

PALMIA COMPUTER CLUB

January/February 2008



Next Meetings

January 9, 2008

Open Forum Q & A

February 13, 2008

Navigating Palmia Websites

USER FRIENDLY

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President: Barry Robbins
Vice-President: Nick Nickerson
Secretary: Alex Halperin
Treasurer: Bob Ruben
Webmaster: Jerry Moore

User Friendly is an electronic publication for members of the Palmia Computer Club. It is published and distributed during the months of January, March, May, July, September, and November.

Managing Editor: Shelton Stern
Editorial Staff: Eva Schmidler

User Friendly is your newsletter. It's objective is to serve every member. If you have a suggestion for an article for publication, or if you would like information about a specific topic, please contact the Palmia Computer Club President, or the User Friendly editor. This newsletter is a wonderful opportunity for all of us to learn.

Guidelines

Articles (1) must be submitted to the Managing Editor no later than the 10th day prior to the month of publication; (2) should be no longer than 1,200 to 1,500 words (approximately three columns), although longer articles may be published; (3) may be edited by staff for clarity, spelling, grammar, and space available. Articles should be relevant to the membership of the Palmia Computer Club. The choice of articles to be included in any issue is solely the prerogative of the Editorial Staff.

Computer Club Special Interest Groups

SIGs meet from 3:30 to 5:00 P.M. on the specified Fridays unless noted otherwise:

1st Friday- Windows.....Barry Robbins
2nd Friday - Computer Potpourri.....Barry Robbins
3rd Friday - Internet.....Nick Nickerson
4th Friday - Photo Editing & Scanning.....Don Yenche

There is also a HELP SIG! This SIG is intended for beginners to answer your basic questions relating to computers (This is not a class). It meets on the first, third and fourth Mondays of each month at 10:00 A.M. The SIG leader is Joe Lebovitz.

Contacting Board Members and Officers

All Board members and officers are available for help or information via email addresses as follows:

Barry Robbins, President - pcc_pres@cox.net
Nick Nickerson, Vice President - npierce@palmia.com
Alex Halperin, Secretary - ahhalperin@cox.net
Bob Ruben, Treasurer - bobaud@cox.net
Jerry Moore, Webmaster - jerryamoore@cox.net

Palmia Computer Club meetings are scheduled for 7:00 PM on the second Wednesday of every month except July, August and December. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. for Q&A and socializing. Visitors are welcome. For visitors from outside the Palmia community, our address is: 21455 Monterey, Mission Viejo, CA 92692. The parking lot is on the left, just inside the Monterey gate. Telephone: 949-472-5075.

On Feb. 13 Find Out How You Can....

- *download Palmia forms to your computer
- *grant guests gate access without using the telephone
- *manage your PCM account from your computer
- *view information about upcoming Palmia events
- *get club and group news on your computer

- ◆view Computer Club newsletter archives
- ◆receive computing tips and software reviews
- ◆test your knowledge of computers
- ◆play selected, challenging games
- ◆click on direct links to helpful websites

FEBRUARY 13 AT 7:00 PM NAVIGATE PALMIA WEBSITES WITH OUR WEBMASTERS

Palma Computer Club 2008

Our plan is to make 2008 an informative, entertaining year for all members.

Looking Ahead:

January 9 - Member Only Open Forum

Come with your computer/digital photography related questions
Help fellow club members; ask for help yourself; stay connected
Suggest topics for future Club meetings

February 13 - Palma Websites

Have you researched both websites?
Do you know how to print Palma Master forms at home?
How many names are on your "gate access" list?
Can you add a gate access authorization from your own computer?
Have you tried direct links from the Computer Club website?
How many tips on the Computer Club website have helped you
Have you tried challenging games on the Computer Club website?

March 12 - Identity Theft

How vulnerable are you?
Do you know who the thieves are?
What do the thieves want from you, and why?
How can they get your information?
Can you protect your identity? How?

April 9 - Cyber Defender Vendor Presentation

What are the threats to your computer?
What are the risks from these threats?
How complicated is it to protect myself from these threats?
How can it be free? What does "free" really mean?
How can quarantine protect you?
Will I get alerts if there are threats?
How often are there updates and how much do they cost?



This members only Newsletter is intended to bring you information to help make your computing more enjoyable. Let us know if you would like to see an article about a specific topic.

