



The Cursor



Monthly Newsletter of the
Washington Area Computer Users Group

Meeting Location:
Fairfax County
Government Center



Next Meeting:
January 22, 2005



Presidential Bits

By Paul Howard
January Meeting

Annual meeting of the Washington Area Computer User Group occurs at the January meeting. Your attendance is appreciated!.

This month's meeting will be on the 4th Saturday, January 22nd, and will be held in Room 7 of the Fairfax County Government Center's conference facility. The session will include a brief WACUG Annual Meeting and election of the 2005 Board of Directors.

Join us for a demonstration of Mozilla, Firefox and Thunderbird software, find out about the similarities and differences between Mozilla, Firefox and Thunderbird, and learn how to setup Internet newsfeeds, customizable themes and additional features through optional extensions. Our presenters will include Geof Goodrum and Scott Hanak.

Mozilla is a free network application suite integrating a web browser, e-mail/news client, Internet Relay Chat (IRC) client and web page editor. The Mozilla Organization separately developed the Firefox web

browser and Thunderbird e-mail/news client as standalone applications. These programs have received high marks for better security, features, performance and standards compliance than Microsoft's Internet Explorer and Outlook Express software.

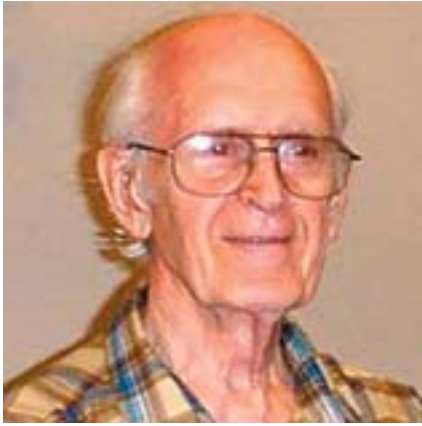
If time permits, there will also be a video presentation and report about the January 2005 Consumer Electronics Show.

Don't forget – annual WACUG membership dues are now payable. See our membership page for details - <http://www.wacug.org/membership.html>. Donations beyond the \$25 annual fee are welcome and tax deductible. Your continued support of WACUG is greatly appreciated.



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Lu Spriggs Web Sites for January 2005

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Here is the URL for the Washington Area Computer Users Group. <http://wacug.org/> Visit it for past versions of Spriggs Web Sites w/hyperlinks.

1. <http://scholar.google.com/>  
– Find works of academic research with this search tool. Even find works in hard copy not on the internet.

2. <http://wdc.speakeasy.net/>  
– Check out the download and upload speeds for your network connection. Also, what you can do if your connection is slow.

3. <http://www.help.com/> – Check out the free online courses from C\_NET. Win the fight against spam and spyware!

4. <http://www.zdnet.com/> – Sign up for a free technical news letter from zdnet. Learn about all the news when IT happens!

5. <http://postalmuseum.si.edu/>  
– Visit the Smithsonian National Postal Museum which illustrates the history of postal events starting with Queen Elizabeth and going to the present.

6. <http://www.irfanview.com/>  
– Free download of the popular Viewer for graphics files. Version 3.95 available. Supports many file types.

7. <http://www.safer-networking.org/> – To remove Spyware from your system, download Spybot

Search & Destroy. Free, but donations are solicited. Ver. 3.1 is 4.3 MByte dl.

8. <http://edheads.org/> – Visit this site for educational information about surgery. Your choice of a surgery simulation or actual photos taken during a knee surgery. Free educational activities for the classroom.

9. <http://www.crbestbuydrugs.org/> – This site, by Consumers union lets you search for the lowest price for drugs which treat Osteoarthritis and pain.

10. <http://www.blingo.com/> – Try out this new search engine, now in beta test, and win prizes!

11. <http://www.flickr.com/> – This site will let you save and display your digital photos to your friends. Free at present.

12. <http://www.a9.com/> – This is a powerful search engine, whose search results are enhanced by Google. This is an Amazon.com subsidiary.

### WACUG

Nominations and the election of four WAC members to the board of directors will take place at our meeting January 22, 2005. Members in good standing with paid dues are able to participate in the nomination and election process.

Your participation and support is appreciated.

