



The Cursor



Monthly Newsletter of the
Washington Area Computer User Group

Meeting Location
Fairfax County
Government Center



Next Meeting:
January 12, 2008



Presidential Bits

January 2008 Meeting

By Paul Howard

Happy New Year! May you find the time to fulfill all your resolutions - especially those dealing with computer backup, security, and healthful living!

January's WACUG meeting serves as our annual corporate meeting, where we hold election of officers. If your dues were paid through January, you've received an email ballot. If your membership isn't up-to-date, you may pay at the meeting on January 12th, (2nd Saturday), at the Fairfax County Government Center, Rm 2/3, from 12:30 - 3:30 PM.

Our schedule for 2008 is posted on the "Meetings" page of the web site - <http://www.wacug.org/meetings.html> Please note that, because of scheduling issues, half of our meetings in 2008 will be on dates other than the traditional 3rd Saturday of the month.

At our December meeting, we were challenged by a Toshiba laptop that would fail to type characters in a Yahoo web mail internet session, but work fine in Microsoft Word. We played a number of silly videos from Internet sources, including a

great spoof on Vista. Our primary topic was a home networking video from Scott Mueller's 18th edition of his book, Upgrading and Repairing PCs. See: <http://www.informit.com/promotions/promotion.aspx?promo=135473>

Bill Walsh will be our featured speaker in January, with a presentation on Google Earth. He plans to give general info about this software---its origins, its general features---and will talk about the subscription product, Google Earth Plus, which has a few neat features for the GPS technophile, but there are limitations. (The last time Bill checked, Google Earth only allowed Magellan and Garmin units to upload Points of Interest/Waypoints, which means a lot of the newer GPS gadgets can't use GE+ product.) Bill will also talk about the "tours" they feature and how the "Google Earth Community" is creating a bunch of individualized points of interest using KML - content overlays.

Bill is researching Google Earth's image sources, noting that some areas have recently been enhanced, while some have been blurred (Dick Cheney's undisclosed location?) Bill says "There's a lot of little things

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Lloyd's Web Sites for January, 2008

by Lloyd Johnson, WACUG Member

<http://www.wacug.org/> is the URL for the Washington Area Computer User Group. Visit it for past issues of Web Sites with hyperlinks

January Sites

1. **GovBudget.com** – <http://govbudget.com/front/> This site offers a user-friendly web portal to the Federal Budget. Site goal is to provide clear, accurate and nonpartisan information on how our government raises and spends nearly \$3 trillion per year.
2. **How Earthquakes Work** – <http://science.howstuffworks.com/earthquake.htm> This edition of How Stuff Works examines what causes earthquakes and explores why they can have such a devastating effect on us.
3. **StumbleUpon** – <http://www.stumbleupon.com/> StumbleUpon helps you channel surf the internet and discover great websites, videos, pictures, blogs and more - all according to your interests. As you Stumble and rate the sites you visit (using a thumbs up/down), StumbleUpon learns what you like and is able to deliver you better recommendations.
4. **All Acronyms** – <http://www.all-acronyms.com/> The main purpose of the site is to have a convenient lookup tool for those who need to quickly find an acronym definition.
5. **2008 Central**– www.2008central.net 2008 Central seeks to become the single most comprehensive information source for the upcoming 2008 Presidential Election. What you can expect from 2008 Central: Non-partisan coverage of candidates; Campaign analysis; Access to videos of campaign stops, speeches and interviews; Quality information, and Frequent updates.
6. **San Francisco Public Library: Amusing America** – <http://sfpl.org/news/onlineexhibits/amusing/> Amusing America is the premiere exhibition of the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society, co-sponsored by the San Francisco Public Library with support from the California State Library. Amusing America is the story of participatory commercial amusements in American cities - San Francisco in particular - and how they changed the way Americans lived.
7. **Countdown to Digital TV**
Americans with older analog television which receive signals by antennas must switch to digital by 2/17/1009. Cable subscribers or satellite services should ask their providers if they need special equipment. A converter box will change digital signals to analog; enabling one to use their old TV. These boxes cost \$50 to \$75 each, but starting 1 January 2008 U.S. house-

Lloyd's Web Sites continues next page

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about this program that are interesting, and I hope to make it informative and fun for all attendees.”

Start the New Year off right - introduce a friend to WACUG! New members are the life blood of any organization. Help your friends and neighbors find “Real PC Power!”



Reminder: The January meeting is our annual corporate meeting which includes the election of WACUG officers for 2008. You must be a member in good standing in order to vote in the election. This means you must have already paid your 2008 dues, or pay them in person prior to the election.

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 start at 7:00 PM



GNU/Linux SIG

By Geof Goodrum

ASUS Eee PC 701 4G Super Mobile Internet Device

One of the hottest selling notebook computers of the season is the ASUS Eee PC 701 (<http://usa.asus.com/products.aspx?l1=24>). The Eee PC is designed to be an easy-to-use portable computer for typical home and office applications. NotebookReview.com gave the Eee PC top rating for notebooks under \$400 (<http://www.notebookreview.com/default.asp?newsID=4055&review=Asus+Eee+PC>); both the professional and owner reviews have compared it very favorably to much more expensive laptops, complimented its construction quality, and say “it just works.”

The Eee PC is an ultralight notebook (under 2 lbs without included AC adapter and carrying case) with a 7 inch, 800x480 resolution screen, integrated Intel GMA 900 graphics processor, Intel Celeron M ULV 900MHz central processor, 512 MB DDR2 memory, 10/100 Mbps Ethernet port, 56Kbps modem, 802.11b/g wireless, three USB 2.0 ports, an MMC/SD memory card slot, an external VGA display port, 3.5 mm audio in and out jacks, an

internal microphone, and built-in stereo speakers. The Eee PC does not have a mechanical hard drive, but uses a 4 GB solid state drive. The Eee PC also has a built-in 640x480 webcam.

The pre-installed operating system is a modified version of Xandros GNU/Linux, although Microsoft Windows XP drivers are included. The system includes over forty software applications, including the Firefox web browser, OpenOffice.org office applications, media players supporting common music and video formats (Xandros licenses proprietary codecs), . The desktop interface is simplified with clear, functional icons. Although hidden, the Linux console is available to power users who want to customize

the system and install new applications.

The Eee PC has 24x7 phone support along with a support DVD and user guide. The unit has a two year manufacturer’s warranty. The battery warranty is six months.

