

User Friendly



**November/December
2003**

Next Meeting

Wednesday, November 12, 2003

Ken Rockwell

Digital Photography and Your Computer

In this Issue

From the President's Desk, (p. 3) Barry Robbins
What We Should Have Learned By Now, (p. 4) Ira Wilsker
A Must-Have Program for Sharing Digital Images, (p. 6) Ron Hirsch
The Value of Removable Hard Drives, (p. 8) Allan Pogensky

Departments: Tips and Tidbits (p. 3), Answers to Questions (p. 10), Techmart
(p. 11), Web Surfer (p. 12),

Palmia Computer Club



President: Barry Robbins
Vice-President: Doug Harley
Secretary: Ali Tabikh
Treasurer: Ralph Lazar
Webmaster: Jerry Moore
APCUG Rep: William Reinholtz

User Friendly

a publication for members of the Palmia Computer Club & the Palmia Community.

Published monthly, January through June, September and October. Combined issues are published July/August and November/December.

Managing Editor: Ali Tabikh
Technical Editor: Herbert Sax
Advertising Editor: Joe Lebovitz
Editorial Staff: Joe Lebovitz
Lee Okerblom and Ruth Tabikh
Circulation Manager: Eva Schmidler

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 1,000 to 1,500 words (approximately three columns), although longer articles may be published; (3) may be edited by staff for clarity, spelling and grammar, and should be relevant to its readers. The choice of articles to be included in any issue is solely the prerogative of the Editorial Staff.

Advertisers' Information

Full Page \$35.00
Half Page \$20.00
Quarter Page \$12.50
Business Cards \$ 7.50
"For Sale" Ads for members only:
..... per line \$0.50

To place an ad contact:

Joe Lebovitz
(949) 581-3136
jlebov1@aol.com

Computer Club Special Interest Groups

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

1st Friday - Computer Hardware Richard Jenkins
(*Notice: New SIG Leader*)

2nd Friday - Email and the Internet Jerry Moore

3rd Friday - MS Office (Word, Excel) Barry Robbins
(*Notice: Special Time 4 to 5:30 P.M.*)

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 their email addresses as follows:

Barry Robbins, President - drdisk@cox.net
Doug Harley, Vice President - dharley01@cox.net
Ali Tabikh, Secretary - alitabikh@cox.net
Ralph Lazar, Treasurer- ralphrhea@juno.com
Jerry Moore, Webmaster - jerryamoore@cox.net
William Reinholtz, APUG Representative - fbblue@fea.net
User Friendly Newsletter:
Ali Tabikh, Managing Editor - alitabikh@cox.net
Herbert Sax, Technical Editor - saxsr1@cox.net
Joe Lebovitz, Advertising Editor - jlebov1@aol.com

Please Help

Your User Friendly newsletter needs a back-up, or co-editor, to Ali Tabikh who is not in good health. This fine publication must continue to serve everyone. So many members rely on it to stay up-to-date on computer developments. This is a learning opportunity for someone willing to help as well as a fine way to help the Club. **Please call Ali at 699-1962 or Herbert Sax at 455-1315.**

The Palmia Computer Club meets in the Palmia Ballroom the second Wednesday of each month, except July and August, at 7:30 p.m. The doors open at 6:30 p.m. for Q&A and socializing. For visitors from outside our Palmia community the address is: 21455 Monterey, Mission Viejo, CA 92692. The parking lot is just past the gate on the left side of Monterey. Telephone: 949-472-5075

From the President's Desk

By Barry Robbins

Although our October meeting was attended by only 27 people (5 were guests), we were treated to an excellent presentation by Rich Blumenthal from Dragon NaturallySpeaking. We learned how easy it is to speak into a microphone and have the computer type what we are saying. Also we discovered that, unlike IBM's ViaVoice which takes about two hours to train, Dragon Naturally Speaking takes only about five minutes to train. Rich also made the software available to us at a substantial discount.

