a device shown at a previous meeting that allows external hard drives to be attached to a computer. The name of that device was called a "USB IDE SATA docking station". Newegg and local computer shows were sources. Additionally it was suggested the one find a source that sold the hardware without charging for shipping. In purchasing a docking station make certain that it has a power supply.

An interesting Microsoft update situation occurred to one person. After Microsoft Update started, it ran for a bit, then stopped and returned to the window asking to run the update. Uninstalling, then reinstalling the program was suggested as a possible solution.

A discussion ensued on finding good prices online at sites such as www.fatwallet.com.   They seem to have a new wrinkle— you order an item through them and then pick it up at Office Depot. In the case reported, the person said, with the coupon issued by FatWallet, he got Acronis True Image almost free. It was an online transaction with a local pickup. This is certainly one way to avoid shipping charges.

When a request for a recommendation for an unzipping program was presented, 7zip was mentioned. The questioner was uncertain as to how to unzip a file or program. One way would be to right click on the zipped file. The resulting menu should contain an entry entitled "unpack" or "unzip" or something similar. 7Zip is an open source program found at www.7-zip.org. Note: if you have several unzip programs, some may

conflict with others.

 The issue of administrative privilege was discussed. Even if you are the sole person on your computer, you may not have administrative privilege. At least this is the case for Vista and Windows 7. You must explicitly establish that privilege. (The following material was exercised using Vista.) From the Start button, go to the Control Panel. There are two forms in which the Control Panel is displayed. Depending on your choice, the path to making the change is slightly different. The path described here is having set the Control Panel to "Control Panel Home" mode. With the panel in Home mode, click on User Accounts. This will take you to another User Account window. Clicking on it will take you to a window entitled   "Make changes to your user account."

At this point on the right side of the window is a picture icon that represents you on the first opening screen. Along with this icon is your name as the system understands you, your account type, and whether you are password protected. The fifth statement down in this window is entitled "Change your account type". Clicking on it takes you to the window entitled "Select your new account type." There are only two choices: Standard User or Administrator.

On the other hand, if you choose to view the Control Panel in Classic View mode, clicking on the User Accounts takes you right to the window "Make changes to your user account".

Note: Before you change anyone from an Administrator to Standard User you MUST insure that there is another user on the system assigned as an Administrator. If you do not have an account assigned as an administrator you have locked yourself out of your computer!

Now suppose there is another user on the system, how might you change the user type for that user account? Follow the path to the "Make changes to your user account" Window and click on "Manage another account." Of course, this can only be done if you are an Administrator.

Suppose you are the sole user on the system without being an Administrator. How can you get administrative privileges? You will need a

password. From XP through Win 7 there is always a hidden account labeled "Administrator". To get to it you still have to be an Administrator. Sounds like a "catch 22" situation. Actually when one installs XP, Vista, and Windows 7; you are asked to set up a password. (aHa). If you get a system prebuilt, the Administrator has probably been set up with "no password" as the password. In this case you will be prompted for what the Administrator account will be and its password. Entering as that account you will be able to take the following actions.

Starting from the Control Panel in Classic view mode, click on Administration Tools to get to a menu containing Computer Management. Clicking on it will yield another menu containing various statements. On the side bar on the right is the phrase "Local users and groups". Clicking on it will bring up a menu containing two entries; Users and Groups. Click on Users. The resulting window will contain an account called Administrator whose description is a "built in account for administrating the computer". Here you have several choices related to the Administrator. At this point, perhaps it would be best if the reader went further through the use of the helps that are available.

How would you introduce a new user into the computer system? Starting from the Control Panel displayed in the Classic mode, click on Administrative Tools.   From the resulting window, click on Computer Management. In this window, click on Local Users and Groups. In the resulting window, RIGHT click on User. Chose New User from the resulting menu. From there you can establish a User name, a sign on password, and other details.

To delete a user, again from the Computer Management window click on Local users and Groups to get the list of names on the system. Right clicking on a particular name will produce a menu containing the Delete option.