There are some drawbacks. Due to its compact size, the keyboard and mousepad are smaller than usual. However, users can connect a full-size USB keyboard, mouse, and external monitor for desktop use. Battery life is limited to about 3.5 hours without recharging. The system does not have the performance for serious 3D gaming, but is more than adequate for the included applications.



Lloyd’s Web sites for January 2008 from page 2 continues below

holders may request up to \$40 coupons to apply to the purchase of these boxes.

Call 1-888-225-5322 or go to: www.dtv.gov

8. Recalls.gov – <http://recalls.gov/> Find recent recalls of consumer products, motor vehicles, boats, foods, medicines, cosmetics, and environmental products. Also, search for past recalls.
9. AIRNow – <http://www.airnow.gov/> The U.S. EPA, NOAA, NPS, tribal, state, and local agencies developed the AIRNow Web site to provide the public with easy access to national air quality information. The Web site offers daily AQI forecasts as well as real-time AQI conditions for over 300 cities across the US, and provides links to more detailed State and local air quality Web sites.
10. Time & Life Pictures – <http://www.timelifepictures.com/> Time & Life Pictures is an unparalleled collection of striking imagery, documenting past and present events in politics, culture, celebrities and the arts. The collection includes some of the greatest photographers of the 20th century, such as Alfred Eisenstaedt, Margaret Bourke-White, Andreas Feininger, John Dominis, Nina Leen and Gjon Mili, whose photographs have adorned the pages of Time, Life and other Time Inc. publications. The online collection comprises over 425,000 digital files, representing millions of original prints and negatives archived by the Time Inc. Picture Collection.



Keeping Up

by Paul Howard (WACUG)

The Christmas season provided the opportunity for me to experiment with some newer television technology. My mom, who lives in the Hudson Valley of NY State, about 55 miles north of NYC, needed a new television. Her ten year old set had been flakey for a while, and the picture, if it appeared at all, only filled about a third of the screen.

Shopping options in that part of the world tend to be somewhat limited. Last time we looked for a TV set for her we had to do a fifty mile death march on the other side of the river. Other considerations included a need to fit in an existing cabinet, and lack of enthusiasm for flat panel, 16 x 9 displays. Thus, I decided the shopping would be most easily handled here, in the Fairfax County shopper's paradise.

The considerations noted above pointed to a conventional CRT television. Searching the web sites of big box retailers Circuit City and Best Buy revealed that these chains have eliminated or drastically reduced CRT sets from their inventory. A check of Sears and KMart quickly revealed their common ownership - their web sites share a



common design. While each store carried several likely candidates, the best bet appeared to be an RCA Truflat model, number 20F504T, offered by KMart

The specs for this TV show that it has an ATSC/NTSC/QAM tuner - thus being capable of receiving analog television signals (NTSC), which disappear on February 17th, 2009; digital television signals (ATSC), which offer high definition capability; and unscrambled digital signals from cable TV systems, using its Quadrature Amplitude Modulation (QAM) tuner. This is a standard definition TV, but will display digital HD signals.

As it happens, I did a minor death march, striking out at the Chantilly KMart on Thanksgiving Day, after a commercial during a football game alerted me to KMart being open. (It turned out not to be a total loss - I picked up a "boom box" for Mom, so she'd have something to play the many cassette tapes she loves. Boom box tape players seem to last 200 plays, or four years, whichever occurs first.)

I found the TV the next day in Herndon, and wrestled it home to my basement - after all, I had to check it out and make sure it was going to work before hauling it on a 300+ mile trip to NY. At 46 pounds, this was an awkward beast, especially since it works better to turn the box upside down, and slide the TV out on its top - but done on a concrete basement floor, that's a delicate process. Then, turn it over, plug into power, insert batteries in the remote, and hook up the antenna cable - literally, since as long time readers of this column know - I still rely on over-the-air signals, captured by two antennas in the attic of my garage. (I'm anxiously

awaiting FIOS TV - but that's another story.)

Going through the set-up menus, I started the analog channel scan, which completed in a couple of minutes, and found 26 stations. Now the big test - I didn't know what would happen when I ran the digital channel scan. The digital channels are all in the UHF TV band, with newly assigned channel frequencies for both the local VHF and UHF TV stations' digital broadcasts. Like waiting for an elevator, the digital channel scan seemed to take forever - I'd estimate three or four times as long as the analog scan, probably 6-8 minutes. On completion, the scan had found 25 channels!

What I was going to see was a real mystery, 'cause I'd been having lots of trouble with UHF band TV since the stations started converting to digital, with new transmitting antenna systems. Over the last couple of years, for us Channel 32 has gone from excellent to terrible to blue screen to weak. MPT on 22 went from a very usable PBS alternative to WETA on 26, to rarely watchable. Channel 56, MHZ - the non PBS public station, that we loved for the International Mystery series of subtitled crime / mysteries was totally unpredictable, and usually bad.

Amazingly, only one of the digital channels, 14-1 proved to be in blue screen (no or very weak signal) mode - no loss, since my Spanish is limited to "fajitas" or "ranchaladas." Also surprising, generally, regardless of what UHF channel / frequency the digital station is actually broadcasting on, the identification shown is that of its original assignment, i.e. - WRC is identified as 4-1, NBC4

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HD. As we know them, channels 4, 7, and 9 each have a “-2” standard definition broadcast of weather information. WJLA (7) also has a 7-3 “Local Point” standard def broadcast of area club acts. WETA is broadcasting three standard def channels in addition to its high def regular content. MHZ is broadcasting five programs simultaneously, and was the only station identifying its broadcasts as 30-1, 30-2, etc., - the newly assigned frequency being UHF channel 30. Old channel 66 is broadcasting four programs at a time. Other digital channels I was able to receive include WTTG 5-1; WDCA 20-1; WHUT 32-1; WDCW 50-1. (These comments on content are based on only about two hours viewing time.)

When I connected the TV to the Time Warner cable system at my mother’s house, I found out what waiting for the digital channel setup scan could really be like - in short, pack a lunch! My recollection was the process took twenty minutes.

I found this TV purchase to be an interesting learning experience - clearly, the reception of off the air, digital signals is possible, with evidence of the possibility of additional programming without the monthly expense of satellite, cable, or FIOS services. Sources of “off the air” antennas and associated equipment, such as www.solidsignal.com, offer hope to those who are “no cable” holdouts, or want to receive TV signals on secondary televisions after the shutdown of analog broadcasting. One can only be optimistic that the digital conversion boxes, to be available “real soon now,” to allow the reception of off the air digital broadcasts for use by analog tv receivers, will provide a quality viewing experience for those who

don’t wish to make the investment in new HD digital tv receivers.