WEB SURFER TIPS

By Jerry Moore

2008 Presidential Election

With so many candidates running for office and the vast multitude of issues facing our country, how do you make an intelligent decision in these upcoming elections? A new website www.connect2elect.com



is an independent, unbiased matching service that uses some of the coolest technology on the Web to give citizens the power to navigate through the oftentimes confusing process of selecting the best candidate for the most important job in America.

One Laptop Per Child



OLPC proposed to design a low cost laptop intended for use by children in developing nations. The laptop is poised to empower and educate children through the use of technology, and connect the world's next generation of thinkers.

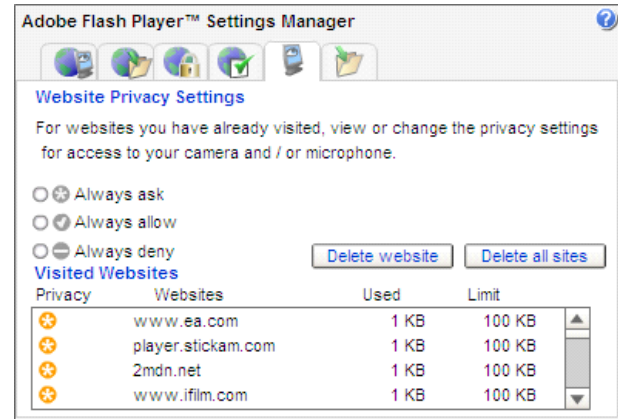
OLPC was founded by Nicholas Negroponte with a core of Media Lab veterans, but quickly expanded to include a wide range of exceptionally talented and dedicated people from academia, industry, the arts, business, and the open-source community. Each individual involved brings a unique skill set, and a deep personal passion, to the project.

To learn more, visit www.laptop.org

It's Not Just Cookies Anymore

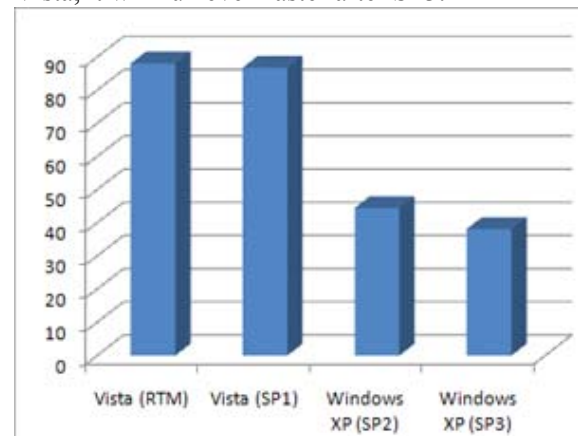
The help section of Internet Explorer 7 describes cookies as follows: *Websites use cookies to offer a personalized experience to users and to gather information about website use. Many websites also use cookies to store information that provides a consistent experience between sections of the site, such as a shopping cart or customized pages. With a trusted website, cookies can enrich your experience*

by allowing the site to learn your preferences or allowing you to skip having to sign in every time you go to the website. However, some cookies, such as those saved by banner ads, might put your privacy at risk by tracking sites you visit. You can choose to remove all cookies, but now many web sites have found another way to track your surfing habits using settings hidden within a Flash player. Visit the site at http://www.macromedia.com/support/documentation/en/flashplayer/help/settings_manager.html to learn more.



Windows XP Service Pack 3 Coming Soon

Sometime in the first quarter of 2008 expect to see the first major update to Windows Vista and the third major update to Windows XP. Hang on to that XP machine. Not only does it already run faster than Vista, it will run even faster after SP3.



Until next time, happy and safe surfing. If you run across any interesting sites you would like to see discussed in future articles, please email me at jerryamoore@cox.net



OUTLOOK EXPRESS MESSAGE WON'T GO AWAY

(From the OC Register)

Question: I have Windows XP. I have been trying to remove an error message that comes up every time I open Outlook express to check my mail.

I tried to send an e-mail to someone whose e-mail address is no longer valid. It says that the message could not be sent because one of the recipients was rejected by the server. No. server error 550, Error No. 0x800CCC79. That's fine, I understand that. She moved, but the window keeps popping up telling me that and I can't get rid of it. Help, Help.

Answer: Without additional data this is a guess, but you should check the Outbox folder in Outlook Express to make sure it is empty. If it is not empty, either delete the message in the Outbox folder or move it to another folder.

This is a fairly common problem because Outlook Express keeps trying to send any messages that are in the Outbox and it does not delete them until they are successfully sent or manually deleted.

Slow Computer?

