

June 2008

Published by the Plateau PC Users Group, Inc. P.O. Box 3787, Crossville TN 38557-3787 www.PPCUGinc.com

June 2008

“JOIN US FOR FUN AND LEARNING AT CROSSVILLE’S COMPUTER CLUB”

Volume 14, Issue 6

THIS MONTH’S MEETINGS

June 6 at 1 p.m.
At FFG Community Church
Photography Club

June 21 at 10 a.m.
At 127 S. Senior Center
Investment SIG

June 16 at 6 p.m.
At 127 S. Senior Center
General Meeting

June 25 5:30 pm to 7 p. m.
At 127 S. Senior Center
Spreadsheet Class

Please note that the time of our general meetings has changed to the summer schedule. Meetings begin at 6 p.m.

- Ask the Experts Q&A
- Short Business Meeting & Program

June Program

“An introduction to designing your own greeting cards using Hallmark Card Studio 2008”

The June program will be presented by Mary Anne Nordeen. Although Hallmark Card Studio 2008 will be used in the demonstration, it is representative of the many similar programs available today, and the techniques to be demonstrated are adaptable to most all design programs. The class will cover printing the basic pre-designed cards, altering them with minor personalizations, to starting from a blank page and creating your own work of art!



President's Letter from Carl Nordeen

June is here and the weather is getting warmer. Stay cool and keep your computer cool also. Clean out the dust bunnies and make sure all of the fans are working. Your computer will thank you by running more efficiently.

Don't forget to help out Wags and Whiskers.

Inside This Issue

Club information and Phone numbers	Page 2
Upcoming events	Page 3
New Members	Page 3
News of the SIGS	Page 3
Cool Sites	Page 3
Minutes of the May 19 Membership Meeting	Page 4
Hasta la Vista - Customize Your Data Locations	Page 4
Product Review— Diskeeper 2008	Page 6
Product Review— NTI MediaMaker 8	Page 6
The New, The Best, and The Worst	Page 7
Moving on to Vista – Part 6	Page 9
Power Supply Tips	Page 11
Careful What You Ask For!	Page 12
Updated Version of “Google Earth”	Page 13
Spreadsheet Class	Page 15
Investment SIG Report	Page 15
July 2008 Calendar	Page 16

“FREE” Table

We have set up a table at our member meetings to share our “extra” goodies with other club members.

If you have something to give away, bring it in and put it on the FREE table. It's first come, first served. If you see something you want, help yourself.



Membership Dues and Expiration Dates

Membership dues are \$25 a year for a family, \$20 a year for an individual, and \$10 a year for a student 21 years of age or under. Your membership is valid for 12 months from the month you join (or renew your membership). Please pay your dues to the treasurer before the last day of your anniversary month. Anyone who is 30 days or more in arrears with membership dues cannot participate in the door prize drawings.

Corporate memberships are \$25 a year for the first two memberships and \$10 a year for each additional membership from the same company.

Our Club cannot exist without you, the members. Remember, you and your membership dues are important to keep the club functioning!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS DISCLAIMER

All members of the Plateau PC Users Group are willing to help one another in the area of advice and tutorial instruction over the phone. If you should require more involved services or instruction, we have a few members who are very knowledgeable in several areas. As a responsible consumer, it is up to you to discuss, before retaining a member, any and ALL charges for repair services and time consuming tutorial activities.

It is not the desire of this Board of Directors to set fees for individuals for services rendered, nor the responsibility to intervene between members who enter into a contract among themselves

The GAZETTE is published using the following: Microsoft Word, Microsoft Publisher, and Microsoft Windows 98, The GAZETTE is the monthly newsletter of the Plateau PC Users Group. Material in the GAZETTE may be freely used in other user group newsletters if credit is given the author and the PPCUG GAZETTE. PPCUG members may place free classified advertising (up to 50 words) in the GAZETTE (run time maximum of three months).

Commercial ads (local advertisers) may be placed at 50 cents per line. Graphic ads (camera ready) are as follows: \$25 per 1/4 page, \$40 per 1/2 page, \$75 per full page.

DISCLAIMER: No warranty, express or implied, is made by the PPCUG, the Gazette editorial staff or its contributing editors. This extends to all losses incidental or consequential from the use or non-use of any information in any issue of the GAZETTE.