### NCTCUG

Visit our “sister” user group. The National Capital Technology and Computer User’s Group meets the first and fourth Wednesday of the month. They meet in Carlin Hall in Arlington at 5711 South 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Visit their web site for more information, a map and directions:

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



## GNU/Linux SIG

By Geof Goodrum

### 'Tis the Season for Distro Updates

Many GNU/Linux distributions have been released since September. The following summarizes some of these distributions and key features at the time of release. Visit <http://www.distrowatch.com/> for more information on GNU/Linux distributions.

Mandrakelinux 10.1, released September 16, 2004. RPM-based distribution. RPM package management, kernel 2.6.8, glibc 2.3.3, xorg 6.7.0, KDE 3.2.3, Gnome 2.6.1.2, OpenOffice.org 1.1.3 (cvs).

Ubuntu 4.10, released October 20, 2004. Debian package management, kernel 2.6.8, glibc 2.3.2, Xfree86 4.3.0, Gnome 2.8.0, OpenOffice.org 1.1.2.

SUSE Linux 9.2 LiveCD, released October 25, 2004. RPM-based distribution. RPM package management, kernel 2.6.8, glibc 2.3.3, xorg 6.8.1, KDE 3.3.0, Gnome 2.6.1, OpenOffice.org 1.1.3.

Fedora Core 3, released November 8, 2004. RPM-based distribution. RPM package management, kernel 2.6.9, glibc 2.3.3, xorg 6.8.1, KDE 3.3.0, Gnome 2.8.0, OpenOffice.

org 1.1.2.

Gentoo 2004.3 LiveCD, released November 15, 2004. Source code based distribution. Portage package management, kernel 2.6.9, glibc 2.3.4, xorg 6.8.0, KDE 3.3.1, Gnome 2.8.0, OpenOffice.org 1.1.3.

Knoppix 3.7 LiveCD, released December 9, 2004. Debian-based bootable CD with over 2GB of software. Debian package management, kernels 2.4.27 and 2.6.9, glibc 2.3.2, KDE 3.3.1, OpenOffice.org 1.1.3.

### Firefox Erodes IE Market Share

Since the U.S. Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) recommended the use of alternative web browsers (*The Cursor*, July 2004), the Mozilla Organization's Firefox web browser has seen significant growth in downloads and usage. The release of Firefox 1.0 has had a noticeable effect on the dominance of Microsoft's Internet Explorer web browser. Firefox claims over 14 million downloads of version 1.0 since November 9. Web statistics company WebSideStory (<http://www.websidestory.com/>) announced on December 13 that Firefox's percentage of the U.S. Web browser market grew from 2.66% to 4.06% between October 8 and December 3, 2004 at the same time Internet Explorer's share dropped from 93.21% to 91.80%. Incidentally, Netscape and Mozilla browsers also dropped from 3.05% to 2.83% during the same period.

Growth in Firefox downloads was fueled by a two page ad in New York Times December 16. The ad was paid for by thousands of contributors, whose names were incorporated in the design. The ad had been delayed due to some technical

problems in layout, but an Adobe Illustrator engineer helped get the job done. More information and a PDF version of the ad can be found at <http://www.spreadfirefox.com/?q=node/view/8769>.

### OpenOffice.org 2.0 Preview

The OpenOffice.org (OOo) project is preparing to release version 2.0 of the Open Source office application suite. Like version 1.0 before it, development releases of version 2.0 are available for download and test. The 2.0beta is scheduled for January 2005 with a tentative final release in March 2005. A review by The Inquirer (<http://www.theinquirer.net/?article=20293>) was quite favorable and includes some screenshots.

In addition to better compatibility with Microsoft Office word processor, spreadsheet and presentation file formats, OOo2.0 adds a fast Java-based SQL database manager to the application suite. OOo2.0 will use the new OASIS standard XML file format as the default file format, which will promote interoperability with other office applications.

A comprehensive guide to the new features in OOo2.0 and their implementation status is at <http://marketing.openoffice.org/2.0/feature-guide.html>.

### Open Source Beer

One of the slogans of Open Source software development is "Free as in Free Speech, not as in free beer" (see the Free Software definition at <http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html>). While the product itself may not be free, a group of students at the IT University in Copenhagen have published a beer recipe under a Creative Commons

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license. Anyone is allowed to brew and sell the beer or derivatives, as long as they publish the recipe under the same license conditions.

Vores Øl is described as “a great tasting energetic beer and it’s the world’s first open source beer! It is based on classic ale brewing traditions but with added guarana for a natural energy-boost. Version 1.0 is a medium strong beer (6% vol) with a deep golden red color and an original but familiar taste.”