If your computer is running slowly, you don't necessarily need to reinstall your operating system, make sure that you don't have unwanted programs hogging your memory. Do thorough spyware and antivirus scans, and then uninstall any unnecessary programs. Check your system tray. Are there a lot of programs running? Disable anything that you don't actually need, then see if your system performance improves. If all these fixes don't help, and it's been at least a year since you got your computer or you reinstalled the OS, then your PC might be a good candidate for reinstalling the OS

OPEN THIS FILE WITH THAT PROGRAM

(From the OC Register)

Question: I usually use Windows Picture Viewer or Picasa to view downloaded photos. I bought a copy of Photoshop Elements to do picture editing. After I installed Elements, it automatically changed all of the photos on my hard drive to launch in Elements. I don't want that. I would like to edit in Elements and view in Picasa or Windows Picture Viewer. How can I disable the "automatic launch feature" of Elements and only use it for editing?

Answer: Software programs want to be the software of choice for your PC. When you install new photo software (or music or video or whatever else), it offers to open all photo formats by default. Photoshop Elements apparently hijacked all your images. But this is easy to change.

1. Open a Windows Explorer window, such as "My Computer." From the top menu bar, select "Tools" and "Folder Options."

2. Select the tab "File Types." You should see a list of various file extensions and what software opens them.

3. Now, search for the photo format you normally use. The typical photo extension is .jpg, but higher-end cameras can save photos with .raw or .tif extensions. Double-check how your camera stores pictures on your PC by going to a folder where you store your photos. Look for the letters after the period - such as the jpg in "photo.jpg" - to determine the format.

4. If .jpg is what you use, search for JPG in the "Registered File Types" box. Then look at the "Details" area to see what program opens such files.

5. To pick a new default program, select the "Change ..." button on the right. You'll see a list of possible software. If you don't see the one you want, hit "Browse." This pulls up your "Programs" folder. Find the program you want - for example, Picasa - select the folder and search for the launch file, which should end with an .exe.

6. Remember, you can use this method to pick a default program for music, videos, documents, even Internet sites.

Automobile Computers

Bob Elgines, Editor, Colorado River Computer Club, AZ



Is your Engine Check light on? Do you need a smog test? Is your engine running rough? Is your transmission shifting improperly? Did you know you can read your automobile computer results with a simple plug in device?

All autos from 1996 and newer have common plugs and codes mandated by the Federal Government. Some late 1995 models are also equipped with this type of computer and will have on the label under the hood "OBD II" listed. Prior to 1995 some Engine Check Lights in the car were on timers or mileage meter, and would come on after 50,000 miles and really had nothing to do with the operation of the engine or computer.



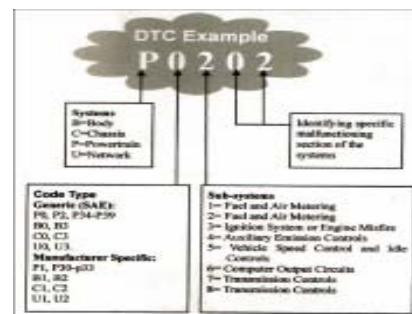
"OBD II" is the model of your Powertrain Control Module (PCM) – terminology for the on-board automobile computer that controls engine and drive train. Some automobile models will use more sensors and controlling devices than others. There are Continuous Monitors, such as Misfire, Fuel System, and Comprehensive Components, and Non-Continuous Monitors, such as EGR System, O2 Sensors, Catalyst, Evap System, Secondary Air, and A/C Systems.

New car dealers charge you \$100 to plug their reader in called a diagnostic test, and guess at what to replace. As an example, EVAP codes can appear for several things such as leaky hoses, gas cap, EVAP solenoid, EVAP pump, etc. All these have to do with the evaporation of fuel from your gas tank. They will replace them one at a time charging you labor and diagnostic charges for each item. That can be \$200 plus parts for each replacement.

Simple code readers start at \$40. The next model up costs \$80 to \$90 and the difference is more readings, memory and allows updates via the web (there have not been any updates since 1999). Top models will cost \$200 to \$250, but allow you to plug the results into your computer via a USB connector giving you much more information and possibly allowing some adjustments.

Most Data Link Connectors (16 pin) are under the dash just left of the steering wheel. Below-right is a basic definition of how to understand the codes that you will read. There are at this time 7000 different codes with several being for Diesel engines only. You have Generic Codes and special Manufacture Codes.

Here is an example of a readout on a PC of the more expensive model readers.