Finally, there is another approach using the search area in the Start menu. Type in the search area "control userpasswords2". This produces a User Accounts menu. As you select a name you have the option of changing the password associated with that name. If you are changing your own password, you need to press

Ctrl-Alt-Delete and select "Change word". Otherwise, click "Reset Password" to change the password of another user. Also note: near the top of the menu there is a check box labeled "User must enter a user name and password".
If this box is unchecked, the operating system will bypass the logon and take you right to the desktop. This is a less secure path. As you see, a great deal of time was devoted to this topic. □

July Technology Workshop

by Harry Elder

Hi everyone, we had another great meeting. This is the place to come and discuss all things technology, computer related. Bring us your questions, or your news. You'll be certain to leave with something new and useful.

Dick Kranz started off by entertaining us with his "fireball" that he got at Cracker Barrel.   It's a clear, rubber ball that produces a small light show when thrown or bounced.   This would make a great gift for someone.

Rolf Nijuis is using Skype, and wanted to know how to remove the small Skype icons that it puts next to phone numbers on web pages.   I've seen this and agree that this can be visually annoying. No one knew how to solve it; Google was suggested, as usual.

Gordon Sager told us about a new hard drive format in the works, featuring 128 partitions, among other things. These drives will have huge capacities compared to those of today. The master boot record format will be different on these drives, I'm told.

Jack Marcella bought our attention to "Magic Jelly Bean Key Finder". It's a handy freeware app that will find your Microsoft product keys, even on unbootable machines.   There is a new release, 2.01, that will find your Office keys.
www.magicaljellybean.com/keyfinder

Bob Morales said that his son's computer had a problem with IE – a missing DLL. The consensus was to re-install IE, which you can download from Microsoft. Bob said that he couldn't uninstall IE, which is correct. IE is imbedded in the OS, but a

re-install should, in theory, fix any missing file or DLL issues.

Alex Kurylo had questions on Acronis data recovery. Alex needed to recover a system that was backed up on multiple DVDs. This should be possible, we're curious to find out how the recovery will go. Alex also had a boot-up problem recently, where someone had recommended that he download Ultimate Boot CD. Alex said that it worked very well, and fixed his bootup issue.

Jeff Dowley briefly mentioned ERUNT, a registry backup tool. Perhaps someone will try it out and report back on it. Find it at CNET: download.cnet.com/Emergency-Recovery-Utility-NT/3000-2094_4-10069122.html.

Ray Polivka had an unexplained "no operating system" message when booting up his Vista desktop. This was a continuation of a problem that Ray told us about at an earlier meeting. Many suggestions were offered and tried. The ultimate solution was for Ray to unplug his external USB hard drives. I've seen where USB attached devices can prevent both startups and shutdowns.

I mentioned that a favorite "deal-of-the-day" website, namely "Woot", was just acquired by Amazon. Woot has a rather cult-like following; their daily write-ups are very entertaining and often quite humorous. Interestingly, on day one of Woot owned by Amazon, they were selling Kindle 2 units. It remains to be seen how independent Woot will stay. www.woot.com

I also discovered, although not new news to many of our club members, that if you have a dual boot system, where XP is on one hard drive or partition, and Vista or Windows 7 is on the other; if you boot into the XP system, you lose all of your later OS's restore points. Beware.

Charlie Patterson brought our attention to a free software checking tool called "Personal Software Inspector" from Secunia. According to the Secunia website, "Secunia PSI is a free security tool designed to detect vulnerable and out-dated programs and plug-ins which expose your PC to attacks". secunia.com/ .

Charlie also told us about Process Explorer, free from Microsoft. Process Explorer will tell you

"which program has a particular file or directory open", among other useful things. Still better, checkout or download the entire suite that Process Explorer is a part of – "SysInternals". There are enough system discovery tools there that would keep geeks like us smiling for days. Thanks Charlie! http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/bb896653.aspx

Want to try another PDF reader other than Adobe? Jack Marcella recommends using Nitro PDF reader or Foxit for viewing PDFs. Rich Nayman says that the Open Office "Draw" program will let you edit PDFs. On that note, Bob Morales said that he had difficulties uninstalling Adobe reader. I've seen that too; apparently Adobe can't be running when it's being removed, so if it starts automatically on startup; you may have to use the task manager to close it or stop its processes.