More information, including the recipe, is provided at <http://www.voresoel.dk/>.

### Commodore Changes Hands (again)

Many of us started with Commodore computers, so I like to report on news items about the brand.

Tulip Computers, a Dutch company, is selling their rights to the Commodore brand name to US company Yeahronimo Media Ventures. The complete press release with terms of the sale is available on Tulip’s Commodore web portal at <http://www.commodoreworld.com/>. Previously, Tulip announced plans to market a C64 Direct-to-TV device in the US market beginning in November 2004 (*The Cursor*, September 2004).

In related news, C|NET’s news.com and The New York Times published a fascinating story on December 20, 2004 (“Commodore 64 reincarnated on a chip” by John Markoff) about Jeri Ellsworth, a retro computer enthusiast and self-taught chip designer who implemented a complete Commodore 64 computer on a single chip. Mammoth Toys put

the chip into a \$30 joystick with 30 classic C64 games built-in that sold 70,000 units on the first day it was promoted on the QVC shopping channel. According to reports, a keyboard and disk drive can be wired into the joystick circuit board to make an enhanced, fully functional Commodore 64 system. The game system can be purchased on <http://www.qvc.com/> (search for “Commodore 64”).

### Linux CD of the Month

In addition to the CD-R discs described below, I can provide any downloadable GNU/Linux operating system distribution (e.g. Fedora Core, Mandrake, Debian, Knoppix) on CD-R. Note: download versions of commercial distributions do not include official technical support or printed documentation.

Discs are available only to WAC members by pre-order. Contact me by phone (703-370-7649) or e-mail ([ggoodrum@bigfoot.com](mailto:ggoodrum@bigfoot.com)) at least 48 hours before meeting day to order or for more information. Single discs cost \$4 each; GNU/Linux distribu-



tions on two or three discs cost \$6 per set. All executable programs are for Intel x86 compatible Linux distributions unless stated otherwise. Your requests and suggestions are always welcome!

**Linux-NTFS** – v2.1.22. Free GNU General Public License RPM modules for Fedora Core and Red Hat Enterprise Linux, and patch for kernel 2.4.26 by Anton Altaparmakov, Pawel Kot et al. Although support for the NT Filesystem (NTFS) (used by Microsoft Windows NT/2000/XP) is included in Linux 2.6 kernels, it is not included in pre-compiled Fedora Core and Red Hat Linux kernels. These modules (and a backported v2.1.6b patch for 2.4 kernel source code) provide safe read-only (and limited write) access to NTFS disk partitions. This is handy on dual-boot PCs when you need a file from your Windows partition while running Linux.

**NTFS Tools and Library** – v1.8.4. Free GNU General Public License source code and RPM package by Anton Altaparmakov, Richard Russon and Matthew Fanto. This package contains the user space tools that work with the NTFS driver in the Linux kernel to: Create an NTFS volume on a partition; Print a file on the standard output; Efficiently backup/restore a volume at the sector level; Given a cluster or sector, find the file; Forces Windows to check NTFS at boot time; Dump a file’s attributes, completely; Display or set a volume’s label; Move all the common code into a shared library; List directory contents; Resize an NTFS volume; Find files that have been deleted and recover

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them.

**UFO: Alien Invasion-** Demo Christmas Edition. Free copyrighted source code and executable by the UFOAI Team. UFO: ALIEN INVASION is a turn-based strategy game featuring tactical combat against hostile alien forces that are about to infiltrate earth. You are in command of a small special unit formed to face the alien strike force. To be successful in the long run, you must also have a research team to learn as much as possible about the aliens, their technology, and their goals. Inspired by the classic XCOM series of games by Mythos and Microprose, UFO AI uses a modified version of iD Software's Quake2 engine to create a 3D environment. Up to six players (three per side) can play UFO: AI across a LAN or the Internet. Very highly rated by players.

**Xsnow** – v1.42. Free GNU General Public License source code and executable by Rick Jansen. Xsnow is an X-window “toy” that makes whirling snowflakes fall on the background screen and accumulate on application windows. Can Santa and his reindeer make it through this storm? Watch and find out!

**GNU/Linux Distribution Updates** - Security and bug fix monthly updates for Fedora Core 3.

**Kernel Source** - The latest versions of 2.4 and 2.6 kernel source code for all platforms.



## The Digital Home

by Sherry Zorzi

Will 2005 be the year your home entertainment goes

digital? For many families, it will be. Welcome to the Digital Home!