Our next meeting will feature a return visit by Ken Rockwell, award winning photographer, who will again talk to us about digital photography and your computer. Be sure to attend. Our next meeting will also be our annual election of officers. Those running for the four executive positions are: Doug Harley, Ralph Lazar, Bill Reinholtz and me. You can vote in person, or send in the absentee ballot found in this issue of User Friendly.

The PCC Board met on October 1st and decided that the Palmia Computer Club would continue, but with some changes being made. As of January 2004, the following will apply to the Club:

✍ Meetings will be held on a quarterly basis. We will hold meetings on the second Wednesday of January (1/14), April (4/14), June (6/9), and September (9/8). On December 8 we will have a social.

✍ Presentations at the meetings will be done by PCC members. We will try to bring things back to basics, spending an evening demonstrating how to use a specific software program, and answer

your "How To" questions.

✍ The User Friendly newsletter will be published bi-monthly. Beginning with the March issue, it will be published as an E-Newsletter. Be sure to attend our January meeting to learn how to download and print your copy of User Friendly.

✍ We will continue to maintain the computer lab in the Crafts Room, with approximately six to eight computers being connected to the High Speed Cox Internet.

✍ Working printers will be connected to all of the Internet connected computers. Members will be responsible for bringing their own paper.

✍ During the course of the year we intend to upgrade the Internet connected computers with faster, more powerful computers.

✍ Dues will remain the same so that we can do the necessary computer upgrading.

✍ The board will continue to meet monthly. Board meetings are open to the general membership. If you would like to attend, please call me at 699-0572, and let me know that you will be attending.

We are now accepting dues for the coming year. Dues are \$20 for an individual and \$30 for a household. We are responsible for all of our computer lab upkeep, except the cost of the Cox High Speed Internet connection. Since the Palmia Computer Club is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization, your dues may be tax deductible. Consult with your tax adviser in reference to this.

Remember, our next meeting will be November 12th. We start promptly at 7:30 PM.

Tips and Tidbits

Cleaning up the Temporary Folder

If you don't want to worry about periodically cleaning up your Microsoft Internet Explorer 6 temporary file folder, you can tell Microsoft Internet Explorer 6 to do the job for you each time you close the program.

To do this, run Microsoft Internet Explorer and

choose Tools | Internet Options. Now, click Advanced. Scroll down and select the check box labeled "Empty Temporary Internet Files folder when browser is closed". Click OK to close the dialog box and save your selections.

Spam CSI

Do you dislike spam? Of course you do. Everyone dislikes spam. Even people who send spam

Continued on page 5

What We Should Have Learned By Now

By Ira Wilsker

Hopefully by the time you read this column the attack of the SOBIG-F worm should be history, as it was scheduled to self destruct on September 10. That does not mean that all attacks will cease, as there are still many users who have incorrect dates on their computers. That means if your date is "slow" then any Sobig-F worms that may be residing on your computer will not know to self-destruct, and will continue to send infected emails to others without your knowledge.

I routinely received readers' messages which have headers placed by their email program giving the wrong year. Unless the computer is under the control of an administrator who does not allow changes, the time and date can easily be reset by simply clicking on the clock and resetting the date and time. If for some reason the clock is frequently incorrect that may be an indication of a more serious error, and possibly a pending problem. For those who would like to keep their computer clocks correct there are several programs available that will automatically reset the clock to some standard, such as the Naval Observatory, NASA, or the National Bureau of Standards. My personal favorite is "About Time" available for free download at vps.arachnoid.com/abouttime. I use About Time to reset my computer clock to U.S. Naval Observatory time on an almost daily basis.

Sobig-F and its predecessors, flooded our inboxes with undesirable emails that eventually became easy to detect and identify. I would estimate that on all of my email accounts I received over 10,000 Sobig-F emails. Since each was about 100k in size, I received about a gigabyte of trash email due to Sobig-F alone. If I had to download those messages before deleting them, that would be an enormous amount to download. At broadband speeds, the time needed to download all of those bogus emails would be considerable; at dialup speeds the volume and frequency of Sobig-F emails may mean that downloading all of the email could be interminable. Since I still get along at home with dialup internet access, I needed a method to screen

my email before downloading it to my computer. This allowed me to delete or otherwise process spam, and delete possible virus-bearing and other unwanted email. My local ISP accounts provide for some type of web based method to view email without physically downloading it to my computer. By viewing suspicious emails using web mail without physically downloading them, a degree of protection from dangerous content is provided. I choose to view online email in text only, and not in HTML. Almost all web mail systems offer this option, and I strongly advise that users choose to view emails in text format only, and configure their web mail to that setting.