President	Carl Nordeen	(931) 456-5597
Vice-President	Open	
Treasurer	Pearl Harter	(931) 484-1142
Secretary	Roger Holyer Black with Mary Holyer Black as backup	(931) 707-5108
Librarian/Compliance	Gordon Botting	(931) 456-2184
Past President	Alan Baker	(931) 788-2201
Programs		
Membership	Janet Hammond	(931) 484-6023
Publicity		
Product Rev. Chair	Peter Kaufmann	(931) 456-9353
Editor	Don Lewis	(931) 456-5352
APCUG Rep	Peter Kaufmann	(931) 456-9353
Equipment Custodian	Bob Willis	(931) 456-6511
Webmaster	Don Lewis	(931) 456-5352

Directors at Large

Jim Mansfield	Kay Cargill	Joan Carroll
Bob Willis	Don Lewis	Janet Hammond
Dick Riesz	Harriette Weidner	

SIG Leaders

Pleasant Hill	Dick Riesz	(931) 277-5642
Investment Club	Bob Mohar	(931) 707-0434
Photography SIG	Jim Mansfield	(931) 484-6920

Up Coming Meeting

July 2008 !!!

The next General Meeting of the
PLATEAU PC USERS GROUP
Will be July 21 at 6:00 P. M. at
127 S. SENIOR CENTER

Program to be determined.

New Members

Kathy Cassady
Lucy Elmore
Joan Bronske
Karen Goluszka
Ellen O'Brien

Cool Sites

Here are tips from Steve Bass on safely and efficiently downloading files.

http://www.pcworld.com:80/article/id,130856/article.html?tk=nl_sbxcol



Please send your cool site suggestions to me at
webmaster@ppcug.com

News of the Special Interest Groups

The PPCUG sponsors several Special Interest Groups (SIGs) tailored to meet the varied needs of our many members. Each SIG is a small group whose leader prepares material for presentation and encourages open discussion and questions. We urge you to attend the SIGs and hope you will find one or more of interest to you. Ideas for additional groups are welcome, as are volunteers to form and lead new SIGs.

Investment Club

Meets the third Saturday of each month at 10 a.m. at the 127 S. Senior Center. The leader is Bob Mohar . Anyone interested should contact Bob at 707-0434”.

Pleasant Hill Group

The Pleasant Hill group meetings will be announced by the SIG Leader, Dick Riesz. Meetings are held in the Pleasant Hill Community House on Main Street across from the Pleasant Hill Post Office. All members are welcome and visitors from the Pleasant Hill area are especially encouraged to come.

Photography Club

The Photography Club, a PPCUG SIG, meets the first Friday of each month at the Fairfield Glade Community Church at 1:00PM. Topics vary each month but we show and discuss member's photos each month. One or two "People's Choice" photos are submitted to the Glade Vista each month for publication. The SIG leader is Jim Mansfield.

PPCUG ISP

We wish to thank the following for providing ISP connections:

- Multipro for dialup at Pleasant Hill
- Charter for cable broadband at the 127 Senior Center
- Frontier for DSL at Fairfield Glade

PPCUG Website

Visit our website at www.PPCUGinc.com. The Learning Center class schedule and Gazette are all available on our web site.

Send your comments and suggestions to the
Webmaster, Don Lewis
Webmaster@ppcuginc.com (931) 456-5352

Plateau PC Users, Inc.
Minutes of the Membership Meeting
May 19, 2008

Two question and answer sessions attended by 38 members and 3 guests preceded the meeting. Nine people attended the Vista Q&A session. The remaining 32 people were in the general Q&A session.

Call to Order at 7:00 PM.

The Treasurer's report and membership numbers were presented by Harriette Weidner.

Programs: Alan Baker presented, "Managing Your Computer Files". Alan's handout is on the home page of the PPCUG website. <http://www.ppcuginc.com/>

Door Prizes: Pearl Harter and Ellie Maaners each won a one Gigabyte Flash Drive.

Adjournment: at 8:00 PM

Submitted by
Roger D. Holyer Black, Secretary

Hasta la Vista - Customize Your Data Locations

by Lee Reynolds, a member of the Broward Personal Computer Association, Florida
www.bpca.com
[LeeTutor\(at\)earthlink.net](mailto:LeeTutor(at)earthlink.net)

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

I'm told the literal meaning of "hasta la vista" in Spanish is "until the seeing." Or maybe a more adequate translation is "see you later". But in this column, I'm using that phrase to invite you to take a look at Microsoft's latest version of Windows: Vista.

If you take a look at the new Vista Start Menu, one change from Windows XP you will see is that there is a link at the top of it which is your account name. If you click on that, you will open up a Windows Explorer window, which shows all your user folders, such as:

Documents
Music
Pictures
Desktop
Favorites
Etc..

In Details view, this is handy since one column shows the Folder path for each of these. Most of the folders will be on your boot drive (normally, C:) in this path:

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

C:\Users\

There are several entries in this list which have the little "shortcut" arrow in their icons, for example:

- Application Data
- Cookies
- Local Settings
- My Documents
- Recent
- Send To
- Start Menu
- Templates

If you click on any of these shortcuts, except Recent, you will immediately be presented with an error message: "<folder path> is not accessible Access is denied", then you have to click the OK button to dismiss the message.