In the digital home, you can listen to your PC's digital music on your stereo or home theater system, on your portable music player, or on your wireless notebook computer. In the digital home, you can view the photos stored on your PC on your TV or home theater, on your wireless PDA or wireless notebook computer, or on a digital picture frame.

In the digital home, you can access your broadband Internet connection from any PC in your home, or on your TV or home theater. In the digital home, you can access the videos or home movies from your PC or its DVD drive and watch them on your TV or home theater, or on your wireless PDA or notebook. In the digital home, you can view a video feed from a home webcam on your PC, a wireless PDA or notebook, or any Internet connection.

In the digital home, you can record live TV on your PC. You can program the PC to record every episode of a particular show or every show that features your favorite actor. You can pause and playback live TV. In the digital home, you can play multiplayer online games wirelessly on your gaming console, PC, and notebook computer.

Does this sound like a futuristic dream? Well, the future is now, and it's surprisingly affordable! Here's what you'll need to make your home a Digital Home.

Start with a PC with an Intel P4 processor with HTT (hyper-threading technology.) This will give you the power needed to drive all that multimedia. The hyper-threading technology allows for parallel processing, making it speedy as well as robust. Use Windows XP Media

Center Edition 2005 as your PC operating system. This gives you a simple, built-in interface for all your digital media experience and can be controlled by wireless remote.

Make that PC the hub of your home network. It's powerful enough to handle the digital entertainment, the network, and still be used for running regular computer programs – email, Internet browsers, word-processors, and the like. You can have other PCs and notebooks connected to it with a wireless network router, or you can use a wired connection to other PCs. You'll need a broadband Internet connection for accessing online TV guides, digital music and video download sites, and online radio. Add a TV tuner card for connecting to your TV or home theater system.

You'll want a DVD burner if you'd like to burn recorded TV to DVD so you can take it with you for viewing on a notebook computer. A Digital Media Adaptor will allow you to stream your music, photos and video to any room in your house. You can use your current TV and stereo system so long as they are not antique!

To top it all off, throw in a portable MP3 player and PDA so that you can take all that media with you as you travel.

The beauty of the Digital Home is the seamless connection of the personal computer, Internet, TV, stereo (or home theater system), laptops and portable music and PDA devices. You can access any media over any device in any room at any time. Now that's entertainment!

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

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## Keeping Up

by Paul Howard  
WAC January, 2005

New Year - again!! It seems like I just got used to saying and writing "2004." Now I've got to remember "2005" - could it be age that's the problem here? One of my email correspondents recently concluded a message with "You have to grow old, you don't have to grow up!"

Well, I won't beat the dead horse about New Year's resolutions to back up your vital computer data this year, since I know you took my last plea to do that to heart. Instead, I'll remind you of the necessity for adding spyware protection to your computer's arsenal against malefactors. At our last WACUG meeting of 2004, we discussed the need for firewall software, especially for users of DSL and cable modem services, but it's a worthwhile investment for dial-up users as well. Checking your firewall with the Shields Up section of Steve Gibson's web site, GRC.com was recommended and demonstrated as part of the PC Clinic. Our Q&A session brought a question about removing "artifacts" from old program installations. A freeware program, available at [download.com](http://download.com), was recommended for this: CCleaner 1.16.082.

I fortify my home system with Spyware Blaster, Spybot Search and Destroy, and Ad-Aware. My choice is Norton Internet Security for firewall and anti-virus protection. The key is updating the definition files for protection programs, and being sure the scans are run. Automatic updating and scheduled scans are features of most of these programs. However, I believe in the "belt and suspenders" approach, and take time each week where I manu-

ally check for the latest updates and run a scan. I find that particularly necessary for my backup computer and laptop, which don't get as much use as my primary machine. You can find links to a wide variety of computer protection resources on our web site, at: <http://www.wacug.org/protection.html>

"Thumb" or "keychain" drives - flash memory devices with an integral USB connector that plugs into your PC - are proving to be a great resource for sharing files. We heartily recommend you invest in one or more, and bring them along to WACUG meetings, so we can share useful freeware and shareware programs. Thumb drives are an easy way to transfer files between computers, provided both have USB ports.

Windows 98 users will need USB driver software, usually included with the thumb drive on a CD or available for download from the web. XP users should find true "plug and play" functionality - the computer will recognize the drive when it's plugged into a USB port. Copying files is a simple matter of "drag and drop."

