



The Cursor



Monthly Newsletter of the
Washington Area Computer User Group

Meeting Location:
Micro Center
Pan Am Center



Next Meeting:
October 15, 2005

Presidential Bits

by Paul Howard



Last month, members were introduced to several useful software utility programs by Bill Walsh and Chuck Roberts. Check our “Recent Meetings” page on the web site to learn more: <http://www.wacug.org/recmtgs.html>

October and November WAC meetings will be held from 12:30 - 3:30 PM in the conference / training rooms of the Pan Am Plaza Micro Center, 3089 Nutley Street, Fairfax, VA 22031. The meeting room is located on the east side of the building (book department side), accessible from corridors at the front and rear of the store. Look for WACUG signs pointing to the location.

The October 15th meeting of the Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC) will feature member Bill Walsh talking about Street Atlas 2006. DeLorme’s latest version of this consumer mapping software does things right - new features, better performance.

Bill follows with an introduction to GPS, Magellan, and Mapsend Streets, and then will perform the all important job of integrating the GPS unit to the computer displaying the Street Atlas 2006 software, so the group can see GPS

interfaced with SA2006. While the Magellan GPS units can themselves be standalones, it’s the integration with a feature-rich program like Street Atlas 2006 that makes GPS “neater than neat”!! Now you can find your way, even if you can’t read a map, because — these geek toys talk to you!!

WACUG and Intel are sponsoring “Build Your Own Computer” seminars in November and December. We’re also cooperating with our sister group, NCTCUG, to offer these sessions several times, so scheduling conflicts won’t cause our members to miss out. Please contact me if you wish to BYO computer at one of the “build sessions.” Email: plhoward@verizon.net

More details - see my *Keeping Up* column on page 6, and check the web site: <http://www.wacug.org/byocomputer.html>



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Lu Spriggs Web Sites for October 2005

<http://www.wacug.org/> – is the URL for the Washington Area Computer User Group. Visit it for past versions of Sprigg's Web Sites w/hyperlinks.

1. <http://www.ConsumerReports.org/> – Latest Consumer Reports ratings. Free information on Health (Mad Cow Disease, recalls, etc.).

2. <http://www.ConsumerWeb-Watch.org/> – CU's Web Site watchdog.
3. <http://www.CRBestDrugs.org/> – Free. Compare medicines and choose the right ones for you.
4. <http://www.ecolabels.org/> – Guide to environment friendly labels.
5. <http://www.FinancialPrivacyNow.org/> – Tips about protecting yourself against identity theft and credit fraud.
6. <http://www.NotinmyFood.org/> – Providing consumers with friendly information on food safety risks.
7. <http://www.SafeCarsforKids.org/> – Enhancing vehicle safety to protect children from deadly auto hazards.
8. <http://www.StopHospital-Infections.org/> – Promoting patient safety through public disclosures of infection rates.

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 4th Street. Visit their web site for more information, a map and directions:

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

Meetings begin at 7:00 PM

Reading Product Manuals Online

By Gabe Goldberg, APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP Computers & Technology Website

I'm reasonably well-organized; my wife thinks I'm a packrat (she keeps trying to sneak my '70s shirts to the thrift shop). You'd think this would mean that I can find product manuals for every appliance, gadget, PC component and software, etc., I've ever bought. That's mostly true.

But sometimes my filing system fails me. Or I've forgotten to whom I loaned something. Or someone else in the house (but I'm not naming names) has moved it. What then?

Fortunately, manufacturers are increasingly making product literature and documentation available online. While this isn't entirely out of generosity -- it reduces their customer-support workload -- it's great for consumers who can find and read the material.

A good starting place is the manufacturer's Web site. For example, I'm writing this article using a Samsung SyncMaster 912n LCD video monitor. Suppose I need to know what its control buttons do but can't find its manual. Samsung's home page [www.samsung.com] offers a button, "Download Center: Download Drivers, Manuals, Software, and Firmware". I can either enter a product model number or name, or search via product group (audio/video, computers, etc.), then product type, then product subtype, and model name.