All of those shortcuts are there for compatibility reasons, in order for the system to be able to access certain locations that were used in Windows XP. The actual path of each of those locations has changed in Windows Vista. For example, the folder that was accessed in this way in Windows XP C:\Documents and Settings\\My Documents is now here in Vista:

C:\Users\\Documents.

Backup and Partitioning

I like to backup my entire system periodically with a drive image program from Acronis called True Image.

However, I also like to try and keep most of my data separate from the program files and windows system files making up the boot drive.

I took advantage of the built-in drive partitioning software of Vista (more about this in another article), in order to create several other partitions on my C: drive, and one of these is reserved for storing the contents of such folders as Documents, Favorites, Music, and Pictures. (I did something similar for an old computer using Windows XP.) This not only reduces the size of the backup image of my boot drive, it also makes it much easier to backup my rapidly changing data to CD-RWs or DVD-RWs.

In Windows XP, in order to move the data locations to another partition, I was forced, in some cases, to edit the registry. In Windows Vista, this is no longer necessary.

There is a Windows user interface to change folder locations of your user account profile. Just right click on your Documents folder, for example: Select Properties from the context menu, and then you will see a new tab in the folder properties windows called Location.

Click on that tab, and you will now see this message: You can change where files in this folder are stored to another place on this hard drive, another drive, or even another computer on your network.

All you have to do is type in the new location, and click OK. You will then be presented with a message, asking if you want to move all of the files from the old location to the new location, and recommending that you do so, or else you will see two of the designated folders in your profile.

This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

Product Review Page

This page will be devoted monthly to reviews of computer products chosen by our Product Review Coordinator Pete Kaufmann. The Editors encourage PPCUG Members to “get a product” from Pete, evaluate it and write a review. The product then becomes yours!

DISKEEPER 2008 with Invisi/Tasking

By Kay Cargill

Diskeeper 2008 with InvisiTasking is a defrag program which runs automatically. There is no need for manual activation unless you want it.

The cost for this program varies according to which program you choose, i.e., Home version is \$21.95, Professional version is \$49.95 and Pro Premier version is \$99.95 and is made by Diskeeper Corporation which provides 24 hr, 7-day support plans. But truly, the average home user would not need one of these support plans.

In trying to install Diskeeper 2008 I panicked when I saw the choices of Diskeeper Professional, Pro Premier, Server and Enterprise Server. I had no idea which to choose for the average home user. But in reading through the demo manual which comes on the installation disk I realized that my license number contained which program I should install. It was the Diskeeper Pro Premier version. It also comes in several languages i.e., English, Dutch, French, etc. I installed it in English and then registered it. In registering the program you get updates and patches for the product as well as learn more about Diskeeper products, if you so choose. In opening the program up, it said I needed an update which I also installed. Then I set the program to defrag weekly and that was all there was to it. Now I am a female senior citizen and if I can do it, anyone can. Diskeeper 2008 with InvisiTasking is an easy installation and easy to run program and I highly recommend it. It runs unnoticeably to you while it monitors and utilizes idle system resources while you continue to work. **NO SCHEDULING IS REQUIRED EVER!!!!**

For the “newbies” or beginners who wonder what a defrag means: Fragmentation means that pieces of files are scattered all over the disk, making it difficult for the computer to access a file. When many files are fragmented, the computer will become slower, making common tasks like opening email or pictures much slower. This is why you need to defrag your computer on a regular basis. With this program you can “set it and forget it”. It will defrag automatically, and unnoticeably but only when your computer is turned on.

NTI Media Maker 8

Review by Peter Kaufmann

Product Information:

Media Maker 8 is a product of NewTech Info Systems. The cost is around \$80 with a full version upgrade about \$50. As a user of an older version, my new laptop with Vista necessitated a look at the new model. MM8 is XP and Vista and 2000 compatible and lists these main requirements: Pentium 111 900 MHz, 500MB free space to install, 256MB RAM, 10MB for creating DVD disks and a 16 bit color card.

MM8 is a full featured CD and DVD authoring program and a complete listing is extensive. The main features currently used by this novice to date are minimal and a learning curve is needed to achieve higher usage. A list of some of the basic features include: home video maker, backup, music ripper, photo maker, DVD fit and other multiple burning options.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Installation:

The program downloaded and consequently installed happily without incident Two icon's were added to the desktop, MM8 and Digital Flix. Installed help files are extensive, easy to read and are step x step directions to understand and master any of features you are working with. Clicking on MM8 brings up a round instrument like launching panel with access to the main feature options as noted above. Digital Flix is full featured DVD, audio-cd and media player.