In local discussions, I have found that many internet users are unaware of the availability of web based email from their ISPs. I suggest that such users either check their ISP website support link, or contact their ISP to inquire about web based email. One warning: Many web mail systems place deleted messages in some form of online trash folder. Please remember to purge that folder frequently. Once unwanted email has been deleted using the web based email viewer, there is less email to download, and a decreased chance of catching an email borne virus or worm.

There is an excellent utility available that can provide assistance in identifying email that possibly contains spam or viruses, and I use it on all of my computers. It is MailWasher, published by Firetrust, of New Zealand. Available in a free version, or a more powerful "Pro" version (\$29.95), MailWasher allows for the easy screening of emails. MailWasher is very fast, even on a dialup connection, because it only downloads the message headers, and a selected number of lines in the body of each email, rather than the entire email. Utilizing some of the internet "blacklists", services that compile information on spammers, many suspicious emails are labeled by MailWasher as possible spam. Using the integral "bounce" feature, spam can be bounced back to the sender giving the appearance of a defective email address. While I can give no proof that spammers delete bad email addresses, and there is always a risk of a forged email address, it is fun to bounce those critters. Many of the Sobig-F infected emails were labeled as "possible virus" making them easy to identify and delete. Since Sobig-F infected emails were about 100k

We Should Have, continued from page 4

in size, I sorted the list of emails by size, and the Sobig-F emails all clustered together, enabling fast deletion of them all from the mail server. Emails can also be sorted by any column, such as date sent, size, from, subject, status, and other factors. MailWasher can be set to automatically check for new email at any desired interval. MailWasher is available for download at www.mailwasher.net.

A companion product, "Benign", works with MailWasher, and is available from Firetrust at www.firetrust.com (\$34.95). Benign adds additional email screening and filtering functions for viruses (in addition to your antivirus software), malicious code, and other possibly harmful content from email before reaching your computer.

Ira Wilsker is the Advisor for Region 8, APCUG Representative & Bylaws Chair for the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for The Examiner in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows. He also graciously shares his articles with the APCUG editors.

Editor's note: More about anti-spam software in Tid Bits.

Tips, continued from page 3

don't like to receive spam.

It may well be impossible to stop all spam, but one can try. Spam CSI - Crime Scene Investigator is a spam eliminator that you should try. It works as well as any we have seen and much better than most.

Spam CSI - Crime Scene Investigator is freeware and you can download a copy for yourself at: www.promailix.com/

I have also used McAfee's SpamKiller. SpamKiller will pull the spam into a separate program that gives you the opportunity to send an "error message" to the sender telling them that the email address they used is no longer valid. This eventually will reduce the number of SPAM messages that you need to go through. The program was \$16.99 with a \$10.00 rebate at Costco.

Suggested Reading for Most Palmians

INTELLIGENT MEMORY: Improve the Memory that Makes You Smarter

BARRY GORDON AND LISA BERGER

Gordon, the founder of the Memory Clinic at Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, teams with science writer Berger to impart an understanding of how memory works and how it may be improved. The authors focus on "intelligent memory"—the memory that melds thinking and the ordinary remembering of specific facts to create critical thinking. Intelligent memory is what fails us



when we don't feel as clever as we would like. Gordon argues that there is little direct connection between remembering facts and being intelligent. On the other hand, he asserts that intelligent memory can be strengthened and improved by experience, even in old age. This book

is a combination of practical quizzes and memory exercises based on Gordon's research. *Viking, 2003, 219 p., hardcover, \$24.95.*

THE PRINT ZONE — Your Ultimate Source for Printing & Graphics

GRAPHIC DESIGN, MAC/PC
HIGH SPEED B/W & COLOR COPYING
COMMERCIAL PRINTING
FULL SERVICE BINDERY
MOUNTING & LAMINATING

FREE PICK UP & DELIVERY

We Can Print From Your Digital Files On All Types of Media

Call us now for a quick, accurate and honest estimate for your next print job.