Old to New Computer Files Transfer: Careful!

By Charles W. Evans, Reviews
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It’s that time of year when many of you will buy a new computer. And one of the biggest chores of getting a new computer is moving all of your stuff from one to the other. This review and the one next month should be helpful in transferring or moving your “stuff”.

I have the advantage of visiting numerous SIGs each month and listening to individual problems. Moving files or “migrating” programs can be a real head ache, but it doesn’t have to be.

A few comments first:

1. When you install a program under Windows, that program not only places most of its files in its own folder (subdirectory). It also places files in various Windows folders. You must move the files in the Windows folders as well.
2. To remove a program, you cannot simply delete the folder. That’s only the first step, although not the best. You must uninstall the whole program. Most programs now include

an “uninstall” feature. Please use it.
3. Transferring a file or folder from old to new computer just does that - it simply moves files from one place to another. If you have the original installation media, that may be all that you need. Install the program on the new computer then move data files from the old computer.

4. If you don’t have the original install media, what then? Next month, I’ll review a program that will actually move the entire program, including files in the Windows folders, to your new computer.

CAUTION: The trick is know what to move. If you’re moving from XP to Vista, keep in mind that some of your programs may no longer work with Vista. And you have to be careful when you’re moving full versions of a program from XP on top of demo versions on your new Vista machine. So spend some time up front doing some housecleaning on both machines before you start the process.

What won’t move easily? Some programs with security features may need to have the user key put back in or the entire program reinstalled. Anti-Virus software won’t move successfully because it is so coupled with the operating system.

PS: You can also use these two reviewed devices to copy files between your laptop and desktop computer. In addition, you don’t have to deal

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with firewalls or Ethernet - some transfer programs use an internet type connection.

File Transfer or Migration

Belkin USB Cable Transfer



For a basic utility and simplest way to transfer files from one place to another, use this Belkin Easy Transfer Cable for Windows Vista. Load the special drivers from the included CD. Plug in the USB2 cable into each computer and open Explore.

You should see your old computer as another device or hard drive. Then move the files from the old to the new computer as you would move any other file. Suggestion: I would Copy rather than Move. That way you have a backup on your old computer...just in case.

The Windows Easy Transfer Wizard automatically appears and lets you select the files to copy. With a couple of clicks, your photos, music, settings, and more transfer, without requiring time-consuming CD burning or a network.

Belkin includes free file-synchronization software. With "One-Click," PCsync software automatically synchronizes files, folders, music, photos, video, etc. between your PCs. It works on Win98SE through Vista.

What can you expect in your box? An Easy Transfer Cable for Windows Vista, a brief Quick Start Guide (a more complete Guide is on the CD) and a CD with Windows Easy Transfer and PCsync® soft-

ware. For more info and updates, go to www.belkin.com.

LapLink Migration Kit



For a more comprehensive solution to move your stuff from your old computer to your new Vista computer, look at LapLink's version 11.5 or 12 which use an optional USB2 for transfers. This device uses a TCP/IP connection, which, for us non-guru's, means an internet connection procedure. This Kit is very efficient and effective, but it does require some time to set up AND you've got to read the few pages of instructions. They are non-technical, but you have to follow them explicitly.

Newer versions include a Windows Vista transfer wizard that attempts to bring over some of your settings from one to the other (it helps if you buy a special cable). Simply select the files or programs you wish to transfer and press the button. To assist you in correctly moving files, LapLink has included a "sync" program - easy to use and oh, so handy.

I have used the Vista wizard on a handful of PCs and none were adequately transferred in my opinion. The data files were moved okay for the most part but the process was cumbersome and crashed on some computers when using the network options. There were timeouts and snags. Transfer security is very tight from lockout protection to folder

level security.

Warning: It is important to install the USB cable correctly. Do not attach the cable to the computer until directed. Incorrectly installing the cable can result in problems in the Device Manager, and can prevent Laplink from connecting properly. If it is currently attached, please unplug it before proceeding. For more info and software updates go to www.laplink.com.

Not sure either of the above will do what you want? That's understandable. Hang loose for the January '08 review of an excellent file/program mover.

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The New, The Best, and The Worst - November 2007

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Disruptive Open Source Programs.

The prestigious British weekly news magazine, The Economist, carries a 14-page special report on Innovation in its October 13th, 2007 issue. As you might expect it is about innovation in entrepreneurship, not the kind associated with the name Edison and symbolized by a light bulb. Besides, Edison did not invent light bulbs but only improved them to make them practical and marketable.

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Of the different kinds of entrepreneurial innovation the articles discuss, a particular one caught my attention. Referring to Clayton Christensen, author of *The Innovator's Dilemma - When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail*, *The Economist* writes: "... even successful firms can get into trouble by trying to please their best customers. Because there may be only a handful of highly profitable, high-end buyers who want and can afford more features and better performance, firms can invest heavily in trying to deliver what this elite group wants, even though the resulting products may end up being beyond the reach of the majority of customers." That opens the door to producers of "inferior" but perfectly adequate, lower priced products to compete successfully and to delegate the incumbents to market niches. Christensen calls this "disruptive" innovation, as opposed to innovation due to product improvements or novel marketing techniques. As examples he mentions how personal computers took over most of the tasks of IBM's mainframes and Digital Equipment's mini-computers and how Nucor's highly efficient mini-mills outdid US Steel's blast furnaces.

Another such disruptive innovation that comes to mind is the development of Open Source software in competition with expensive, overly elaborate programs currently in use by the majority of computers in the Western world. Most users of MS Word never use, or even know or care about, its many arcane features and could save themselves a lot of money by using the free OpenOffice.org's Writer that has most of the same features. Even simpler, but

perfectly adequate text processors are available for free, such as Abiword. The OpenOffice suite also includes perfectly adequate offsets for most users of MS Excel spreadsheet, PowerPoint presentation manager, Database, and Drawing programs. Recently IBM announced that it would open up its Corel Office suite, and in particular the powerful Lotus spreadsheet program, to the Open Source community and participate in Open Source program developments.