Sample Runs:

For the first trial create a "data disk" was launched. It allowed for a single session, multiple sessions or a mixed data audio mode. A single session which formats, copies and closes a session was chosen, Folder(s) were dragged to a frame below burn speed selected and burned in stepped format directions.

Another trial involved copying some old music saved on a second hard drive. Audio was picked from the home pad followed by a second pad with options for audio, mp3, ripper, live audio, music and audio editor. Here again, in two step format, select the drive, folder and drag files to be burned. The order of songs can be changed as desired, select speed and copy. A gauge indicates the size of files (MB) to be copied. The burn was most successful although some small differences in volume were apparent. Some research on balancing is needed.

Got a little daring, did a little trial with the photo maker. From the main launch picked photo and then photo disc. Other choices were cinematic and vcd/dvd side shows. Five pics were dragged into an album as step one. The next step allowed full editing including resize, rotate, crop, etc. Step three allowed for format selection slideshow, photo disc, print or email. After burning, the pictures were viewed. Some resizing could have been done but quality was great.

General:

The featured items covered herein admittedly cover only the tip of the iceberg as to features and functionality available in this application. Users from the beginner to the more skillful "techie" will find application for the program. There is something for everyone. Features range from basic disc burning to more sophisticated level of editing content, file archiving and video importing. They even threw in a Test Drive, a utility that tests performance of media, optical and hard drives. Most optical drives including blu-ray are supported. If I had one complaint, some of the features I use are, for me, layered down too far. Additional projects for me to pursue include DVD fit for recording a long movie, smoothing transition between songs and the Backup 5 feature.

My appreciation and thanks to Linda Herd at Marken Communications for making this program available.

The New, The Best, and The Worst

Collected by Pim Borman, Webmaster, SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc
<http://swipcug.apcug.org/>
Swipcug(at)gmail.com

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

Good, Bad, or Who-Needs-It?

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

Penryn

With the introduction of Intel's Penryn Core 2 Duo and Extreme CPUs Moore's Law stays right on track. Thanks to further miniaturization to 45-nanometer elements, the chips have significantly lower power consumption, a feature that will be even more desirable in the five new Penryn-based CPUs for laptops that have now been released. The new Penryn-based systems are not significantly faster than systems with Intel's previous-generation processors, but outstrip those with the currently fastest AMD chip, the 2.2 GHz 9500 quad core Phenom CPU. Intel has introduced a new instruction set for the Penryns, called SSE4, that can greatly speed up applications written to work with it. That may take a while yet. Adobe is updating its next version of Premiere Pro video editing with SSE4 support. (*PC World*, March 2008)

Only two years ago I bought a new desktop screamer using the then-tops AMD Athlon 64 X2 Dual-Core processor. My pride in the new system didn't last long, as usual, as the AMD CPU was left in the dust by new Intel processors. Nevertheless, I doubt that even now my run-of-the-mill programs make use of all the special capabilities of the dual-core CPU. Photo editing with Adobe Photoshop Elements or The Gimp happens instantly, faster than I can think of what to do next. So who needs any more power?

PC World's 25th anniversary issue (March 2008) quotes from the March 1991 issue:

"These five screamers are amongst the fastest - and the costliest - systems you can buy. We pick the best of the lot and answer the obvious question: Who needs this much power? - *We reviewed four blazing 486 PCs in the March 1991 issue, starting at \$8300, and decided that they were simply too fast for most people.*"

Famous last words!

False Firefox Fix

Usually I don't pay attention to application software tips, such as keyboard shortcuts for common actions. The most important ones I already know, and the obscure ones are not worth the effort remembering. Therefore I would normally not have paid much attention to an article in the January issue of *PC World* by Lincoln Spector about undocumented Firefox tips. What caught my eye was that, according to the author, Firefox is optimized for dial-up connections, and one of the tips concerned changing its settings for broadband.

Firefox has dozens of hidden configuration settings that are not readily available to the ordinary user, for obvious good reasons. They are stored in HTML documents that can be accessed by typing *about: config* in the address bar of the browser. The article suggests that you back up the configuration file before you fiddle with it, and shows how to do that.

Following the instructions, I turned network pipelining and network proxy pipelining on (set their values to "true"), increased the network pipelining "maxrequests" to 15 (up from 4), and entered a value of 0 for a new integer *nlayout.initialpaint.delay*. After restarting Firefox I tried it out. It seemed to perform with alacrity, although I couldn't have sworn that it was faster than before.

Looking for background information on Firefox configuration, I found a June 2006 article on the *PC World* Web site by the ever knowledgeable Scott Spanbauer on the *about: config* command to access hidden information. Specifically he mentions *about: cache* that gives access to an enormous file listing the URLs accessed in the past. Handy to find some old data or revisit a Web site without logging on.