THE PRINT ZONE

(949) 770-0998
FAX: (949) 770-4400

800-704-PRINT
21998 Bain Parkway, #106, Lake Forest, CA 92530

www.theprintzone.com

A Must-Have Program for Sharing Digital Images

By Ron Hirsch

Boca Raton Computer Society, Inc.

If you are involved with digital images and want to make slide shows to showcase those images, and/or give copies to friends and family via CD's, or several other means, I strongly recommend a program that you absolutely must consider using. The program is called "Digital Photo Slide Show." It's available at: <www.digitalphotoslideshow.com.>

Like all shareware, you can download the program, and try it out before you register it. It has an amazingly low registration fee of \$19.95, and this includes free lifetime upgrades. The author, Jim Voelker, has done a fantastic job of creating an easy to use, but very powerful piece of software. It can meet the needs of advanced users, but can also be used easily by beginners.

In this review, I'll cover many of the highlights of this program. For complete information on this program, visit the Web site above, and browse around. Then download the program and try it out yourself. If you have a broadband Internet connection, the download will take less than a minute. Dial-up users will of course experience a longer download time, but it is worth the effort.

Periodically I've reviewed shareware programs here in Boca Bits. I only review programs that I feel are 5-star ratings. This program is actually better than my top rating of 5 stars.

What Does the Program Do?

This program does a variety of things, and does them all well. One key feature which should appeal to BRCS (and TBCS) members is the capability to generate a self-running slide show, with lots of customized features. This show can be viewed on your computer. And, via a few simple steps, you can produce a CD with the slide show on it, and give it to friends and family to view on their computer. There are several options/ways for giving your slide show to others. You can:

Generate a custom screen saver with changing photo images of your choice.

Generate a customized and continually changing wallpaper for your desktop.

Generate a Web slide show.

See "Other Features" for other capabilities.

How Does It Work?

The user assembles a group of photo images, and places them in a designated folder. It's best to have already edited/cropped/retouched these images so they are what you'd like to display.

Once you have this folder of images assembled, the bulk of your work is done. With the straightforward procedures that the program offers, it will take you only a few simple clicks to do the job that you want.

I've been using the program to generate slide shows from a large collection of scanned images of friends and family, starting back over 60 years ago. I go through the necessary steps, and then copy the final material onto a CD. That CD is set to be an auto running slide show.

So, when friends and family put that CD into their computer's CD player, a list of all the slide shows on the CD comes on screen, and they can choose the one they want to view. When that show is over, the listing comes up on screen again, and another show can be selected.

The beauty of this setup is that each slide show is just another sub-folder in the root directory of the CD. So, when one wants to add more slide shows, all that is needed is to add more subfolders to the master folder on your hard drive, and burn another CD with all the new material you've added.

Now, if you are saying to yourself "How do I do all this stuff with folders and subfolders," maybe it's time to resurrect my series of tutorials from last year's Boca Bits. All that material is very necessary and important for computer users to have at their fingertips in their daily activities with any Windows program.

Other Features

The program is loaded with all kinds of nice features that users can choose from. If you go the <www.digitalphotoslideshow.com> Web site, you can get

Continued on page 7

A Must Have, continued from page 6

complete information on everything about Digital Photo Slide Show. Here's a partial listing of features:

There are now 135 transitions to choose from. These transitions are used when the slide changes to the next slide. There are wipes, dissolves, and you name it. The user can choose a different transition for any slide, or let the program just cycle through the full library, or a lesser library by selecting those desired. And, the display time for each slide can be set, either individually, or via a single entry that will apply to all slides.

A caption text box can be added to any slide, and there are lots of nice formatting features available. Fonts, colors, size and position of the text box are all user-selectable. The text does not become part of the image itself or change the image in any way, but it is associated with the proper image automatically by the program.