Firefox already has taken over a large corner of Microsoft Internet Explorer's browser market, based on its simplicity, ease-of-use, and the perception that it is less susceptible to virus attacks. The Thunderbird email program is giving MS Outlook Express a run for its money with easy plug-in access to spell checkers in multiple languages and the expectation of greater safety in everyday use.

Most of the powerful image manipulation features provided by the expensive Adobe Photoshop program are available for free in The Gimp, another Open Source program free for the downloading. Many free programs are available to convert documents back and forth to PDF format, long the carefully preserved domain of the expensive Adobe Acrobat program. There are long lists of other Open Source programs capable of performing just about any function required by users, including an excellent simple checkbook and bookkeeping program, GNU-Cash and a good genealogy program, GRAMPS. Interestingly, almost all Open Source programs run just as well in Linux, without the need to invest in the performance-hogging, malware-susceptible, expensive MS Windows operating

systems, Vista in particular.

Open Source programs, including the Linux operating system, are making only slow inroads in the Western world, especially the USA, due to the overwhelmingly strong marketing legacy exerted by Microsoft. The rest of the world, in which the USA seems to occupy an ever-diminishing niche, is less overwhelmed by Microsoft and mostly can't afford its expensive, excessively complex products. Open Source programs are widely used in Asian countries like India and China, and stand to gain further in features and reliability due to inputs from highly capable local programmers. Those countries are only now entering the computer age with literally billions of potential computer users about to acquire their own systems. There is no question what software those new computers will use. Meanwhile, in the Western world Open Source programs have found early adaptors amongst government offices at several levels with limited financial resources for software, that have growing needs for use in computers that are already available at low cost.

It may take some time, but the advance of Open Source software is unstoppable because it makes perfect sense. Smart major computer companies, such as IBM and Sun Microsystems, recognize this and have decided to switch, rather than fight. Microsoft, mostly dependent on software sales, may well end up being disrupted like the lamplighters of long ago. Tux, the Linux mascot, might paraphrase the Borg, the StarTrek cyborgs that "assimilated" whole planet populations: "You WILL Be Disrupted... Resistance is Futile."

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New, Best, Worst from page 7

(Thanks to Louis Ritz for *The Economist*)

Thermal Color Printing

Thermal printers, still used in cash registers, have been around for about 50 years. They print in black-and-white on special paper using rows of heaters to activate the ink. They are sturdy, small and inexpensive since the only moving parts are there to advance the paper.

Scientists at Zink Imaging have developed heat-activated inks in the three complementary colors, cyan, magenta, and yellow, needed to generate full-color images. The dyes used are expected to be stable over time and are still being improved. A hand-held printer will be available by year-end. 2x3 inch sheets of paper will sell for about \$2.00 per 10-pack. Expensive still, but a promising development. Over time the prices are certain to come down (*Chem.&Eng. News*, 9/10/2007)

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Connected or Discombobulated?

Ramblings by Judy Lococo,
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Everywhere you look today, someone is always talking about “connectivity” and how our new, improved world demands it. The more I see of this phenomenon, the less I think we are connected. The Internet and identity thieves have made us a nation of anonymity, and paranoid anonymity at that. We are electronically connected, but are losing the ability to look into people's eyes, read their body English, listen to the voice inflections, and interact one-on-one with another human being.

It's even impossible to keep up with all the acronyms! WiFi, DSL (I remember ADSL), URL, etc., have become entrenched in our lives so much that we no longer flinch when we hear one of them. And they keep stacking up at warp speed, so that even the nerdiest of us has to visit a website occasionally to find out what one means.

The morning newspaper used to be a shared experience at the breakfast table. Now it's read online with only the parts that a reader prefers coming across the screen, and you don't discuss your opinions with the rest of the family, nor listen to theirs. You no longer have to scan through the business section to find the crossword puzzle. You don't have to pore through the sports pages to find automobile tires. IOW (another TLA), you don't even have to talk to a soul without being considered rude.

Going to an office is not nearly as important as it once was. Now employees can work an 80-hour-week at home, without health insurance or retirement benefits. But you can work in jeans or sweats, so there's considerable savings on wardrobe.

The chat rooms are so rampant with predators that parents are restricting their children's surfing, and rightly so. But these chat rooms are yet another example of not connecting

with a real, live, breathing person, only an image, which may or may not be accurate.

Email has replaced letter writing to the extent that I have to wonder if script handwriting will also be obsolete soon. Remember calligraphy? Have you seen any within the last three years? Will the dictionary of the future have “u r 2” as a comeback phrase? Will schoolchildren even be taught English grammar or typing?

And, of course, how could I not mention the answering machines, voice mail, and all other means of not speaking to people who are trying to contact you. If you reach a person on the first attempt, are you supposed to believe that person is not busy? Is this why nobody bothers to answer their phone any more, only return phone calls? If all one does is return phone calls, what happens when the one you're calling also only returns phone calls?

As if all the time spent behind a monitor isn't enough, our automobile windows are now designed to keep others from seeing you. So if there is actually a person around who is considerably higher up on the social ladder than you are, you have to roll your window down for them to see you! How gauche is that?

I have to admit, I'm just as guilty as the rest of the world of spending too much time on email and INet (look it up already...) It is a lot of fun to laugh out loud at a joke that somebody forwards, or follow a link to a YouTube video. I am not addicted, but afraid of what will I will have to face if I don't check it daily. I guess you could say I'm not connected, I'm tethered. <BWG>

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Weird Windows Behavior

By Sandy Berger, compukiss.com
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Have you ever been completely dismayed by your computer? Does it seem to do unusual things that you can't trace back to any of your actions? Well, you are not alone. This happens to all computer users. In the computer world, unusual things sometimes happen. Here is a list of some weird computer behavior and how to combat it.

Icons disappear

Right-click on any open area of the computer desktop, then chose Arrange Icons By. If your icons have accidentally become hidden there will be no checkmark in front of Show Desktop Icons. Just click that option and your icons will reappear.

Unusual windows appear

Windows has a lot of keyboard shortcuts that can be accidentally accessed. For instance, when I started this column, I wanted to hit the Shift key and the letter "h" for the word Have. However, my finger slipped and I hit the Ctrl key and the letter "h" instead. A window popped up asking what I wanted to Find and Replace, which is not at all what I intended. If this ever happens you to you can usually just close the pop up window, but occasionally you have to look a little further into what happened. For instance, when working in Microsoft Word, if you accidentally hit Ctrl+N, a new window will appear making it look like you just lost your entire document. If you look closely you will be able to figure out that all you have to do is close the new window and the document you were work-

ing on will reappear.