Born In The Garage

By Berry F. Phillips, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

IT was born in a garage! If you had driven by the garage located in a residential neighborhood, you would not have noticed there was anything strange about the garage since it looked like all the other garages attached to residences. However, if you were a neighbor you would be aware of certain unusual activity. You would have at times noticed the cars lining the street, and people going into the garage carrying various equipment usually in the evening. If a neighbor was blessed or cursed as the case may be, with an active imagination several fantasy explanations could come to mind. Perhaps it was a band practicing in the garage but there was no sound of music. Perhaps it was some kind of a terrorist group but no smoke or explosions or sounds of automatic rifles being fired. Perhaps they had a still operating in that garage however there were no police raiding the garage. Well, the garage could be used for all kinds of purposes but one thing is certain; it was not being used as a garage!

The garage was located in Menlo Park, San Mateo County, California and was a maternity ward for the birthing in March 1975 of the Homebrew Computer Club. The 1999 made for television movie, "Pirates of the Silicon Valley (and the book on which it was based, "Fire In the Valley: The Making of the Personal Computer") describes the role the Homebrew Computer Club played in creating the first personal computer. Hackers were attracted to the garage like steel to a magnet since in those days it was just another name for a computer enthusiast like nerd or geek. In the old days a hacker is one who "hacks" through a computer problem and who writes his own code to fix it. In modern times a hacker has unfortunately a negative connotation which should be correctly called a cracker, a combination of the word, criminal and hacker. The hackers wanted to "homebrew" their own machines using parts from the Altair computer kit, computer chips such as Intel 8080, or any other computer equipment. While the members of the Homebrew Computer Club were hobbyists, most of them had electronic engineering or programming backgrounds. I am reminded of Bill Gates' Open Letter to Hobbyists which lambasted the early hackers of the time for modifying and pirating commercial software programs. Several founders of microcomputer companies including Bob Marsh, Adam Osborne, Lee Filsenstein, and Apple founders, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniack were founding members of the Homebrew Computer Club. Thirty years later in 2005, a reunion celebration was held as part of the Vintage Computer Festival sponsored by the Computer Museum. Upon the completion of the activities in the exhibit hall, there was an autograph signing as well as vintage computer equipment for sale that took many a hacker back to those early days they "homebrewed" their computer.

The Homebrew Computer Club's newsletter was one of the major forces that influenced the formation of the Silicon Valley created and edited by the members. The first issue was published in 1975 and continued in several designs ending after 21 issues in December 1977. There have been other Homebrew Computer Clubs that have emerged like the one in the Netherlands that started with a dozen members and operates today with 180 thousand members which is the largest association in the world. Their small newsletter grew into the magazine, "Computer Total."

Today, many of the original members of the Homebrew Computer Club meet today as the 6800 Club named after the Motorola (now Freescale) 6800 microprocessor. Who would have ever thought that a garage would be a maternity ward for the IT (Information Technology) Industry? I have decided to elevate the status of the lowly garage in my mind especially since I found out many of our largest corporations were also born in a garage! Why I am thinking now that a garage should not be for cars or junk but a shrine dedicated to American ingenuity and innovation!

Buying an HDTV

By Pim Borman, SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc.

TV broadcasters are in the process of changing from analog to digital technology. The change will result in more efficient use of the available transmission frequencies and improved image quality. The US Government also had a \$14 billion windfall from auctioning off the available frequency bands to interested parties. As long as there is adequate signal strength digital TV presents a sharp picture, free of snow and distortions. When there is poor reception an analog TV might still present a recognizable picture, but the digital TV won't show any picture at all. It is easier to manipulate digital transmissions, and to make and store perfect copies. The downside is that digital data can be compressed to reduce bandwidth requirements, resulting in loss of quality, and that they are wide open to all sorts of Digital Rights Management (DRM) restrictions that so far have caused problems and remonstrations.

February 17, 2009 is the expected date when broadcasters will stop sending analog signals. TV sets will continue to receive programs from cable and satellite providers who will supply conversion boxes to their customers. TV receivers connected to an antenna will no longer work, unless provided with a converter box and a suitable antenna to receive the digital signals. Starting in 2008, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) will provide up to 2 coupons per household, worth \$40 each, towards the purchase of the converter boxes. The required antennas are similar to those used for UHF reception on analog TVs, but they are more sensitive and can be placed almost anywhere in the house. For more details see <http://www.ntia.doc.gov> .