When the images are displayed on the computer monitor, they automatically adjust their displayed size to the maximum that the monitor screen can display. This is a plus. The user doesn't have to worry about playing with the image sizes—it's all automatic.

At the top of the slide show display, there is a toolbar where viewers (should they desire) can pause the show, advance forward/backward manually, and a good selection of other options also.

Background music can be played, by simply adding the music file into the folder containing the image files for that show. Add as many selections as you want, and they will be played in alphabetical order.

Slides are also played in alphabetical order. In my slide shows, I have the slides named by using the year and month, such as 6306, as the first characters of the filename. So, I don't really have to do any renaming—I want them in chronological order. But, users can set the order for the images by simply adding a 3 or 4 numeric string to the beginning of the filename. If the file was named "picnic.jpg", and you wanted this to be the first slide, change the name to "0001picnic.jpg." Remember, you must use leading zeroes, or a group of slides that are numbered from 1 to 12, without leading zeroes, will play in this order 1, 10, 11, 12, 2, etc. But with a leading zero, they'll play as 01,

02, 03, etc. This is the way Windows does sorting.

And, if you're asking "How do I rename files?", I'll once again refer you to my tutorial articles from 2001 and 2002. This is more necessary information that you should know.

Miscellany

Through the years I've produced many "slide shows", all of which were personal in nature, and used thousands of images I've scanned from negatives, slides, and prints (actually, going back to before I was born, and that's a long time ago).

I've used MS PowerPoint, Corel Presentations, and an "album" program called Diji Album. They all did a nice job, and they all had capabilities for distributing the "shows" to others. The one problem that they all had was that they had to have each page composed individually, as each page had to have the image sized, positioned, etc. The beauty of Digital Photo Slide Show is that I don't have to do this anymore. All I have to do is put my images into a folder, and the program will position and size them automatically for me. And, since I'm now in the process of generating a whole new batch of shows, my workflow will be far more efficient.

I will of course have to manually add any captions that I want to use, but I've now decided that the only caption on most pages will be the date. That simplifies the caption box size and position—it'll be the same on each page.

Future Features

I've been having some dialog with Jim Voelker, and I listed below a few of the things that I'd like to have him consider in the future.

An included utility to help the users rename images (using a 4-digit numeric string) to set the desired order.

The ability to use not only background music, but voice clips, and have independent control of both. Various of my present shows in other programs allow the use of voice clips to be inserted when a given slide appears, and temporarily suspend the background music, and then have the music restart when the clip is finished, or when the next slide appears.

The Value of Removable Hard Drives

By Allan Pogensky
Las Vegas PC Users Group

One of the most frequent topics on any newsgroup dealing with operating systems or when computer users get together, is what's the best strategy for backing up one's hard drive. Hardly a day goes by where you don't come across literally dozens, if not scores, of postings on the various newsgroups relating to this subject. The queries (and responses) invariably focus on the problems the user has encountered in using this or that software backup program - either some third-party program or whatever built-in backup program is included with the user's operating system.

In my opinion, the best backup system for the average home user and even small business owner to employ in most cases is having his or her computer equipped with two removable hard drives. There are other advantages in having two removable hard drives on one's computer but the most significant one is providing a near fail-safe backup system. The speed, flexibility and peace of mind you get with this arrangement far outweighs (for most users) the relatively small additional cost of equipping one's computer with this hardware configuration.

Using this setup, backing up your hard drive is simple, straightforward, fast, and most important of all — effective. By easily and relatively quickly making a clone of your hard drive, using a software program like Symantec's Norton Ghost which is specifically designed for this purpose, you get, what seems to me, the ultimate backup solution given the present state of personal computer technology. Unlike backup programs that merely back up your data files - that is, the files you've created in the various programs and applications that you use - by cloning your hard drive you are making a bit for bit copy of the drive, in essence an exact duplicate of that drive. Thus, you are backing up your operating system, your registry, all your programs and applications, your configuration settings, your data files - in short, everything on the hard drive that you have cloned. And you're doing this in one fell swoop. And for added safety you can remove this newly-cloned hard drive from

the premises, not to mention making another clone, if desired, for near-absolute security.