Computers are very precise; searching took three tries, since it want-

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GNU/Linux SIG

By Geof Goodrum

Linux on WAC's Laptop

Jim Brueggeman generously donated a Dell Inspiron 1100 laptop computer and accessories to WAC. The system had Microsoft Windows XP home preinstalled, occupying the entire 20 GB hard disk in a single partition. The system was also limited by 128MB of RAM, which resulted in very poor performance despite meeting Microsoft's memory recommendation.

I wanted to demonstrate Linux software at WAC meetings for quite awhile, but WAC's older Toshiba laptop had data corruption problems that made software installation (Windows and Linux) nearly impossible. Therefore, I borrowed the Dell laptop to install a GNU/Linux distribution.

First, I had to make room on the hard disk to install Linux. I booted the v3.9 Knoppix Linux LiveCD on the laptop drive, which allowed me to use the `ntfsresize` command line utility to resize the NTFS-formatted C drive (first running a simulated test operation) so it fit within half of the drive. Using the Linux `fdisk` utility, I deleted the original NTFS partition and recreated an NTFS partition that ended in the middle the drive. I rebooted the

laptop in Windows to verify it was okay. It was. If it wasn't, I could just recreate the partition with the original start and end points (repartitioning doesn't modify data on the drive). This left half of the drive "unallocated" and available for the Linux installation. NOTE: while the Linux command line tools work perfectly, commercial disk partition software such as Symantec's PartitionMagic are easier for beginners to use.

I decided to use `fdisk` again to manually create partitions for the Linux installation, but I could let the GNU/Linux installation software do this for me. I booted CD 1 of Fedora Core 4 GNU/Linux installation CDs (four CDs total) and followed the installation prompts, selecting a desktop installation. The installation went very smoothly. However, I noticed the sound test failed.

I rebooted the system. The GRUB bootloader installed by Fedora Core allowed me to select booting either Windows or Linux. I was able to boot each operating system without any problems. Although I could run the Red Hat Network utility to update all of the software installed by Fedora Core to the latest versions, I preferred to use the `yum` command as the root (administrative) user on the text console. Simply entering "yum update" while connected to the Internet (broadband access is almost mandatory unless you use the monthly WAC Linux CD updates) downloads and updates all software on the system.

With permission from the WAC Board of Directors, I purchased a 512MB SODIMM memory module from MicroCenter (\$29.99 after rebate) and installed it in the laptop's second memory slot. Win-

dows performed much better with the additional memory. Unfortunately, the extra memory confused the video configuration in Linux and scrambled the video screen. A Google search revealed that the Intel video chipset in the laptop uses system memory as video memory (unlike most video cards that have dedicated video memory). I was able to boot Linux into a text console and reconfigure the video configuration to restore the graphic video display, but this required technical knowledge beyond most beginners. In retrospect, installing the memory before installing Fedora Core would most likely avoid this unique problem.

With a little searching on Google with "Inspiron 1100", "Linux" and "audio" as keywords, I was able to get the audio working. I enabled the "external amplifier" setting in the volume control GUI and sound began working (also check the volume levels and mute setting for the various inputs and outputs).

While the built-in ethernet adapter was autoconfigured and worked without fuss, I am working on getting a connection with my D-Link DCF-650WK wireless network card. The chipset used by this PC card was autodetected when it was plugged in, but an unrecognized configuration option causes an error. This is apparently due to differences in firmware between manufacturers using the chipset. Again, Google has provided leads on the solution so I expect to have this card working shortly.

As a result, expect to see more Linux software demos at future WACUG meetings.

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Massachusetts Adopts OpenDocument Standard

Linux Users Respond to Katrina

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

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

NERDTV

<http://www.pbs.org/cringely/nerdtv/>

Firefox and Mozilla Security Alert

Firefox 1.5 beta available

Banner-less Opera Browser

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feel Free: Opera Eliminates Ad
Banner and Licensing Fee

Oslo, Norway - September 20, 2005: Opera Software today permanently removed the ad banner and licensing fee from its award-winning Web browser. The ad-free, full-featured Opera browser is now available for download - completely free of charge - at <http://www.opera.com>.

“Today we invite the entire Internet community to use Opera and experience Web browsing as it should be,” said Jon S. von Tetzchner, CEO, Opera Software. “Removing the ad banner and licensing fee will encourage many new users to discover the speed, security and unmatched usability of the Opera browser.”

Opera was previously available free of charge with an ad banner. Users had the option of paying a licensing fee to remove the ad banner and receive premium support.