If you can't figure out what happened or you get caught in a loop, restarting your computer will usually bring you back to normal.

Lost toolbars

As noted before, an errant key press can cause a problem. This time the culprit is one of the F keys. Accidentally pressing the F11 key can make the toolbars disappear. This is often used as a feature when you want to show something in what they call "full screen mode". If this happens to you, just press F11 again to make the toolbars return.

The toolbar moves

Have you ever had the toolbar that usually appears on the bottom of the screen show up on the side or top of the screen? There is an easy way to get it back where it belongs. Just place your cursor right next to, but not on, the Start button. Then hold the mouse button down and drag the toolbar back where it belongs.

Dramatic slowdown

A dramatic slowdown can mean that your hard disk is filling up. The computer uses the hard disk as sort of a scratch pad when it computes, so when your hard drive starts to fill up, it can slow the computer down significantly. Click on My Computer and highlight the drive called Local Disk (C:). Look at the Details area to see how much space is free. You should have at least 10% of your hard drive free. If you don't, a hard drive cleanup is in order. Delete unnecessary programs and backup old files and photos to an external drive or CD so you can delete them from the hard disk. You can use the Disk Cleanup utility to empty the recycle bin and delete unnecessary temporary files. To access it, click on Start,

choose All Programs, then click on System Tools where you will find Disk Cleanup listed. It will walk you through the cleanup. Once your hard disk has more free space, your computer will perk up considerably. You might also consider defragmenting your computer to speed it up. The Disk Defragmenter utility is in the System Tools area. Remember there are other things like viruses and spyware that can also slow down your computer.

No sound

Sometimes the sound gets muted by mistake. Look at the taskbar at bottom of the screen. In the right hand side you will see a small icon that looks like a speaker. If it has a red X on it, the sound has been muted. Click on the icon, then click to remove the checkmark in front of the word Mute. If you don't see this icon, go to the Control Panel and choose Sounds or Sounds and Audio Devices where you will find a place to uncheck the Mute option. Many laptops and some desktops also have a volume button on the keyboard which you can use to mute and unmute the speaker.

Mouse shutters

If your mouse is hard to control or acting erratic, it may need a cleaning. An optical mouse with a flat bottom just needs a cleaning with a damp cloth. If your mouse has a roller ball on the bottom, remove the ball and clean the rollers inside the mouse with a Q-tip soaked with isopropyl alcohol.

Hope this gets you through some of those weird Windows moments in your life.

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Moving on to Vista

– Part II

by Neil Stahfest, Shareware
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One of the most irritating things about Windows Vista is the repetitious messages that appear whenever you attempt to install a new program. First you see a box with that asks, “Are you sure you want to run this program?” Once you get past this point, you see another box which says, “Unidentified program wants access to your computer”, “Allow” or “Cancel”. In some cases, once the program is installed, every time you attempt to run it you see a warning, “A program needs your permission to continue”.

I suppose this is part of Microsoft’s attempt to improve security and protect users from “malware”. For a long-time, “experienced”, Windows User, these warnings seem like overkill. One of the first things I did was to search the Internet for a way to turn them off. Microsoft will tell you not to do this (it weakens their security system) but, for the knowledgeable user, here is the solution. Click Start --> Control Panel. In the left panel, make sure that you are in the Classic View. Double-click User Accounts. Click “Turn User Account Control on or off”. Clear the check box and click OK. Reboot the computer.

I’m not sure if I like the new Vista Start menu. You open it by left-clicking on the Start button or pressing the Windows key. The colors are more brilliant in the new menu and the order of some things has been changed to place things

that are used more frequently near the top. For those who prefer something closer to what you see with Windows XP, Microsoft has provided an alternative. Put your mouse pointer on the Task Bar at the bottom of the screen and left-click. In the window that appears click on “Properties”. Click on the Start Menu tab; then click on the button for a “Classic Start Menu” and click OK. Notice that at the bottom of this page is a hyper-link (blue text) “How do I change the way the Start Menu looks”. Click on it to see the many options.

For those who want to change the right half of the NEW Start menu, place your mouse pointer on the Task Bar at the bottom of the screen again and right-click. In the window that appears click on “Properties” and then Start Menu tab and click on the “Customize” button. The top half of the screen shows all of the items that are available and the manner that they are available (you’ll probably have to scroll down to see everything). Point and click to turn items on and off. Experiment a little. Turn things on and off. You can reverse the selections that you made if you don’t like them or click on the “Use Default Settings” button to restore everything to the original condition. Note that you can do the same thing if you select the “Classic Start Menu” instead of “Start Menu”.

There was one “last” convenience item that I wanted to add to my desktop. I like to go directly to “Computer” (it used to be called “My Computer” in Windows XP) for fast access to hard drives and file folders without going through the Start Menu. This is easy to set up in Vista - just right-click on an empty area of the desktop and click

on “Personalize”. On the left side of the window, under “Tasks”, click on “Change Desktop Icons”. Under “Desktop Icons”, click on “Computer” so a check mark appears in the box next to it.

Before you leave this window, notice that you can also change the icons that are used for each of the selected items. You can also pick one of the default icons, click on the “Change Icon” button and select an alternate from a library of icons. If you change your mind about the icon you picked you can click the “Restore Default” button. When you are finished with changes click OK.

Next month we’ll look at more things you can do with the desktop.

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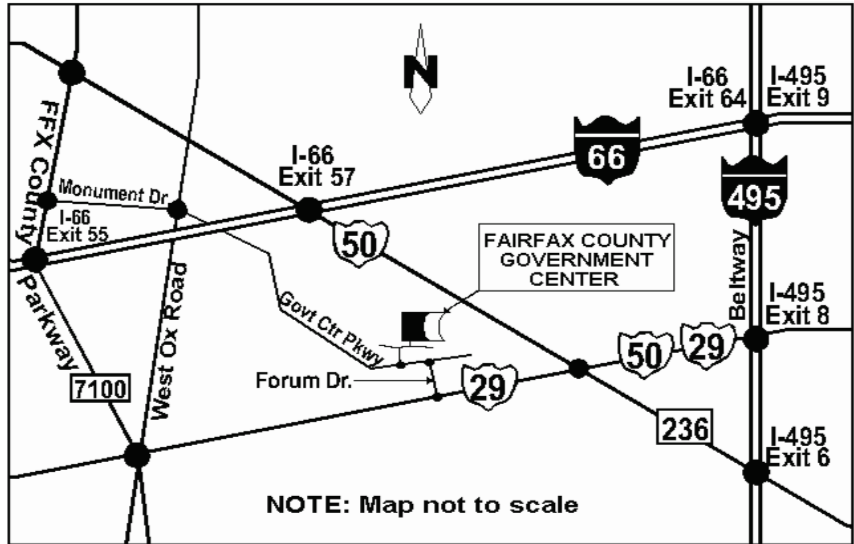
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Need a Sticky Note? Put it on Your Computer!

by Linda Gonse, Editor &
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www.orcopug.org
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Sticky note programs for your pc, as you might imagine, are a utility that takes the place of paper Post-It notes that we all stick to our monitors!