Anyway, Spanbauer's article provided a link to Mozilla's *about:config* FAQ site (<http://find.pcworld.com/53066>). I took it from there and found out that the suggested settings to optimize Firefox for broadband were either irrelevant or actually retarding downloads. Turning pipelining on is not always supported by all servers and may therefore cause crashes. The value "maxrequests" has a maximum value of 8; higher values than that default to 8. Setting the

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

delay value too low actually slows down the download; its preferred value is the default 250 milliseconds (about the blink of an eye). So much for helpful tips. I reset the parameters to their original values and left it at that. Don't believe everything you read!

Fatalyzer

Wondering if your dieting and exercising is doing any good? Fret no more! Soon you'll be able to take a fatalyzer test to see how fast you are burning off fat. Based on technology developed by Dow Chemical, and under development by a start-up company Kemeta (<http://kemeta.com>), a hand-held breathalyzer detects acetone in your breath that results from metabolizing body fat. This is a more accurate measure of how effective your dieting and exercising efforts are, eliminating the influence of fluid and muscle fluctuations (*Chemical and Engineering News*, 1/28/2008, <http://snipurl.com/fatalyzer>). The results are shown in terms of pounds of body fat lost per week.

It might motivate the dieters stronger if the unit also indicated how much fat was added to their hips by that pizza they just ate. And with the run-away popularity at the recent Toy Expo of digital doggies that can sit up and beg or fart on command, maybe the next product ought to be a doggy robot with a nose capable of detecting drugs, explosives, lost children and misplaced car keys. That should be a bestseller for sure!

All a-Twitter?

"Twitter is a free networking blogging that allows users to send 'updates' (or 'tweets'; text-based posts, up to 140 characters long) to Twitter website, via short message service, instant messaging, a third-party application such as ."

That's how Wikipedia describes the latest rage in digital jabbering (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter>). presidential candidates use the service constantly, undoubtedly hoping to reach younger voters. Find out what Barack Obama (<http://twitter.com/BarackObama>) Hillary Clinton (<http://twitter.com/HillaryClinton>) up to. Ron Paul (<http://twitter.com/RonPaul2008>) to be the only Republican who twitters. John McCain is noted by his absence.

As the Twitter site (<http://twitter.com>) puts it,

"Twitter is a service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question: What are you doing?"

Indeed.

Thanks to *The Economist* (Feb.2, 2008) for enlightening us about this service.

This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

Moving on to Vista – Part 6

by Neil Stahfest, Librarian, Tacoma Area PC User Group, Washington

www.tapcug.org

[ncstahfest\(at\)msn.com](mailto:ncstahfest(at)msn.com)

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

It's easy to lose track of time when you're playing computer games or cruising the Internet. As our computers have improved we tend to use higher screen resolutions to see more detail and unfortunately, that can cause eye strain.

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

The solution is not to reduce screen resolution but to increase the size of the text.

Windows Vista offers an easy way to do this. Click on “Start”, then “Control Panel” and then type “adjust font size” in the search box in the upper right corner. A menu choice “Personalization” will appear and right under it you will see “Adjust font size (DPI)”. Click on it and a window called “DPI scaling” will appear. You'll see three choices: “Default scale (96 DPI), Larger scale (120 DPI), and a button that says “Customize”.

The first two choices are pretty clear. In the third choice, if you click “Customize DPI”, the “Custom DPI Setting” window will open. Just follow the instruction to increase or decrease the DPI setting to find the setting that works best for you.

One question new Vista users ask me is “What happened to the search command?”. People who have used Windows XP and previous versions of Windows are used to clicking on the “Start” button and then clicking on the “Search” label on the right side of the menu.

Search is still available but Microsoft apparently thought it was more intuitive for us to click on the “Windows” key plus the “F” key (think “Windows find” to remember this). Look at the upper right corner of the window that opens for the “Search Box” and enter the word or phrase that you are looking for. Notice in the line below you have a number of options to limit your search to “All”, “E-mail”, “Document”, “Picture”, “Music”, and “Other”. There is also an “Advanced” selection that allows you to select a range of file dates, locations, names and authors. To close the Search Window you have to click on the red “X” in the top right corner.

You might also notice that when you Click on “Computer” (used to be “My Computer”) there a search box appears in the top right corner of the window. This feature is universal and appears whenever you open any folder window. It also appears when you click on the “Start” button (the “search line” appears in the menu directly above the Start button).

While I'm on the subject of the “Windows” key, the combination of “Windows key plus the “L” key locks your keyboard. Everything you are working on becomes hidden by the login screen and you need to enter your password to continue to use your computer. This feature may be convenient even if you're not trying to hide your work from anyone. My son's cat seems to be fascinated by computer screens and anything blinking or moving on the screen. She frequently jumps up on the desk next to an unattended computer and walks across the keyboard to touch the screen with a paw or her nose. It's cute but sometimes I return to find a program has been suspended or the computer placed in “sleep” mode. For me, “Windows Lock” is protection from pets.