“Opera fans around the globe made this day possible,” said von Tetzchner. “As we grow our userbase, our mission and our promise remain steadfast: we will always offer the best Internet experience to our users - on any device. Today this mission

gains new ground.”

Availability

Download the Opera browser, available in 20 languages, at <http://www.opera.com>. The complete download is less than 4MB. It is available beginning at 9:00 AM CET.

About the Opera Browser

Already regarded as the world's fastest, most secure browser, Opera speeds up your Web browsing with these innovative features:

- Navigate quickly using intuitive mouse gestures and browser tabs
- Start from where your last browsing session ended or save your entire session
- Access downloaded files quickly with the transfer manager
- Protect against identity theft and phishing with integrated security features
- Speak up: surf the Web hands-free using voice commands
- Shop Amazon, browse Ebay, and search the Web with Google right from the address bar
- Set reminders for Web pages you visit with the notes feature

A complete list of features: <http://www.opera.com/features>

Screenshots: <http://www.opera.com/docs/screenshots/>

Opera logos: <http://www.opera.com/press/images/>

Press resources: <http://www.opera.com/press/>

About Opera Software

Opera Software ASA is an industry leader in the development of Web browser technology, targeting the desktop, mobile, PDA, home media and vertical markets. Partners include companies such as IBM, Nokia, Sony, Motorola, Adobe,

Macromedia, Symbian, Sony Ericsson, Kyocera, Sharp, Motorola Metroworks, MontaVista Software, BenQ, Sendo and AMD. The Opera browser has received international recognition from users, industry experts and media for being faster, smaller and more standards-compliant than other browsers.

Opera Software ASA is headquartered in Oslo, Norway, with development centers in Linkoping and Gothenburg, Sweden. The company is listed on the Oslo Stock Exchange under the ticker symbol OPERA. Learn more about Opera at www.opera.com.

Contact:

Opera Software

Tor Odland

Communications Director

Direct: (+47) 2416 4242

Mobile: (+47) 9909 0872

toro@opera.com

Thomas Ford

Public Relations Manager,
Desktop

Direct: (+47) 2416 4205

thomas.ford@opera.com

Michelle Valdivia

Marketing Communications
Director, Americas

Direct: (+1) (786) 312-1717

Mobile: (+1) (786) 208-6072

michelle@opera.com

Job Opportunity

SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR
/ OPERATIONS ENGINEER

Zope Corporation is seeking an experienced and highly motivated Systems Administrator / Operations Engineer to maintain and en-

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hance Zope Corporation's managed hosting operation.

http://www.zope.com/about_us/careers.html

Requirements

- Bachelor's degree in CS and/or equivalent industry experience
- 2+ years of experience with Linux / Unix, network management
- 2+ years of experience maintaining high-availability systems
- Ability to perform challenging assignments under general supervision
- Strong communication and collaboration skills
- Good problem solving and documentation skills
- Experience with Zope or Python is a plus

Responsibilities

- Deployment and maintenance of hosted solutions in a clustered high-availability environment
- Responding to issue reports, diagnosing and resolving problems and ensuring the level of quality of the hosting environment
- Developing and improving efficient and reliable deployment and maintenance strategies
- Architecting, managing and monitoring data center components

Qualified candidates, send resume and salary requirements to careers@zope.com.

Only candidates invited for an interview will be contacted. Position is in Fredericksburg, VA. (Must have valid working papers entitling you to employment in the US.)

Re-lo available.

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 by pre-order. Contactmebyphone(703-370-7649) or e-mail (ggoodrum@bigfoot.com) at least 48 hours before meeting day to order or for more information. Single discs cost \$4 each; GNU/Linux distributions 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!

October 2005

GpsDrive – v2.0.9. Free GNU General Public License source code and Mandriva package by Fritz Ganter. GpsDrive is a car (bike, ship, plane) navigation system. GpsDrive obtains your position from the serial port of a Garmin or NMEA capable GPS receiver and displays it on a zoomable map. The map file, which can be downloaded from the Internet, is autoselected for best resolution depending on the position and preferred scale. Speech output is supported if the „festival“ software is running. GpsDrive is written in C with use of the GTK+ graphic toolkit and runs with Linux and FreeBSD.