But, sticky note programs I've researched this year discouraged me from even trying them out. Sometimes they didn't have enough features, or if they did, they were expensive.

Then, someone recommended a program called Stickies, created by Tom Revell, at www.zhornsoftware.co.uk/. So, I looked at Stickies on the web page, liked what I saw, and downloaded the program.

My first discovery about the program is that it is small, 953Kb, and doesn't interfere with system files and doesn't write to the registry. In fact, Stickies stores all its information in a single text-based ini file. When was the last time you had a program on your computer as well-mannered as this one?

An icon in your system tray will allow you quick access to Stickies' features and options. From this dropdown list you can manage your Stickies notes, configure them, get help, and download new skins. When you do make a Sticky, it won't disappear unless you tell it to, and it stays where it is placed. You can edit, format, and print them. Make as many as you want, or as many as your screen space will permit. But, to save room and keep Stickies orga-

nized, they will snap to each other and to the sides of the screen where they can be neatly lined up. You can even "hide" them from view.

Besides viewing Stickies on your screen, you can attach them to a website, a document, or a folder, so they only appear when the objects they are attached to are on the screen.

Stickies are portable, too. You can transfer Stickies from one computer to another over your TCP/IP network connection, to your PDA and back again, or send to friends in email.

They can be set to "sleep" and appear on a specified date and time, as announcements or reminders. They can even play a sound alarm so they get your attention when they "awaken"!

What's fun is being able to customize the notes with various fonts, colors and buttons. You can even download customized skins from a

big selection to change the outward appearance of the notes — plain, borderless, simple border, etc. The notes can be resized, just like the sticky notes in Acrobat.

Stickies are located in five categories within the application so you can see and manage them. You can search for information in Stickies, wake sleeping Stickies, restore closed Stickies and detach Stickies.

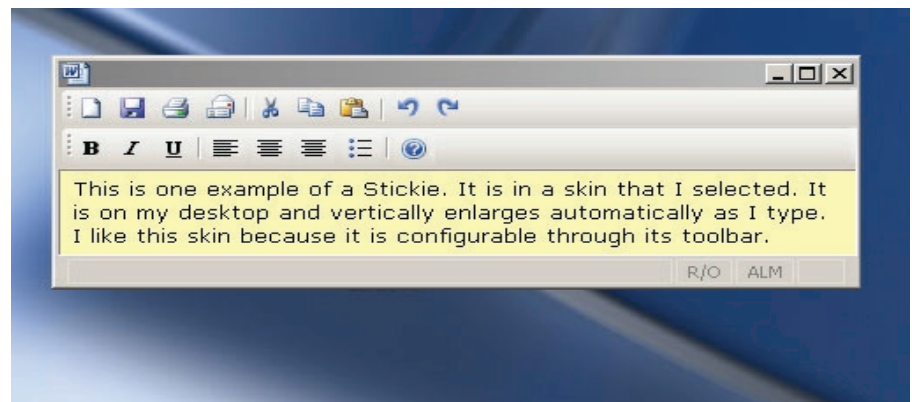
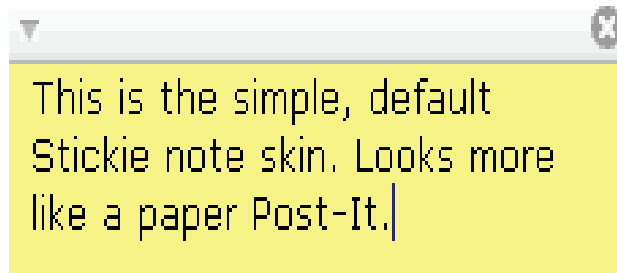
What else? Oh, yes! Another attractive feature of Stickies is...the program is free!

What are you waiting for? Try it out and see if you like this little program as much as I do!

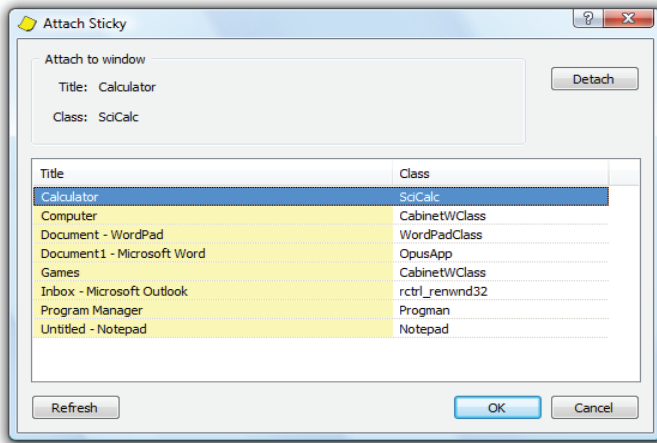
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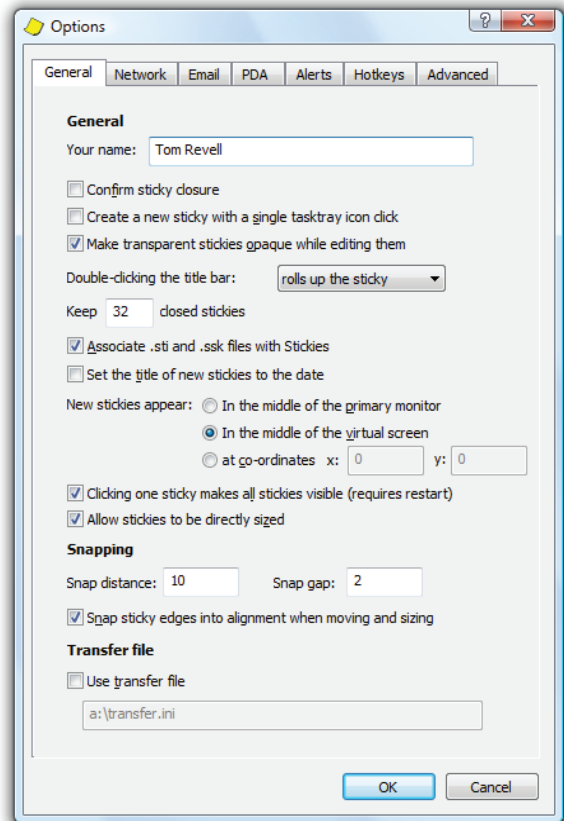
Simple Stickie