Do you use the Vista Sidebar? Some people love it, some don't. There have been complaints of people using the Notes Gadget to store web addresses and they've lost them. Other people have set up their home city in the Weather Gadget only to discover that the program reverts back to Redmond Washington. Gadgets are individual programs that store their own preference files on your hard drive. Anytime you close a “gadget”, you lose all the data that you typed into it; addresses, locations, etc. So... either find a better place to store your information or don't click on a gadget's “X” button unless you really want to cease using the gadget.

Windows Vista has been out for a year now and there are rumors that Microsoft will release the long-awaited Service Pack 1 for downloading in March. If they do, I'm sure we'll see enough changes in Vista for another newsletter article.

This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

Power Supply Tips

By Dan Hanson, the Great Lakes Geek, Computers Assisting People, Ohio
www.capinc.org/ Dan(at)magnuminc.com

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

We have all experienced the computer crashing seemingly for no reason. When it does, we blame Windows or a hardware problem or maybe a power surge or undervoltage. All are possible culprits but one often overlooked possibility is the power supply of the computer.

The power supply is the metal box with a cooling fan next to it. Typically it's in a back corner of the case and you plug your power cord into it. When you plug the power cable into the wall, the power supply converts the AC (alternating current) that runs through your home or office into the DC (direct current) that the computer needs.

If you bought your computer from a superstore or discount retailer it may have low-cost, low-capacity power supply installed which may not be enough to handle all the things you do with your PC.

If you have upgraded your PC with newer or more components (like another CD or DVD player/burner, more RAM or another hard drive) then the power supply that came with your system may not be up to the task.

The physics of power supplies (ambient temperatures, 3.3V vs. 5V vs. 12V, etc) make it so that a power supply rated at certain wattage, say 300W, may not really provide that maximum wattage load. Some experts claim that power supplies are most efficient at 30-70% of their maximum capacity. So if you are nearing that maximum, you can be in for trouble.

Because the power supply gets a rush of AC (alternating current) when the computer is turned on and it heats and cools each time it is used, it is more prone to failure than many other components in your PC. You may notice a slight burning smell before it shuts down. Sometimes the cooling fan stops working and the system overheats.

Newer systems let you monitor the status of the power supply from Windows. Servers and other mission critical computers often have more than one power supply so that when one dies, the other kicks in and the system stays operational.

So what can you do?

Next time you buy a PC, don't just get a cheapo system with a sub-standard power supply unless you never plan on adding memory, drives or other components to the machine.

Take care of your power supply by keeping the cooling fan away from the wall or anything else that might block the air flow and make the fan work harder (and die sooner).

Keep the PC off the carpet or other surfaces where it may suck in particles and clog the fan. Cooler is always better with electronic components.

Periodically, blow out the fan and case with compressed air to get rid of dust and other particles that may clog up the fan and overheat the system components.

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

Add up the wattage of the components in your system to see if you are near the maximum of the power supply. E-mail us at dan@greatlakesgeek.com for a list of Estimated Power Requirements of common PC components.

If that is too difficult for you, look to see if most of the slots in the back of your PC are filled and if the drive bays in the front are being used. Those are indications that you may be close to maxing out your power capacity.

If you have a need, you can buy and install (or have someone else install) a new, heavy duty power supply. They come in several standard form factors to fit in most PCs. Warning this may not be a project for beginners though.

Get more tips at www.GreatLakesGeek.com

This article has been provided to APCUG by the author solely for publication by APCUG member groups. All other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

Careful What You Ask For!

By Richard Kennon, Newsletter Editor, Amador Computer Users Group, California
www.acug.net/
[editor\(at\)acug.org](mailto:editor(at)acug.org)

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

This last Christmas I asked Santa for a nineteen inch wide-screen, thin, flat display for my computer. Santa, being busy and not knowing a thing about computers, asked our son to make the purchase. He decided that nineteen inch was for wimps so he picked up a twenty-two inch wide-screen. It is a beauty with 1680x1050, 96ppi resolution. That is super good... except. Wouldn't you know, my old Dell has a video card that does not go that high. So, buy a new video card, right? They are not so expensive. It turns out my old Dell does not have a slot to unplug the card and plug in a new one. I am not sure of the technicalities, but one tech suggested a new mother board as well. They are not too expensive either. Then his partner says, "If you are going to spend that much, why not let us build you a new computer for just a little more?" Golly, what a great idea. The old Dell is getting so slow, I am frustrated every time I use it. So, why not get a new supercharged dual processor and two gigs of RAM so I can really sail? We discussed specifications for a while and came to agreement. Then I said I would want the Vista Home Premium operating system. One of the partners said, "Why don't you stick with XP?"