TORCS – v1.2.4. Free GNU General Public License source code, dynamic executable and Fedora Core 4 package by Eric Espié & Christophe Guionneau. TORCS (The Open Racing Car Simulation) is a 3D racing car simulator using *OpenGL*.

Race against human or computer controlled drivers. There are 42 different cars, 30 tracks and more than 50 opponents to race against. You can steer with a joystick or steering wheel, if it's supported by your platform. It is also possible to drive with the mouse or the keyboard, but it's not easy. Graphic features lighting, smoke, skidmarks and glowing brake disks. The simulation features a simple damage model, collisions, tire and wheel properties (springs, dampers, stiffness, ...), aerodynamics (ground effect, spoilers, ...) and much more. The gameplay allows different types of races from the simple practice session up to the championship. Enjoy racing against your friends in the split screen mode with up to four human players.

GNU/Linux Distribution Updates

- Security and bug fix monthly updates for Fedora Core 4.

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



Keeping Up

by Paul Howard

Build Your Own Computer !!

WACUG and Intel® will be jointly sponsoring a “Build-Your-Own PC — Part 1” seminar, to be held at Micro Center on November 19th, 12:30 – 3:30 PM. If you’ve ever wanted to build your own PC to save money, get more bang for your buck, customize a PC, or just learn what goes into the making of a PC, then you won’t want to miss this free seminar. Attendees will be provided information on the process and will be given the opportunity to join WACUG in order to take advantage of special component prices available only to participants in a special “Build-Your-Own PC — Part 2” workshop to be held on December 10th. Details will be announced at the seminar, and in emails to members and friends.

The same “Build Your Own PC” seminars will be offered by our sister group, NCTCUG, on November 2nd, at 7 PM, at Carlin Hall Community Center, Arlington and on November 23rd and December 7th, at Carlin Hall. Our hope is that members of either group with scheduling conflicts will have multiple opportunities to attend these meetings with identical presentations.

Details on the seminars and a series of FAQs are available on the web site at: <http://www.wacug.org/byocomputer.html>. Those building computers at the “Part 1” sessions must be members of NCTCUG or WACUG, and must have signed the disclaimer form available on the web page noted above, and must turn it in at the build session. Information on the available computer parts kits and the order process is available at:

<http://www.pcclub.com/byo/>

Members ordering the component kits should have them sent to their home. At the time of this writing, neither group has been able to arrange receipt, storage and transportation of the kits to the meeting places, other than by individual participant.

“I shoulda stood in bed!”

An expression my dad used, I suspect borrowed from a thirties radio program, for “one of those days” when something always seems to go awry. Technology’s been biting me regularly of late, making me want to throw the covers over my head and hide for a day or three.

In my last column, I discussed the installation of an ATI TV Wonder Pro Card in my computer. I was enjoying watching the TV news in a small window on my computer as I worked on my email. All was fine for a while, and then - it stopped talking! The picture was fine, but the sound output was gone. Well, not entirely - I’d get sound for about four seconds when I clicked on the TV application icon. As soon as the TV picture popped up in the window, the sound would disappear.

I finally found that double clicking the speaker in the system tray would bring up the “big” volume control panel, not just the single slider volume control of one mouse click. The “wave” slider had a check in the “mute” box - a click to uncheck “mute” - and stereo sound burst forth from the PC speakers for the TV show in question. Roger Fujii suggested that some of the TV applications were notoriously flakey, and that perhaps an option to mute the sound was set when I’d shut down the PC with the sound mut-

ed. Now I make sure to exit the TV application only when the sound is blasting loud and clear.

Back in the days before there were PCs to occupy all my spare time, my primary hobby was repairing TV sets. After a few forgetful incidents when I left my soldering iron plugged in for several days at a time, I ran all the power for my workbench through a master switch. An electrical box held the switch, and a pilot light with a big red plastic jewel. The pilot light’s glow was real hard to miss when the overhead lights were turned off - so no more left on test equipment or soldering irons.

Several weeks ago, the pilot lamp finally burned out after 30 years’ use, and I picked up a package of two at Lowe’s. I screwed in the new bulb, and “flash”.. I thought lightning had struck. Examining the package, I discovered it read “12” volts, not “120” - the bulb’s innards vaporized so thoroughly they look like mercury on the inside of the glass.