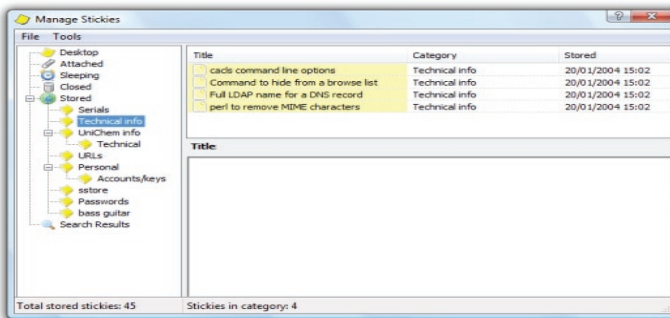
Small Stickie-Note



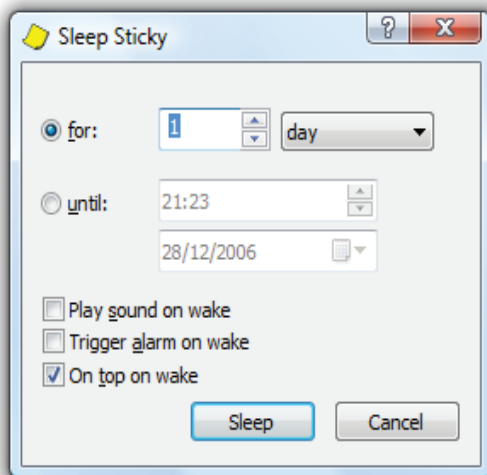
Attach



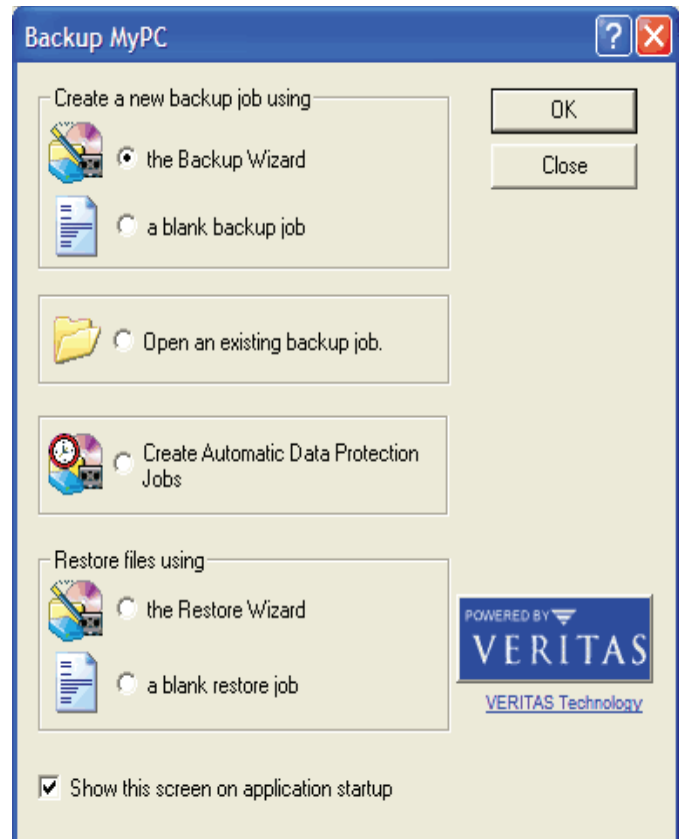
Options



Manage



Sleep



Starter

The Part of Backup Nobody Mentions

by Vinny La Bash, Member of the
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There are dozens if not hundreds of ways to backup your data, but we're not going to talk about that. We're going to discuss the most important part of doing a backup, the part that is hardly ever mentioned. Do you believe that your backup is a sound copy of your data? Would you be at ease if all your files suddenly disappeared from your computer, and all you had was your backup to restore them?

If your confidence fizzled to zero, what's the problem?

You may have developed the most sophisticated and comprehensive backup scheme the computer world has ever seen, but you won't ever know if it's any good unless you test it. Without a valid method of testing, you can have no confidence in your backups. There are many things that can go wrong with a backup, some beyond your control, some not.

Perhaps one day you were in too much of a hurry, and you made a backup of one folder instead of your entire system as you planned. Hmm, no wonder that backup completed so fast.

Your backup disk got exposed to a magnetic field and scrambled all your data.

The CD containing your data was left in the car, and excessive heat warped the media, making it unreadable.

You encrypted your backup and lost

the password to restore it.

You upgraded your backup software, and now it can't read your old backups.

Your new upgraded backup software program becomes corrupted, and you can't make a new backup or restore an old one.

Your new backup program has a great innovative file compression scheme. However, it turns out that it compresses better than anyone expected.

You upgrade your Windows Operating System and your backup software no longer works. (Rare, but it happens).

Let's stop here before you get too depressed to make another backup. What's important is to understand that a great many things can go wrong even with the best backup methods.

The only true test of your backup is to do a restore and see if it works. Does this mean you have to erase all your files, and then run a restore from your backup media? No. Fortunately, there are less chancy ways of verifying your backup data.

One thing you can do is install a second hard drive and restore your data files to the second disk. If your original disk has enough capacity, you can partition it into at least two sections, and restore into one of the new partitions. Hard drives have become almost dirt cheap, so this is not particularly expensive.

Another thing you can do is make at least three backups and store them in three different locations for safety. Keep one copy at home, but in a different room than your computer. Store a second copy at your office or a friend's house, and do the same for him or her. The third copy could be

in a safe deposit box or similar secure location.

If you feel that such measures are not necessary, ask yourself if you are ready to perform the ultimate test. Would you feel totally at ease erasing your hard disk today and restoring it from your backups? If not, then think again.