What follows is not what he said but I figured out later that this is what he was thinking. *"This old geezer is probably not going to outlast XP so why burden him with a new operating system that just eats up processor power and RAM without offering any benefit? He is going to continue to do the same things he has always done on the computer so why not let him enjoy the benefits of all this new horsepower without the burden of having to learn about a new operating system?"*

Out loud he said, "This will allow you to use all the software you now have and won't require you to download all new drivers, etc." I had already decided I could not afford a new version of MS Office and would convert to Open Office, instead. There is no Publisher in Open Office so I would have to do something, I hadn't figured out yet, to continue publishing this newsletter. This idea gave me a great sense of relief - I could reap the benefits of the newer, faster hardware without having to give up software I have grown used to. A little extra icing on the cake is

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

that they will transfer all my Outlook Express folders and address book to the new box so I won't have to figure that out. Also, I have an 80 GB second hard drive in the old box that they will mount in the new. I use it for backup. The new main hard drive will be a 250 GB SATA drive and the second drive can remain an IDE drive. I haven't the slightest idea what that means except that SATA is supposed to be faster and they can mix the two types on one machine.

I am anxiously awaiting delivery of the new computer and will report next month on how it all works out. So, I have spent our Federal rebate already. You can't say I am not patriotic!

Google Releases Updated Version of "Google Earth"

By Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:

<http://earth.google.com>

<http://earth.google.com/download-earth.html> - FREE Version

<http://earth.google.com/tour.html>

http://earth.google.com/enterprise/earth_plus.html - \$20 Plus Version

http://earth.google.com/enterprise/earth_pro.html - \$400 Pro Version

It has been nearly two years since I first (and last) discussed Google Earth in this column. In the ensuing time since the last review, Google has been busy updating and improving the product, adding new features, and improving the graphics. For those who may not be aware, Google Earth is a program that allows the immense Google database of terrestrial and satellite images of the earth, along with amazing images of space, to be utilized and manipulated on the computer.

What is new and improved in the recently released Google Earth 4.3 (beta) is demonstrated in an interactive video tour online at earth.google.com/tour.html. One of the new features in version 4.3 include what Google calls "Photo-realistic Buildings", where hundreds of buildings in many of the world's major cities are shown in three dimensions (3D). If a building that is displayed "turns purple" when cursoring over it, clicking anywhere on the building will open up a smaller window giving details of the building, and the moniker of the person who created or updated the digital image. The images displayed can be manipulated to zoom in or around them from any angle, effectively creating a dynamic 360 degree panoramic view. These 3D views are not just of cities and buildings, but there are also spectacular images of natural beauties such as mountains, rivers, waterfalls, and canyons. Another new feature on this version is what Google calls "Swoop Navigation" where the user can virtually "Fly seamlessly through the landscape with new navigation controls. Swoop from outer space to street level and leap from one building top to another. Use the look joystick to view buildings as if you were standing right in front



(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

of them.”

Another aspect of the new version is the “Light and Shadow” feature where many of the images can be shown in selected or sequential times of the day, such as displaying a mountain top from sunrise to sunset. On the top of the screen is an optional slider which can be moved with the mouse to display the simulated or realistic image at any chosen time. In some of the more scenic images it appears to show the path of the sun across the sky with the corresponding light and shadows. The new and improved “Street View” that has been previously available online with Google Maps (maps.google.com) is now integrated into Google earth. Google has a fleet of vehicles which cruise major cities taking high resolution 360 degree digital photos as they drive down the streets. With “Street View” the user can virtually visit a city and virtually walk or drive the streets using the mouse instead of a vehicle. Views are literally from the street level showing cars, people, store fronts, intersections, and any other features visible from street level. Using the mouse, the user can cruise the streets just as if he was navigating the city for real. While not yet available for every city, a camera icon, when displayed on a map, will zoom in to a 360 degree panoramic image from street level. Many street level images contain additional camera icons which allow the user to travel seamlessly up a selected street, and the mouse can be used to turn in any direction.