Secretary Jorn Dakin advises care if your USB port is on the front of the computer near the floor - apparently an "ask me how I know" moment. Rampaging shoes and thumb drives are incompatible. We suggest plugging in a USB hub to a port on the rear of the machine, and locate the hub on top of your machine or desk. You may need a powered hub if your USB devices get significant power from the USB port - some scanners, printers, and external optical drives, for example.

NCTCUG colleague Ron Schmidt introduced me to a magazine I'm

finding fascinating, "American Heritage of Invention and Technology." The Fall issue of this quarterly includes an article on the introduction of the first transistor radio, fifty years ago. Finding components to fit in a shirt pocket case, let alone increase the yield of functioning transistors to commercial quantities was a challenging project in the '50s - now we have multiple millions of transistors in our computers' CPUs and memory chips. Other articles of interest in that issue included topics of Colt's revolver, the loss and recovery of four hydrogen bombs over Spain after a crash of a B-52 and KC-135 tanker, tunnel boring machines, insect traps, and the development of the GPS system. See: <http://www.inventionandtechnology.com/>

One of my "round tuit" projects this year will be putting up a web site in attempt to get back in touch with old friends from college radio station days. Santa brought me a Konica Minolta Dimage Scan Dual IV - a slide scanner recommended by Bob Lawrence and Henry Kennedy. I've got several boxes of slides from that era, and until getting the scanner, had no way to add those images to the web site. But, along with the tool, one needs know-how. Scanning the slides is going to take real work - the supplied software has lots of settings for scanning resolution in and out, as well as image correction features. Here we go - scampering up the learning curve again !! The package also includes a copy of Photoshop Elements version 2.

As a reminder, WAC maintains a "mirror site" of our WACUG.ORG web site at:

<http://wacug.apcug.org> - note the

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lack of “www” This site can be used if you have difficulty reaching the primary site for group information.



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## Tech News

by Sue Crane, Vice President /  
Editor, Big Bear Computer Club,  
CA.

U.S. dictionary publisher Merriam-Webster says “blog” topped the list of most looked-up terms on its Web site during the last 12 months. The word will now appear in the 2005 print version of Merriam-Webster’s dictionary, defined as “a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments and often hyperlinks.” However, Oxford University Press says “blog” is already included in some print versions of its Oxford English Dictionary and has entered mainstream usage. According to an Oxford U. Press spokesman. “Now we’re getting words that derive from it such as ‘blogosphere’ and so on.” According to the Pew Internet & American Life project, a blog is created every 5.8 seconds, and blog analysis firm Technorati estimates that the number of blogs in existence now exceeds 4.8 million.

CDW, a national technology solutions provider recently announced that its Tech Twister technology makeover contest. The company’s teaming up with IBM, Intel and Linksys to offer small businesses a chance to win a complete technology makeover. Tech Twister is open to any small business with five to 100 employees. Go to CDW’s Web site and fill out the online application to enter the contest <http://www.cdw.com/Webcontent/land/page/>

[techtwister\\_110804.asp](http://techtwister_110804.asp). All entries must be completed and received by 5pm PST on February 15, 2005. The winners will be chosen during the months of December 2004, January 2005 and February 2005.

In a sign that wearable technology is gaining greater acceptance, the Gap on Thursday introduced a fleece jacket with a built-in radio for kids. The Hoodio has a control keypad located on the sleeve and a hood that conceals the speakers. Xybernaut sells a wearable, 1.9-pound computer with an 8.4-inch touch screen. And MP3 players are now in sunglasses. Oakley’s Thump line is available in seven combinations of lenses and colors. The shades have earphones and lenses that flip up and down. Meanwhile, NanoHorizons has developed socks containing silver and gold nanoparticles, which kill foot odor and bacteria.

NanoDynamics has come up with a golf ball that can correct its own flight path so it flies straighter than conventional balls. The design of the ball—and the materials it’s made of—serve to better channel the energy received from the club head and thus correct a wobble or slight drift. The company believes the ball complies with the rules of the United States Golf Association. It will provide samples for testing and USGA approval in January or February. Earlier this year, Easton Sports announced it was developing a set of bike components made from carbon nanotubes that would be stronger and lighter than conventional parts. And other companies have developed nano tennis balls that don’t lose air and golf shafts constructed with nanomaterials.