So when the day comes - as it surely will - that your hard drive fails because of some mechanical or electrical defect, it's a wonderful feeling to know that you have a perfectly good copy of that failed hard drive that you simply shove in the computer, boot up, and you're off and running. Or if you ever get some miserable computer virus that plays havoc with your system, isn't it nice to know that you have at hand a perfectly good virus-free clone of your hard drive? And then simply clone that "good" previously cloned hard drive to the virus-infected one so that once again you now have two perfectly good hard drives. And in the case where the hard drive is kaput because of some mechanical/electronic failure, you purchase a new hard drive, plop it in the removable tray, make two simple connections, shove it in the computer and then simply clone your good hard drive to the new one. There's no need to partition and format the new drive; no need to reinstall your operating system on the new drive, no need to reinstall your programs and data files. None of this is necessary. You simply clone the previously-cloned hard drive to the new drive. And the added beauty of this arrangement is that you do all this from the comfort of your computer chair. There's no need to take apart your computer case in order to get into the guts of your computer and make complicated cable connections. Everything is done outside of your computer because each hard drive resides in a removable tray (caddy) that you simply slide into the computer's mobile rack. In my case I use the Lian Li RH-42 all-aluminum mobile racks which are generally available from a number of vendors on the net. I've purchased mine from an online vendor, Directron.com who sells them 2/\$66 (plus shipping). I'm sure mobile racks from other manufacturers will serve the purpose just as well. I'm aware of many users who have been using inexpensive (about \$10 each) plastic mobile racks without any problems whatsoever.

As I've previously indicated, the cloning pro-

Removable Hard Drives, continued from page 8

cess itself is easy and fast. Using Symantec's Norton Ghost cloning program as an example, with the two removable hard drives connected to the computer, you simply boot up the computer with the floppy disk that contains the Ghost program and after a few key clicks the cloning process begins. My present computer has an Intel Pentium 4 2.0 GHz processor and I can clone one hard drive to another at the rate of nearly 1 GB per minute. The cloning process is practically automatic and you need not be in attendance during the actual cloning.

I can virtually guarantee that once you begin working with two removable hard drives, you'll have but one regret and only one regret. And that is you didn't have this arrangement on your previous computer or computers. There is perhaps one negative to this arrangement and that is the additional cost involved in equipping your computer with the two mobile racks to house the hard drive, the second hard drive, and the software cloning program. I would estimate it adds roughly about \$100 to \$200 (as of June, 2003) to the cost of the computer depending upon the size of the second hard drive and the specific make and model of the two mobile racks. Naturally, your computer case should have available two 5 ¼" bays to house the mobile racks in addition to the 5 ¼" bays needed to house your other IDE devices (CD/DVD-ROM, CD-RW, etc.) that need 5 ¼" bays. Mobile racks come in two basic versions, depending upon whether the hard drive to be housed is an IDE/ATA or SCSI device. At this writing I'm not aware of any mobile racks designed to house the recently introduced SATA hard drives, however, I'm certain it won't be too long before they come on the market.

The software program I use for the cloning process is Symantec's Norton Ghost 2003 which I've recently seen selling on the net for about \$30 for the CD-only version (no retail box), which is really all you need. (There's an older 2002 version of Ghost available which is considerably cheaper than the 2003 version; in my experience the 2002 version works just fine for straight cloning one hard drive to another hard drive regardless of whether the file system is FAT32 or NTFS). The Norton Ghost program is also included in Symantec's Norton SystemWorks 2003 Professional Edition.

There are other disk cloning programs available, e.g., Powerquest's Drive Image and Acronis' True Image among them, both of which seem to get favorable reviews, however, I've had little or no experience with these programs so I cannot speak to them. Another cloning tool is the installation disk that comes packaged with the retail boxed hard drives from several manufacturers, including Maxtor and Western Digital.