Concurrent with the change to digital broadcasting, the aspect ratio of the picture is being changed from the current 4:3 to 16:9. The 4:3 ratio was originally chosen because it was similar to the 35 mm slide format. The 16:9 ratio is the format used for most current Hollywood movies and is therefore preferred for the best display of movies on a TV screen. Many TV programs and commercials are already being produced in the new format and show up on current televisions as a "letterbox" across the screen, unless the receiver has the new, wider format.

Digital broadcasts will use different protocols depending on the transmission medium. Over-the-air transmissions to antennas will use ATSC (8VSB), satellite broadcasts use QPSK, and cable systems use QAM ("kwam"). When buying a converter box it is important to make sure it supports the correct protocol. Cable and satellite providers are likely to provide the correct boxes, but over-the-air (antenna-based) receivers will need an ATSC-capable converter. Newer TVs may also have built-in QAM conversion. In that case the cable provider only has to install a circuit card to configure the connection.

As with all things digital, what used to be simple and good for a lifetime of use gets complicated and subject to early obsolescence with digital TVs. A buyer will be faced with many choices to make in addition to the screen size he prefers and can afford. The next most important choice involves the type of display. There are currently 3 kinds, current Standard Definition TV (SDTV), Enhanced Definition TV (EDTV), and High Definition TV (HDTV).

(continued on page 9)

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SDTV and EDTV both use a screen with 480 lines of 640 pixels wide, but EDTV also provides a choice in screen dimensions with 4:3 ratio or 16:9 ratio, and progressive or interlaced scanning. With interlaced scanning as currently used, each frame is generated in 2 steps, first painting the odd-numbered lines followed by the even-numbered lines. If each step takes 1/60 of a second, the resulting frame rate is 30 fps. In progressive scanning all the lines of each frame are painted in a single step. In fast-moving scenes, such as sports broadcasts, interlaced scanning can result in a slightly distorted picture on large monitors and the (more expensive) progressive method is then preferred.



HDTV is available in 2 screen resolutions, 720 lines of 1280 pixels progressive only, or 1080 lines of 1920 pixels with a choice of interlaced or progressive. How's your headache so far? But wait, there's more! With EDTV and HDTV you also have a choice of frame rates, usually 24, 30, or 60, depending on the other parameters chosen. Not many broadcasts are of the highest possible quality, as the broadcasters may prefer instead to use their allotted bandwidth to transmit several different programs at the same time, using various compression levels and display parameters. The difference in quality may not even be noticeable except on the largest displays. But there is no point in paying for the best quality if no matching broadcasts are available.

What should you look for when you buy a digital TV? One of the specifications is the luminance (brightness) of the display in candelas per square meter (cd/m^2). The other display specification is the contrast ratio between white and black areas, at least 800:1.

To support digital connections between digital devices, new cable standards have been developed to make connections between units of a digital home system. The Direct Video Interface (DVI) standards are labeled DVI-D for carrying digital signals only, and DVI-I for carrying digital-to-digital and analog-to-analog signals. A DVI-D plug will fit in a DVI-I socket, but not the other way around. Converter boxes usually carry a complete set of outlets compatible with DVI as well as the older RGB, 3-wire composite, and S-video connections. A more recent standard, High Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI), carries both digital video and sound but is only useful if your whole home theater is newly digital and supports the cables.

CRT displays are rapidly disappearing because of their bulk and difficulty in forming a sharp color image across a large screen. Liquid Crystal Displays (LCD) and Plasma displays are now very popular. Plasma displays depend on micro fluorescent light sources to provide bright images with excellent color, a wide viewing angle, and high contrast. They have a more limited lifetime than LCD's, however, when they burn out they have probably become obsolete already anyway, and a new unit of higher quality may be available at lower cost.. Finally, projection displays are being used. They are based on Texas Instrument Digital Light Processing (DLP) technology that uses a chip with thousands of tiny mirrors that can flip up and down to direct light beams to the screen. They use an expensive, bright light bulb with a limited lifetime.

Dumb Things to Avoid While Using Your Computer

Adapted from an article by Vinny La Bash, member Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group

To paraphrase a TV commercial, we all do dumb things, but doing them with your computer doesn't have to be one of them.

Most of us know that our computers work better when they are plugged into an active electrical outlet, but ask any service technician how many times he or she has encountered that situation, and you may be surprised at the answer. Every one of us, no matter how experienced, has done at least one dumb thing with our computers. Maybe you pressed a wrong combination of keys and changed a setting you didn't mean to disturb. Maybe nothing much happened or you ended up crashing your system.

Whatever does or doesn't happen, paying attention to what you're doing combined with a dash of forethought can prevent most dumb mistakes.