During the string of hurricanes that hit the U.S. last summer, satellite phones were often the only

reliable means of communication, because they use orbiting satellites rather than landlines and cell towers to transmit signals... “They cover such a broad area, I can use it anywhere,” says one Iridium customer. “The call may get unclear, but if you wait about five or six seconds, it gets better. A cell phone would just drop the call.”

Microsoft’s new small business software gives you financial info at a glance. Looking to offer small businesses an integrated approach to accounting, contact management and general productivity, Microsoft announced that a beta version of its newly announced small business management product is now available for testing

Kawada Industries in Japan, has been putting the final touches on a large biped Robot that can do what no humanoid its size has done before: lie down, get up, and help a human carry light loads, like suitcases and briefcases.

Passwords will soon be a thing of the past according to Microsoft Chairman, Bill Gates. Gates predicted that people will soon rely on other ways of verifying their identity. “A major problem for identity systems is the weakness of passwords,” Gates said. “Moving to biometric and smart cards is a wave that is coming, and we see our leading customers doing this.”

Japanese electronics giant TDK has developed a tough new coating named Blu-ray that makes DVDs scratch-proof. In a test conducted by CNET News.com, a DVD treated with TDK’s coating survived a determined attack with a screwdriver

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and a Sharpie permanent marker with no effect on playability.

Researchers at the Toho University School of Medicine in Tokyo have found that long hours spent in front of a computer screen may increase the risk of glaucoma in near-sighted people. The research is based on a study of 10,000 workers in Japan, with results correlated to data on how many hours were spent on the computer and pre-existing visual problems, such as myopia. Scientists said they believe the optic nerve in myopic people might be more vulnerable to computer-caused stress.

Watch for hefty increases in annual subscription rates for antivirus software as major Security companies encourage subscribers to upgrade to full Internet Security Suites which include firewall, anti-spam and anti-spyware as well as antivirus.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



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## Hard Drive HouseKeeping Is Vital

by Dennis Schulman  
Tampa Bay Computer Society

For those of you who surf the net on a regular basis - and that includes those who use dialup access as well as cable or DSL - it is absolutely crucial that you take your hard drive housekeeping more seriously than you ever thought necessary. Many users think that by having

a suite of utilities, such as Norton or McAfee, that you are protected. You might be, but I seriously doubt it for so many reasons I won't go into it now except for three:

You use auto update and auto scan. This requires that your computer be online at the time to run the auto update. In the case of cable or DSL, that is possible, but the computer has to be on at the time also. In the case of dialup, the computer won't go online unless your password is saved and used automatically. That, of course, defeats keeping friends and annoying children from messing up the computer without your knowledge. So, you might want to run your antivirus update manually, just to make certain it worked and there were no errors.

The second reason is based on the fact that if you did not clean house before scanning, you risk the possibility of the antivirus finding a virus it could not delete or quarantine and you did not know it. You also risk the possibility of not knowing if the auto update was not run successfully for one of many reasons (and time and space won't permit that discussion at this time) and consequently your subsequent full system auto scan may not be able to recognize the latest nasties you have managed to acquire.

There is a third, more obtuse, reason. If you don't really know if your system is truly clean and clear of all the bad stuff, how will you know what to do when you get a message that says something to the effect: "It has been determined that your computer has been sending messages infected with the ----- trojan horse virus to what appears to be the email listing of your address book. If you do not take appropriate action immediately, your

email service will be discontinued. If your anti virus program has failed to protect you, please download the following trojan horse removal tool and run it immediately."

So, here is a housekeeping procedure I use - which is manual - because then I am more certain that I know the status of my files than most of the "suite" programs. And it doesn't use much - if any - of my system resources except when I use it. Just in case you think you have all the utilities you need, let me comment that I am not an expert on your system, but I spend more time now than ever before on systems that have too many over-burdensome utilities that are truly unnecessary and in some cases more dangerous than what they claimed to be designed to do. What I am proposing is basically using 3 little free utilities that only work when invoked, along with utilities that already come with your computer.

Run Disk Cleanup (under System Tools under Accessories on the Programs menu) and process all options (don't worry about compressed files, but do them at a later time when you have nothing else to do, since it could take quite a while if you haven't done it the first time.)