When you consider the enormous advantages of having two removable hard drives on your computer, the additional cost in equipping your computer in this fashion pales into insignificance.

This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member.

A Must-Have Continued from page 7

Right now, the "menu" that appears when there are multiple shows involved is a file listing, via a Windows file manager-type display. I suggested that a listing that wasn't so generic would be more attractive.

Conclusion

The "future features" noted are absolutely not needed to make this program a very worthwhile addition to anyone's computer. The combination of present features, price, and user friendliness make this program a must-have in my book.

So, visit Jim's site, and get more information, if needed, and definitely consider registering this program. It's a winner! I'd appreciate any feedback you might have along the way. I can be reached at: ronhirsch@adelphia.net.

Reprinted from the August 2003 issue of Boca Bits, the monthly magazine of The Boca Raton Computer Society, Inc. (BRCS). Ron Hirsch is a regular contributing editor to Boca Bits. 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. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member.

Answers to Questions

By Jerry Moore

QUESTION

What causes computers to hang up (or freeze)? Is there a way to prevent or at least minimize this?

ANSWER

The most common source of computer freeze up is insufficient memory, although there are numerous other conditions that can contribute to this problem. We will now discuss several of these conditions in order of probability.

MEMORY – Click on Start – Programs – Accessories – System Tools -System Information for a display of Total Physical Memory and Available Physical Memory. If your total memory is 128MB or less and you are running Windows 2000, ME or XP, you should probably increase your memory to at least 256MB. If your available physical memory is less than 25% of your total memory, then you should consider turning off some of the programs that automatically run each time your computer starts up. You can obtain a list of these programs by clicking Start – Run and typing msconfig in the dialog box that appears. Then click on the Startup tab and uncheck any programs that you don't need running all the time. If you are unsure about any program that appears in the startup list, visit the web site <www.answerthatwork.com> and click on the tasklist icon for a description of what each of these programs do and which are safe to remove. If you decide that you do want to add more memory, I recommend <www.crucial.com> as an excellent source for memory upgrades since they provide an easy to navigate menu where entering your computer make and model will direct you to the correct memory upgrade options available for your computer.

MEMORY LEAK – If your computer seems to run O.K. when first started, but then starts to slow down or freeze up after being in use for some length of time, the source of the problem may be an application program that contains a “memory leak”. This is a situation where poorly written software code in a program requires a portion of your computer's memory to perform a certain function, but then fails to provide code that releases this

memory for use by other programs when that function is completed. If rebooting your computer fixes the problem, then a memory leak is generally the cause. If you can isolate the program creating the problem, try contacting the vendor to determine if any upgrades are available.

HARD DRIVE FREE SPACE – When your computer requires memory in excess of physical memory, it relies on using a portion of your hard drive for what is known as “virtual memory”. Access to this memory is not as fast as the RAM chips on your PC motherboard, but it serves the same purpose. If your hard drive has less than 20% free space, you may run out of virtual memory resulting in a freeze up. Consider upgrading your hard drive to a larger size or eliminating unnecessary files to free up space.

SPYWARE – You may have hidden programs running in the background that are collecting information on the web sites you visit and then uploading this information over the Internet so it can be sold to third parties. This can be corrected by visiting <www.palmia.org>, clicking on Files and downloading and running the Ad Aware program.

VIRUS – Make sure you are running anti-virus software and that the virus definition files are up to date. Many virus programs can cause your computer to freeze.

WINDOWS UPDATE – If it's been a while since you checked your computer for software updates, visit <<http://windowsupdate.microsoft.com>> It may be possible that updates at this site may fix your problem.

HARDWARE DRIVERS – If you know how to access the Windows Device Manager, open this window and look for any entries that contain a warning message. Highlight these items, press delete and reboot your computer to allow these device drivers to reload automatically.

HARD DISK MAINTENANCE – Try running CHKDESK and DEFRAG on your hard drive to see if this will free up more space and eliminate the problem.

SCREEN SAVERS AND POWER MANAGEMENT – Turn off any screen saver or power management scheme you have established to determine if this will eliminate the problem.