Somewhere, I’ve read a statistic that only 15% of the US population still get their TV reception over the air from TV stations’ transmitters, with the majority opting instead for cable, satellite, and soon - fiber optics, when Verizon’s FIOS goes beyond high speed internet and provides television services. Well, I’m in that 15 percent, using a couple of Radio Shack antennas in our garage attic and an amplified “Master Antenna TV” (MATV) system, using coax cable to distribute signals to five TVs and my computer video card.

Some time ago, I started having trouble with UHF reception, which seemed to start when WMPT-22,

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in Bowie, changed their antenna system for broadcasting HDTV. Linda and I are big fans of the “International Mystery” series that runs on WNVT / MHZ-56, and I even added a UHF-only antenna to our MATV system to try and improve reception. After all, we needed to feed our craving for cop shows from Italy, Germany, France, Sweden, Australia, and the UK!

From June on, our TV reception deteriorated on VHF stations also, from about 6 to 9 PM, and I thought all the stations must be getting ready for the HDTV changeover. I was really getting annoyed when I couldn't watch much of the Hurricane Katrina coverage with a decent picture. One evening the sound on WETA-26 got so bad, I pulled out my battery operated emergency TV / Radio - and discovered it got a decent picture and perfect sound, not only for ch.26, but others as well. Finally, I called Ron Schmidt, the only other “no cable” person I know, and had him check his reception. No problems in Maryland quickly pointed to my 22 year-old MATV signal amplifier.

I jumped on the internet and ordered a new amplifier. No more problems with signal from 6 - 9 PM. And, while doing some wiring re-arrangements, I ran coax from the antenna to the old amplifier, directly to a TV. I discovered that when I disconnected the old amplifier from AC power, the TV signal on UHF stations actually improved - proof positive! Time to consign that piece of electronics to the scrap heap. So, we've got good TV reception, just in time for the new season. This year, another “vast wasteland” of ghosts, alien invasions, and more

awful “reality TV.” But I'll confess - I'm curious to see the remake of the '70s Darren McGavin vehicle, “The Night Stalker” - as long as they don't run around cutting people up with chain saws!



Product Review: *FileLocator Pro* *Version 3.0*

By Chuck Roberts, WAC

If you attended the September meeting, then I'm assuming you saw my demonstration of FileLocator Pro. I am a registered owner of the previous version and when I received the upgrade offer, I was quick to respond to Mythicsoft with an offer to demonstrate and review the product if I could obtain a group discount offer for WAC members. David Vest responded positively so here is the product review.

It is important to mention that a free-ware “lite” version is available that goes by the name of “*Agent Ransack*.” While the free-ware version is good, it is not as complete as its big brother, but it is free. On the other hand, FileLocator Pro is not expensive and is much better than the basic search function that comes built into Windows. The full version does offer a trial period so you may try before you buy, but once the trial expires, you must either pay to obtain the registration code or download and install *Agent Ransack*.

Most search utilities search for files on your computer. And those utilities expect you to help them get started by defining some basic parameters for the search criteria. Like, for example, which physical

drive or drives to search. Search utilities also appreciate some help with the file name as well. Most utilities will accept wildcard characters like “*” and “?”, in their search criteria, but most are not capable of using Boolean terms like AND, OR, and NOT and building complex search criteria.

Besides simply locating a file, FileLocator Pro can actually search inside the file for specific text. It can also find a file that contains a specific phrase or use Boolean functions to specify textual content within a specific number of characters or NOT (Boolean value) of other characters. And who said the file had to be on your computer? Yes, network or shared drives may also be included in the search.

Viewers are included for Word .doc, text, or pdf file types so that FileLocator Pro can also display the text within a searched file assuming the search was successful. Other file types may also be searched. These include ZIP, RAR, and CAB files.

FileLocator Pro does not index the files it searches or save an index of a completed search. It was developed using the latest development techniques and is blazingly fast at searching files. It is well integrated into the Windows system. Using Windows Explorer, right-clicking on an object to open the context-sensitive menu displays FileLocator Pro as one of the choices on that menu.

I don't want to appear as a commercial for FileLocator Pro, but more details, screen shots and system requirements are available by visiting the web site at <http://www.mythicsoft.com>.