Dumb Computer Mistake # 6: Failing to install or keep your anti-virus and anti-spyware programs up-to-date.

Some people think that keeping these programs current is too much trouble. Others quibble because sometimes they have to disable their anti-virus program to install another application.

Don't be misguided. Viruses and spyware can gum up your system to a point where your machine can be rendered useless and inoperable. You could be a victim of fraud or risk turning your machine into a "zombie" where a third party can use your computer for criminal activities. Innocent people have been arrested and charged with downloading child pornography. They had no idea that their machines were compromised for illegal purposes, yet they found themselves in deep trouble.

Dumb Computer Mistake # 5: Indiscriminately installing freeware and shareware you find on the internet.

If you are guilty of this it's only a matter of time before you get infected with a piece of sloppily written software that will cause your system to behave erratically or crash. If you follow dumb with dumber by installing pirated software, don't ask me for help.

Dumb Computer Mistake # 4: Share your files and peripherals with the immediate world.

Turn off file and printer sharing. Unless you do this you could open your computer to access by using a public wireless hotspot with your laptop. Even if you don't use a laptop be aware that Windows, by default, has administrative sharing for the root of each drive. You can turn this feature off in the Systems Administration portion of the Control Panel.

Editor's Note: The top three Dumb mistakes will be printed in the next issue of *User Friendly*

This article was suggested for publication by PCC member Dr. Alex Halperin

Avoid Disaster – Back Up Your PC

By Jerry Moore-PCC Webmaster

Last month I helped a neighbor who had a Windows PC that had become infected with some really nasty Spyware. None of the available removal techniques appeared to erase all traces, so there was no choice but to reformat the hard drive and re-install Windows. This is often the only choice since Spyware now frequently attaches itself to essential Windows system files and complete removal results in an operating system that will no longer boot.

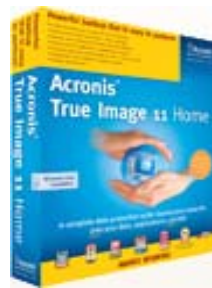
Although most computers come with a recovery disk or a recovery partition on the hard drive, bear in mind that this will only restore the system to the state it was in when purchased new. You must then reinstall all the Windows critical updates that have been released, reload any applications that were installed since new and reload all your data files, email, pictures, bookmarks, desktop settings, etc.

In this particular case, there were 62 Windows critical updates that must be downloaded and installed BEFORE service pack 2 (SP2), then download and install SP2 which is a 1-1/2 hour process by itself, and then download and install 46 Windows critical updates released after SP2. It's at least a four hour process to download and install these critical security updates if you have a high speed connection. If you are connected via dial up, it may take days. Add to that the time required reloading applications and data and you may be talking about eight or more hours of labor. If you had to pay someone \$100/hour to do this for you, it would be cheaper to go out and purchase a new PC.

To avoid this pain, there are two solutions. The first is to create an exact image of your complete hard drive that can be stored on some form of removable media such as CD's, DVD's or an external hard drive. This way, if your hard drive crashes or becomes corrupted, you can boot your PC from this backup media and restore your entire hard drive image in 15-60 minutes depending on the size of the backup. An example of this type of software is Acronis True Image which can be found at <http://www.acronis.com/homecomputing/products/trueimage>.

Another alternative using more modern technology and dedicated hardware is a computer attached to your home network running Windows Home Server. This software will automate the backup process and is particularly useful if you have two or more computers on your home network that should be backed up. www.microsoft.com/windows/products/winfamily/windowshomeserver

In addition to automated backup, this product can provide centralized storage for large media collections of movies, music and photographs and provides the added benefit of allowing you to access any of these files from any computer connected to the Internet.



Recent surveys indicate that less than 15% of computer users do any regular backup of data and according to a recent Google study on hard drive failure rates, any hard drive over one year old stands a 1 chance in 12 of failing over the next 12 months. So a word to the wise – BACK UP BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE



PALMIA COMPUTER CLUB

2008 MEMBERSHIP DUES

Individual Membership \$20.00

Household Membership \$30.00

NAME: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

(For User Friendly Newsletter and Club Communications)

Telephone: _____

NAME: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

(For User Friendly Newsletter and Club Communications)

Telephone: _____

**LEAVE THIS COMPLETED FORM AND YOUR CHECK PAYABLE
TO PALMIA COMPUTER CLUB IN THE COMPUTER CLUB
FOLDER AT CLUB PALMIA
THANK YOU and HAPPY COMPUTING**