WINDOWS DESKTOP – If your computer has

Thank You and Goodbye

For over three years I have had the privilege of producing the User Friendly newsletter as its managing editor. It has been almost a full time job but I have enjoyed doing it. Unfortunately since February of this year my health has deteriorated to the extent that I find it a real burden to continue. This will be the last time I am producing the newsletter.

As I bid all readers farewell, I would like to acknowledge the people without whose help there would have been no newsletter. First of all Herb Sax, whose technical guidance and contribution of articles has been most helpful. Barry Robbins, Jerry Moore, Art Green and Don Yenché were my main sources for material for nearly every issue. My team of editorial and distribution including Lee Okerblom, Joe Lebovitz, Ruth Tabikh, Eva Schmidler and her team have all been wonderful in their support.

My sincere thanks to all of you and special thanks to Bill Reinholtz for filling in for me at Board meetings as secretary for the past several months.

Ali Tabikh

Techmart

In a grand foray into the budding camera-phone accessory business, mobile-phone maker Nokia just released six new imaging products, including an unconventional phone, necklaces, digital-picture frames and a kaleidoscope.

The world's No. 1 mobile-phone manufacturer said it was giving customers more ways to use a camera phone, which has exploded in popularity and collapsed sales of stand-alone digital cameras.

Nokia's latest mobile phone is the 7600, a uniquely slanted palm-sized device with a full-color screen, video and digital camera, and up to four hours of talk time on cellular networks run by AT&T Wireless, Cingular and T-Mobile. Other features include an MP3 player, a multimedia player and support for Java applications. The phone lets users send and receive video clips and digital photographs either through a Bluetooth radio or USB



portor infrared. The phone will appear in stores near the end of this year.

Nokia also released two versions of a necklace that can receive and display images through the infrared capability of a Nokia phone. Both necklaces can store up to eight images and include controls to delete the pictures. One is only available in the form of a necklace, the other can be worn as a wristwatch as well and should appear on the market in the first quarter of next year.



A portable steel, 2.6-ounce kaleidoscope that accepts pictures through infrared is on the drawing board for early next year. It can store up to 24 photographs.



Answers, continued from page 10

limited graphics capabilities, try eliminating some of the icons on your desktop or reducing the number of colors in your display by right clicking on your desktop and choosing Properties – Settings – Color Quality.

REINSTALL WINDOWS – If you are using Windows ME or earlier, consider reformatting your hard drive and reinstalling the operating system.

Web Surfer

By Jerry Moore

Is there a particular quirk to the Windows operating system that is driving you nuts? Pay a visit to www.annoyances.org and you will find out that you are not alone.



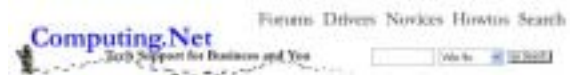
Have you ever found yourself searching for that perfect image to add a finishing touch to a web page, presentation or newsletter? Surf on over to www.images.google.com and you'll probably find exactly what you're looking for.



Are you concerned about all the Internet security threats you hear about in the news? Do you sometimes suspect that Microsoft might not be telling us the full story? We have a great local resource right here in Laguna Hills in the form of Steve Gibson who does a great job keeping us up to date on the latest threats and providing some free useful tools to check if our computers are secure. Steve's site is at www.grc.com



Have you ever had the desire to visit a forum where you can discuss computer related technical issues with other like minded individuals? The web site at www.computing.net may be just the site you are looking for.



Do you like the idea of a discussion forum, but would prefer something that is more focused to members of this computer club? Then test the waters at <http://www.palmia.org/forum>. This discussion board is only open to members of the club and is being tested on a trial basis to determine its benefit to our members.



Are you curious about the retail or wholesale value of that car, van, SUV or truck you have your eye on? Browse the Kelley Blue Book at www.kbb.com. Do you have a need to do genealogy research



or are just curious about that friend or relative who has since passed away? The Social Security Death Index at <http://ssdi.genealogy.rootsweb.com> contains close to 71 million records in an easy to use search form.



Until next month, happy and safe surfing!