See *FileLocator Pro* page 8

I highly recommend trying FileLocator Pro using the free trial. The regular price is \$39.95, but David has set up a special coupon for WAC members. Enter the discount coupon “FLPRO_WACUG” for a 20% discount when you purchase online. Use the following link to make sure you get the special price: https://orders.digitalcandle.com/order_php/order.php?productid=1039



Tech News

By Sue Crane, Editor, Big Bear Computer Club
www.bigbearcc.org
sue.crane@charter.net

Free services are being used to install malicious code. Cybercriminals are increasingly using blog sites, photo album sites, fan and greeting card sites and other free online services to install and spread software designed to steal personal information or hijack a victim's PC. In the first two weeks of July, security company Websense saw more than 500 incidents of such attacks. The free services are an anonymous and affordable way for attackers to store and spread their malicious code. Be careful what you click on!

Insect “extermination” via mini robots.

Scientists in Lausanne, Switzerland, have successfully infiltrated a colony of roaches with a micro robot according to a report published in the June issue of IEEE Robotics & Automation. Called InsBot, for “insect-like robot,” the mechanical bug mimics the insects' smell and movements so the roaches have ac-

cepted it as their own.

Vector Capital purchases WinZip

WinZip, is one of the most popular shareware programs on the Web. More than 140 million people have downloaded the program, and it's downloaded for free about 500,000 times a week. Turnaround investor Vector Capital. will try to change that by reminding users a little more firmly that the software costs \$29 (after a free 30-day trial), as well as likely coming out with new features that only paying customers can download.

Better Eating Through Nanotech

Major food producers are using nanotechnology to improve the quality of their foods, although some warn that the technology may be misunderstood by consumers. At a Nano4food conference food scientists, material scientists and nanotechnicians met to discuss how the technology is being used to improve the consistency of yogurt or cheese, packaging technologies, and even how to “wall off” the most nutritional components of food in favor of tastier alternatives. However, as nanotechnology moves forward, consumers will have to be informed and educated about the possible benefits and hazards of using it.

Microsoft Finalizes Genuine Advantage

Microsoft has gone live with the Windows Genuine Advantage program. The program, which has been available in an avoidable pilot version since late 2004, is now mandatory. Microsoft also noted that it has somewhat simplified the Windows Genuine Advantage validation process; for example, users are no longer required to enter a 25-character product key to validate

their software. Users who try to validate software and discover that they're unwittingly (or otherwise) running illegitimate copies of Windows have a few options. According to Microsoft, qualifying customers who fill out a piracy report, provide proof of purchase, and send in their counterfeit CD-ROMs can receive a genuine copy of Windows XP Home Edition or XP Professional Edition (depending on which version they're using) at no cost. Customers who submit a piracy report can get XP Home for \$99 or XP Pro for \$149.

There is no “Superfetch”

Ed Bott, bestselling author and computer journalist advises: “The same yokels who insist on spreading the “clean out your Prefetch folder” BS are now spreading the word that there's a super-double-secret registry setting in Windows XP called SuperFetch that will reduce boot times dramatically. No, there isn't. And if you see any Web site that tries to insist that there's any benefit to cleaning out your Prefetch folder or enabling this latest bogus tweak, you should assume that any other advice they give you is worthless as well.”

End of analog TV?

Millions of American television sets that receive only analog over-the-air broadcasts could go dark if not upgraded by Jan. 1, 2009. That deadline was suggested by members of the U.S. Senate's Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. The committee is readying legislation expected this year that would require all American televisions to run on digital signals by the end of 2008. That would free up the analog, or 700 MHz, spectrum for

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other uses. Under current law, analog television would be cut off on Dec. 31, 2006, or when 85 percent of households are capable of receiving digital signals, whichever comes sooner. Last month, the FCC proposed to move the date by which all televisions with screen sizes of 25 to 36 inches must contain digital tuners up to March 2006. All televisions, VCRs and DVD players would have to carry the technology by 2007.

New Media Center Device

Microsoft will soon ship a wireless Media Center keyboard and remote control that will help people who have Media Centers in their living rooms interact with the machines. The device features beveled edges for easy two-handed holding, an integrated pointing stick, full Media Center remote-control functionality, a full-sized keyboard with special Media Center buttons, and even power buttons for the PC and TV.