Clear your browser cache (In Internet Explorer go to Tools, Internet Options. Delete cookies and delete all offline files.) In Netscape Communicator go to Edit, Preferences, Advanced, Clear Memory Cache and Clear Disk Cache)

Open Windows Explorer (right-click on My Computer, select Explore), Select the folders/View option and select show all files except system files (You can leave it this way.) Find any folders called tmp, See *Hard Drive* on page 9



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temp, or cookies. Unless you have a good working knowledge of what cookies you need or do not need, you probably don't need the contents of any of the temp, cookies, or temporary internet folders except the index.dat file (you might want to save the contents of the History folder)

### Empty the Recycle Bin

Update and run the latest core version of Adaware SE Personal Edition (currently version 1.05). Once the scan is complete, click on an object found, right-click a lined item and select all, click next and remove all.

Update and run the latest version of Spybot (currently version 1.3.) Before running the scan, run immunize. Then run Look for Problems. Once problems are found, select them all and click on Fix Problems.

Note: Some spyware may be associated with programs you want to use, so read the help section for a further understanding of the features and options on both of these programs. These spyware objects detector utilities can be downloaded from [download.com](http://download.com) or [majorgeeks.com](http://majorgeeks.com).

There is a third utility, called a hijack remover. There are many available, but I like CWSshredder.exe (current version 2.00) (use [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) to find the program) Just make certain you are not online and that your browser is not open when you run it. You may be surprised and pleased if it finds something and fixes it (generally really bad stuff).

Now you should be able to update and run your antivirus more successfully than ever before. The only catch is that it takes time. Once you

figure out about how much time each step takes, you can determine whether you can walk away and come back later when it is done.

I recommend running HouseKeeping at the end of every day you go online - if you can manage it. (cough! cough!) Otherwise, run it every 3 days for certain.

Now, if you know your computer is clean and pure, then this is the only condition to justify running the defragmentation utility (once a week or twice a month). Defrag does not "fix" anything. It enhances the performance of a healthy environment. If you attempt to defrag a "sick" system, you could make it worse to the extent that the computer will fail to boot or run. If you have Windows 2000 or Windows XP, you can run defrag directly. If you have Windows Me, 98, or 95, run it in Safe Mode. I prefer running Defrag in Safe Mode as I have a UPS and the computer can complete the defrag, even if the lights go out in the house.

Now that you have successfully learned the housekeeping routine and understand its importance without the need for complex and sometimes dangerous free software utilities that can cause conflicts, you can set up the program scheduler to run your housekeeping routine for you and just check up on it from time to time to see that it is accomplishing your wishes.

Feel free to email me for further details and other fine, free utilities available for keeping your hard drive and system performing at its best.

Dennis Schulman, known as the PC Miracle Man, has been a practicing field consultant in Largo, Florida for over 22 years. He has been a member of the Tampa Bay Computer Society

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There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



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## New Year's Resolutions for Computer Users

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Board of Directors

This is the season when we are often asked about our New Year's resolutions. We may want to lose weight, be a better worker, better family member, or other virtuous improvements, but we should also resolve to be better cybercitizens and practice "Safe HEX".

Here are some suggested resolutions:

1. Update antivirus software at least daily - new viruses, worms, and Trojans are appearing at a rapid pace, with an estimated 12,000 new ones appearing in 2004 alone. New viruses can spread around the world literally in minutes, so antivirus software that has not been updated at least daily may be worse than no antivirus software at all. We may have a false sense of security using non-updated software, believing that we are protected from the current crop of viruses, so we click on any interesting email attachments, and insert that questionable floppy in our computers, a dangerous practice. Considering that there are a

See *Resolutions* on page 10

variety of free antivirus products available, and commercial antivirus software is reasonably priced (especially after rebates), there is absolutely no reason why not to have current antivirus software that is updated at least daily.

**2. Spam mail** – Delete them without opening them, period. As 2004 came to a close, estimates are that up to 80% of all email is spam. Never purchase anything that is advertised by spam email. Never click on a link in spam email, as many links may load Trojans on your computer, or result in identity theft. Never disclose any personal information such as account numbers, passwords, social security numbers, PIN numbers, etc. in response to an email, even if it says that your account will be threatened if you do not click on the link. This illicit and criminal practice is a method of identity theft called “phishing”. Many who market via spam mail are scammers and thieves who make unverifiable claims about their products, sell pirated software, or who will take your hard earned money and send nothing useful back in return.

**3. Never click on a popup ad.** While many are legitimate sellers, many are also scams. As long as we click on them, and sometimes make purchases, the popup purveyors will continue to plague us with their material.