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Going 100% Digital with Genealogy – or Any – Records

By Tom J. Thiel, President, Lake-Sumter Computer Society, Florida
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In April 2007, I offered a presentation with the same title as above. Our the Lake-Sumter Computer Society's Genealogy Special Interest Group. For a handout see: <http://www.lscs.us/presentations/070412%20Thiel%20Going%20100%25%20Digital%20Handout.pdf>

In my presentation — which was based on an excellent article with a similar title by Dick Eastman in his outstanding Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter Plus Edition — I extensively described the Xerox DocuMate 152 scanner that costs about \$500 with bundled software. This, of course, was the one Mr. Eastman had obtained and on which he based his fine article.

Well, for me at least and for many the roughly \$500 for the DocuMate

152 was a little bit on the pricey side and also it is more of a work group scanner with office document scanning as its primary design criteria.

One of the alternative scanners I found in my research for the presentation and also mentioned in my presentation was the Xerox DocuMate 510, flatbed scanner with an Automatic Document Feeder (ADF) rated at 10 pages per minute.

About a month ago I decided to obtain the DocuMate 510!

PC World has a very nice review of the Xerox 510 at the following web site; <http://www.pcworld.com/article/id,114941-page,1/article.html> — two paragraphs were extracted in the text below.

“If you need to turn a stack of paper documents into editable electronic text, using a scanner with optical character recognition software and an automatic document feeder attachment—like Xerox’s new \$350 DocuMate 510—is a speedy alternative to typing.”

“While the DocuMate 510 is a flatbed model—and therefore takes up more desk space than slimmer sheet-fed scanners—its removable lid allows you to scan pages from books or other bound volumes, including oversize originals. For any business or workgroup that needs an affordable document scanner, the DocuMate 510 is a solid choice.”
End Quote

I was able to find the 510 on the internet from a low of \$298 to a high of \$359. I paid \$312 from Buy.com; however, I found that the local Office Depot (Mount Dora, FL) has the DocuMate 510 for \$299, complete with bundled software.

So far I am totally pleased with my DocuMate 510!

Scanner assembly went effortlessly with the aid of a very well illustrated assembly schematic manual. Installation requires that the software be installed before connecting the 510 to your computer via the USB port.

The 510 came with ScanSoft PaperPort 9.0 which controls the scanner, TextBridge Pro 9.0 for Optical Character Recognition, and ArcSoft Photo Impressions editing software all on one CD-ROM. It also came with a 58-page installation and scanning manual done quite nicely in slick paper, and a 12-month warranty.

After the software was installed, the scanner components were connected to power and then I connected it to the computer with the USB cable. When I attempted to scan a document, however, I received an error message. By entering the error code into Google I was quickly able to determine that I had failed to adequately unlock the shipping lock slider switch.

After sliding the switch, the scanner worked perfectly. The sheet feeder works very well and even handles quite thin papers although hearing those go through the feeder may give one cause to worry a bit.

The ADF handles variable length paper from about 6 inches to up to 14-inch legal length papers — all in the same stack in the ADF. And the fact that the scanner’s cover may be easily removed to copy from books is also a plus for genealogists and for general home applications.

Mr. Eastman, and others, speaks at length on what these scanners and their software, collectively known as a Document Management System, will mean — reducing the number of filing cabinets, safer storage and more rapid and complete retrieval.

All of these are, of course, quite true, but you should be aware that to convert all of your existing file cabinet’s contents to digital information is not something you will be able to achieve quickly! Scanning all of your existing documents, whether your genealogy documentation or your credit card, banking or utility records, will take an appreciable amount of time and effort regardless of the scanner you employ.

At present I am scanning my bank statements, utility bills, medical Medicare and supplemental insurance statements, medical reports and lab analyses, credit cards and the like.

I have not yet begun to scan my Genealogy documents, but intend to — this will be a daunting task; not the scanning but the organizing and assembling of the documents that I have to get them ready for scanning.

When you convert records to a document management system as I am doing with the 510, you need to decide what conversion scenario you will follow: scan all the documents that exist in your files or scan from the day you begin scanning forward.

I have decided to convert most of my documents starting from today forward (except of course for genealogy records). This is simply because it is easier to do this than to “empty the file cabinet first.”

Unlike the DocuMate 152, which is a duplex scanner meaning that both the front and rear of a page are scanned simultaneously with the same pass of the paper through the scanner, the 510 is a simplex meaning that only one side is scanned at a time.

However, the PaperPort Deluxe 9

scanning software packaged with the scanner handles this situation very well. Simply load the stack of papers and scan the front side of all pages. PaperPort will then ask “scan the other side?” and if you wish to you simply turn the stack over and scan the reverse side. The software handles the pagination automatically.

The 510 is very simple to use; one of the more difficult aspects of using it is to remember to load the paper with the face up!

The PaperPort 9.0 software, originally offered by ScanSoft and now by Nuance, works very effectively. One item I would like improved is the default file name, which is “Day of week, Month, Day and Year.pdf.” Other options are available but it appears that all use the current date in one form or another.

So far I have not extensively used the OCR capability as that is a slower scanning process.

Another very useful feature of the PaperPort software is that it is a printer and may be used to print any document directly to a pdf, including documents from the web.

Managing the scanned documents effectively can also be challenging. I created a file folder structure similar to my physical filing cabinet and that seems to work very well so far.

I scan a document or set of documents and then merely drag these and drop them in the appropriate folder. I then rename the file to usually “YYMMDD Plus a Few Descriptive Words” in front of the default file name.pdf. A medical record, for example, would contain the year, month and day of the medical service, the physician’s name and procedure, followed by the default scan date. I find that us-

ing YYMMDD format for my records allows me to sort or otherwise keep a logical file and folder order sequence by date; to use the standard MMDDYY format will not sort logically.

If you are going to scan older records then you should spend some time in document preparation before beginning scanning. Ensuring that documents are in proper order, staples removed, corners straightened, etc., will speed up the scanning process.

And you must verify your copy before discarding the paper document! I am discarding most of the documents I have scanned so far.

All of my scanning to date has been black and white and at 300 dots per inch resolution, which in most cases has been adequate. This will result in a pdf file of perhaps 35KB per page.

If you decide to convert your paper files to 100% digital records, then you simply must practice excellent and very frequent backup procedures. Otherwise you will lose everything! I make a copy on an external drive after every session.

The choice is yours of course, but my advise is: “Go 100% Digital, and do it now!” ###

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