Jerry Clark told us that many more HP laptops were recently recalled for possible battery safety issues than were previously recalled. Check the HP website to see if your laptop is affected. http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/newsroom/recalls/index.html

Dick Kranz is looking for a way to select and print text from a website. When he prints from a webpage the right portion of the page is lopped off. Jack Marcella recommended SnagIt, which does exactly what its name suggests. Capturing text from a webpage is a great way to save on ink – you only print what you want. Read a complete description, and download it yourself, from CNET. download.cnet.com/Snagit/3000-2192_4-10004813.html

 Please join us at our next Technology Workshop. We meet at 7:00 PM on the first Thursday of each month, in room A23B of the Guardian Storage Building, Neptune Road in the Town of Poughkeepsie (behind Red Lobster).□

August Upgrade and Repair

by Ray Polivka

Again on August 19, the Upgrade and Repair Special Interest group met at their usual room in the Guardian storage building. This time we could have used a room stretcher. A capacity crowd of 24 people attended.

One person brought in two pieces of old hardware. One was an external 3.5 diskette reader and the other was an external hard drive. Unfortunately, the 3.5 diskette reader had a plug that would not connect to any existing plugs in today's computers. It apparently it was a proprietary plug. The external hard drive was equally perplexing. It sat in a separately purchased external box. When the hard drive was connected to a computer, it was not recognized. Several possibilities were mentioned. The problem could have been with the USB cable or connections in the hard drive in the enclosing box, or the hard drive itself. The owner of the hard drives was urged to pursue each of these possibilities.

A security warning was discussed. Apparently, Trend Micro and its security package monitors what systems are encroaching on a wireless system. The list that it gives includes the owner's system and/or a printer wirelessly attached in the local "192.168.1.xx" range, which are the wireless IP addresses that routers assign. However, there also appears on several occasions web addresses with very strange arrangements of numbers. These strange numbers were diagnosed as being IP V6 addresses from perhaps a Bluetooth device. One person suggested going to www.GRC.com. There he should look for ShieldsUp. This program will check your internal vulnerability running on your system's ports. It is possible to set your router to only permitted MAC addresses. These settings are made in the router. To find your wireless PC's MAC address, right click a Command Prompt icon, select "run as administrator", and then enter ipconfig/all in the Command Prompt window. In the data that follows is an item called "physical address", which is your PC's MAC address.

One person told of a strange situation at work. He found the hard drive kept on spinning. He assumed that it was a bad hard drive being unable to read, hence the continuous spinning. His IT person re-seated the drive and now it works fine. He was as to curious why this happened. Most likely it was the power connector that was loose. It is independent of the data path. Is there any software that could shut a system down automatically on a power failure? UPS systems provide software to safely shut down your PC in the event of a power failure . Many applications such as Microsoft Word do automatic backups.

The question— "What is a wireless repeater?" arose. It is for a wired network that is not wireless. It is a wireless only device. It also can act as a repeater to create a stronger signal at a further distance from the other router. A router can be attached to a repeater, and it will create a wireless network for the system.

A lengthy discussion followed concerning backing up in general and specifically with Acronis. It was noted that Acronis 11 has just been announced. One person reported that his grandson had a hard drive failure. After replacing the hard drive with a new hard drive he reinstalled the operating system. Thereafter he lost sound. The root of the problem was that he had lost the sound card driver. If he is on a Dell computer, he should type in the computer's service code, and go to Dell.com, then from there go to drivers to look for the proper driver.