**4. Practice good email etiquette,** also called “netiquette” – If forwarding emails to others, do not simply hit “forward” and enter names from your address book. Having a lot of headers, those lines of others’ email addresses and routing information, as well as a lot of “>” (greater-than) symbols makes email difficult to

read. Strip off any useless header by highlighting and deleting them, and delete the “>”.

Another beneficial piece of netiquette is to be sure that attachments are reasonable in size. Since many newer digital cameras can take poster-sized images; users should reduce the size of emailed images to a reasonable size, such that they can be easily viewed. It would also be a good idea to save the image in the universal JPG or GIF formats, rather than the sometimes-default BMP format, as the JPG and GIF formats greatly compress the file, making it a much smaller download. I sometimes resent receiving a digital photo taken at 2560x1720 or larger, when trying to view it. Recently, someone proudly sent me a 4 megapixel photo of his new grandchild to view on my 800x600 monitor. When I first loaded the image, all I saw was a huge eye, and with red-eye at that. Not just was the file size huge, and slow to download, but the image was several times the size of my screen, requiring me to scroll to see the image.

**5. Do not forward Hoaxes and Urban Legends** – These may be cute, or we may feel that we are really warning others about some perceived threat, but please check out any email which says “forward this to everyone you know” as it will most likely be a hoax or urban legend. Sites such as [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com) are excellent resources to debunk hoaxes and urban legends. Be aware that you can not get rich, or get gift certificates by forwarding emails, and that the poor dying kid in Georgia wanting postcards has long since recovered. Save yourself some potential embarrassment and email bandwidth, and refuse to forward these messages without first verifying their authenticity. Smart

people can be duped too, so do not automatically trust the sender.

**6. Kill Spyware** – According to many cyber security experts, spyware, software that can gather and send information of the users’ activities, may be a greater threat than computer viruses. Spyware is used to steal passwords, account numbers, and other personal information, as well as generate obscene popup ads, redirect purchases and searches, and several other undesirable acts. Also referred to as “malware” spyware is dangerous.

Microsoft, never first on the bandwagon, is now in the process of attempting to purchase one of the anti-spyware software companies. While there are several decent commercial anti-spyware products on the market, there are also some excellent free ones, such as Spybot Search and Destroy ([www.safer-networking.org](http://www.safer-networking.org)) and Ad-Aware SE ([www.lavasoftusa.com](http://www.lavasoftusa.com)). Never respond to the scam popup ads that tell you that your computer is infested, and click here ... many of those supposed anti-spyware products are scams themselves.

Install legitimate anti spyware software, update it and run it at least weekly.

**7. Participate in National Cyber Security Awareness Month - October 2005.** Put it on your calendar and go to <http://www.staysafeonline.info/> to find out how you and your User Group can participate in this important event.

All of the resolutions above are necessary, and easier to keep than losing weight.

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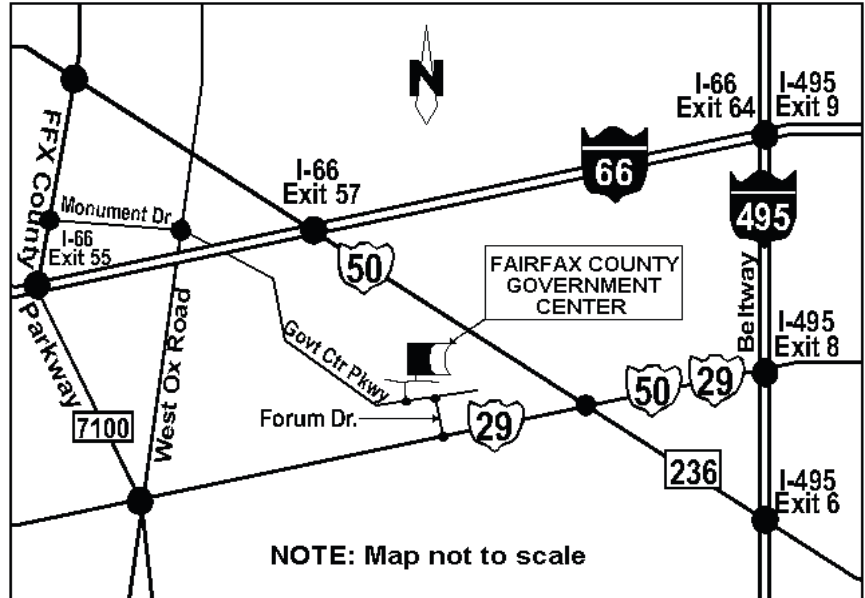
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