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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ed only “912n”, not “SyncMaster 912n”. The manual was then available in any of 28 languages, from Bulgarian to Chinese. A PDF file (see below for explanation), it’s just under three megabytes, dated about a month ago, complete, 83 pages in-

cluding clickable Table of Contents. So a minute after deciding to look for it, I’m looking *at* it.

Another way to search is via Google [www.google.com] entering terms like 912n manual site:samsung.com which only searches the samsung.com Web site. This took me to the right neighborhood on the Web site but left me needing a few more clicks to hit the manual. Sometimes search engine results are better than navigating within a site, so consider both techniques.

Manufacturers often update online material as mistakes or shortcomings are found in printed versions, so for important products it’s worth checking Web sites occasionally. Sadly, they also sometimes package only abbreviated versions with products, suggesting or expecting consumers to download full versions.

Either way, online manuals are also useful when considering purchases or comparing choices, since they give — or should give! — more complete and useful information than is printed on the box. If you’re evaluating something pre-purchase, evaluate the manual’s organization and quality -- Will you be able to find information you need? Will you understand it? If you’re buying something used, online availability of a missing manual can make the acquisition much more pleasant.

Online manuals can be in many formats — HTML (normal Web pages), Microsoft Word documents, PDF (Portable Document Format), and others. Each format has advantages and disadvantages. HTML is nearly universal; if you can view Web pages you can read HTML documentation. But it may be harder to download and save/organize all pieces of a large docu-

ment. You’ll need Microsoft Word software (or free reader) to read MS Word files. Flexible PDF is becoming the most popular online document format, but it too requires software, Adobe’s Acrobat Reader, for viewing. Fortunately, this is free and easy to download/install; visit Adobe [<http://www.adobe.com/>] and click Get Adobe Reader.

Some manufacturers take a different approach, offering search tools and links within their Web sites for different material, such as overviews, tutorials, problem solving tips, even video clips illustrating usage.

Finally, LiveManuals [www.live-manuals.com] takes an interesting/interactive approach, providing interactive product demonstrations. Though it doesn’t include every product — office equipment and appliances aren’t presently well-represented -- the Wish List page accepts nominations for items to add.

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Boo!



Beginning next month, the Cursor will be available via Email as a pdf file. The usual file size is in the 300 - 400 kb arena. This is important to you if you are limited to a dial-up connection to the Internet.

This is a test to determine the logistics of sending a 300 - 400 kb file to WACUG Members – can the infrastructure of the respective ISP's handle the increased volume? Assuming the test is successful, we expect the Email option to continue. You will also continue to receive the hardcopy version via U.S. Mail.

To sign-up for the Email edition, send your request with your name and Email address to: cursor@wacug.org/

As long as your membership remains in good standing, you will continue to receive both the Email and hardcopy versions each month.

Thank you for participating in the Email delivery trial,

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Call Geof Goodrum, 703-370-7649 evenings or mail change of address to:
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2005 WAC Membership/Renewal Application

2005 Dues are for the Calendar Year and include Disk Library Discounts, and WAC's monthly newsletter, *The Cursor*, by 1st Class mail to your home.

Individual/Corporate/Family Dues: \$25.00

Dues for remainder of 2005, \$15.00

Remit payment in person at the WAC Membership table on meeting day, or by mail to:

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Make checks payable to WAC. Please do not send cash by mail. *Thank you for joining WAC!*

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Programming Language(s) _____

Hardware Upgrades/Repair List others below

Next WAC Meetings: • October 15 • November 19 • December 10 • January 21

**Call (703) 370-7649 for the latest meeting information or Visit our Web Site at:
<http://www.wacug.org>**

October Meeting will be held at
Micro Center in the
Pan AM Shopping Center.
Intersection of Route US 29
and Nutley St.
Follow the signs to the
meeting room.

Service Desks Open at 12:30
Meeting Starts at 1:00 PM
FREE ADMISSION
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Driving Directions:

Within the Fairfax area

From West of the Beltway on US-66, go to Nutley Street Exit. Exit South onto Nutley Street. Micro Center is in the Pan Am Shopping Center at the first intersection.

From Washington National Airport

From the airport take US-66 West. Go to Nutley Street Exit. Exit South onto Nutley Street. Micro Center is in the Pan Am Shopping Center at the first intersection.



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