Another lengthy discussion addressed the extreme slow performance of a computer. One suggestion that we can all do is to go to the Task Manager, clicking on the performance tab to get a graphic view of system performance and clicking on the processes tab to see running processes. While one can go to the task manager through the Control+Alt+Delete path, you can go directly to the Task manager by Control+Shift+Esc key combination. Also, one can go to the Control Panel and click on the System icon. In the left sidebar of that window, click on Advanced System Settings. This finally takes you to the Virtual Memory sub window where you can click on the Change button. Now you can view and change your paging file size. In setting the paging file size, a rule of thumb is to set the maximum paging size to no more than 1.5 of the size of your RAM and no less than half of your

RAM size. Another action one could take would be to determine what might be slowing your system down by investigating what programs are started at start up time. To investigate this, from the Start menu go to Accessories in the all programs listing. In its menu click on Run, then in the Run window type in "msconfig". This will produce a window entitled System Configuration. Along the top are five tabs. Select the tab labeled "Startup". You will now see a window with columns labeled:

Startup item -- Manufacturers -- Command --Location – Date Disabled. By unchecking an item, it will not run at Startup time. Before disabling any strange startup items, many urged that one Google the name and manufacturer for more details. Note if the name is not completely visible, carefully click and drag small bar between the titles, until the whole name is visible. Do not make any change until you know more details about the startup item.

One person mentioned a free application, Drive Monitor, which offers useful information about hard drives. Another person reported getting "access denied" messages when copying files from Windows explorer. He overcame the problem by downloading the current version of Ubuntu, and copying the Windows files under Ubuntu. In an ongoing discussion, booting Ubuntu from a flash drive was mentioned. It was noted that booting Ubuntu from a flash drive is much faster than from a CD. Note that different flash drives perform at different rates of speed, and slower thumb drives may prevent you from booting up with them. Another tool that will let you bypass files that Explorer stops you from copying is "TeraCopy", a free download. TeraCopy will inform you of the performance while copying, and its results afterwards.

The issue of slipstreaming was mentioned. Slipstreaming is the process of bringing into Windows media all of the updates at the time you are building media. This means you do not have to install Microsoft patches individually on the PC. You have them all on a bootable CD. One person brought in a 2008 Vista laptop that had been under water for a month or so. It was not his machine. He related his adventure. One suggestion was to try a hair dryer to dry it out. Also someone said not to use acetone but rather im-

merse it in distilled water. It really looked like a hopeless task.

Another person had a new HP Pavilion laptop running under Windows 7 premium that he connected to a TV. All that worked fine. When he unplugged it, the screen on his laptop went blank. He was unable to get it to work immediately again. He had to play with a function key to retrieve it. The suggestion made was to look for an updated driver. Another person had commented that he had trouble running a DOS program under Windows 7. Much discussion followed. Virtual Box, a free virtualization application, was mentioned as the place to run older programs running under older operating systems. Finally one person found that he was getting a redirection message. One suggestion was to run Trend Micro's "HijackThis".

So the evening ended. With the large number of attendees, this meeting ran over time. Do note - there is always room for more folk, come.

The July 8, 2010 Survey Says…

Members were asked a 3 part question:

1. Is your "main" computer a desktop, laptop or netbook model?
2. What is its hard drive size?
3. What operating system(s) does it use?

	Desktops	Laptops	Netbooks
Count	21	7	0

Conclusions

1. No one uses a netbook as their "main" computer!
2. As a "main" computer, desktops models are 3x more popular

Membership Hard Drive Size (GBytes)

	Desktop	Laptop	Netbook
Min (GB)	80	100	0
Median (GB)	500	250	0
Ave (GB)	937	310	0
Max (GB)	4000	500	0

Conclusion:

1. Desktop computer hard drive size had a far larger ratio (Max/Min=50X) vs the laptops (5X).   On the Desktops with huge hard drives, the computers were all 64bit (Window 7 or Vista) with its large address space.
2. Median drive size for Desktops is 500GB vs 250GB for the Laptops

Operating System Counts

	XP	Win 7	Vista	Ubuntu	Linux
Count	13	11	5	2	2

Conclusions

1. 5 different Operating Systems were on members computers…
2. 3 were by Microsoft and 2 were open-sourced.
3. XP users (13) were the most numerous. Then there is the expected sharp drop-off in number of Vista users (5). Interestingly, with the Windows 7 OS being relatively new, there are surprisingly large number users (11), second to the number of XP users. If this is any indication of Microsoft's OS sales, then business of Windows 7 must be good. As a side light, of the 28 people who signed in, 5 had 2 Operating Systems on their machine. Typically this was a type of Windows combined with Linux/Ubuntu.

The MHCUG is a non-profit 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.

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