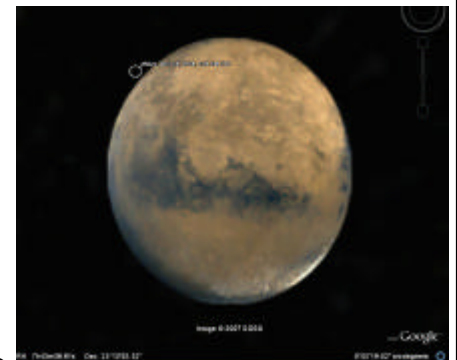
The popular features that were in earlier versions of Google Earth have been retained. One that I periodically use is the “Directions” feature, which does not just give traditional driving directions and maps, but also animates the drive by clicking on the play button at the bottom of the driving directions listing. When animated, a detailed sequential zoomed-in satellite image is displayed, with the directions overlaid on the image. For example, when I requested driving directions from the Examiner offices on Willow Street in Beaumont, to the Bush Airport (IAH) in Houston, the seamless animation in Google Earth showed the street images including real pictures of the highway showing which lane to be in, detailed images of each turn or exit, and high resolution images of the airport. The images are actual photographs, not computer generated images. By seeing the route in exquisite detail prior to a journey may help ease the anxieties of the drive.

Once at a destination, it may be helpful to find nearby “points of interest”, such as restaurants. By simply entering the word “restaurants” in the “What?” box, and the current address in the “Where?” box, restaurants will be displayed on the Google map. By clicking on the icon displayed for each restaurant, details will be displayed for the selected restaurant in a window overlay. Typical information displayed included the name, address, phone, a hyperlink (if any) to the restaurant website, any reviews that may be available and driving directions “to” and “from” the restaurant.

Google Earth does not just provide maps and images of terrestrial and earthly locations, but also includes celestial maps and images. Clicking on the Saturn-looking icon on the top of the screen will open a “Search the Sky” search box. By entering a celestial body or location, such as “Mars”, Google Earth will display a sky map with an image of the heavenly body, and also display the current geometric coordinates for those using sophisticated telescopes.

The basic version of Google Earth 4.3 (beta) is a free download from earth.google.com. For those desiring more features, Google offers Google Earth Plus for \$20, which adds support for a variety of GPS devices (verified support for Magellan and Garmin GPS devices, but can not upload to those devices), improved network performance, and improved high resolution printing. For professional and commercial use Google offers the Pro version for \$400.

Google Earth is a fascinating utility, and will run on Windows 2000 or XP (Vista is not mentioned), and requires a minimum of 400MB hard drive space, and a video card capable of 1024x768 resolution with a 16bit color depth. An internet connection of at least 128Kb/sec is required. I suggest that readers of this column at least download the free version of Google Earth and simply play with it. Click on the icons at the top of the page, and check and uncheck some of the boxes on the left margin, and experiment with it; do not worry, you can not hurt anything by experimenting with it. Google Earth is one of my favorite “fun” programs.



Spreadsheet Class

The Plateau PC Users Group, the local computer club, will host a class on Using Microsoft Excel (spreadsheet program) on Wednesday, June 25, from 5:30-7:00 PM at the Senior Citizens Center, 1460 S. Main Street in Crossville.

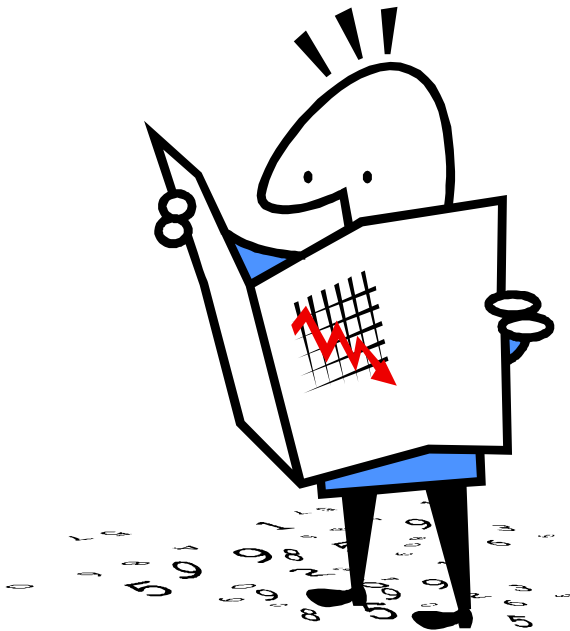
This will be a presentation-style introductory class that will include an overview of what spreadsheets are and what people use them for. Topics will include understanding the user interface, entering text and numbers, formatting text and numbers, formatting cells, adding / deleting columns and rows, summing a column, sorting rows of data and printing your results. Information learned here will also apply to other spreadsheet programs, such as Quatro Pro or MS Works. A second-level class may be scheduled for more advanced topics based on interest of those attending. Cost is \$2 for club members and \$5 for non-members. To reserve a place for this class, please call Alan at 788-2201. For more information about the computer club, visit their website at www.ppcuginc.com.

Investment SIG Report

CAIC Investment Club welcomes two new Partners, Ellen O'Brien and Jerry Kuchcinski. Our meetings are at 10 AM the third Saturday of each month at the Senior's Center. If you may be interested in joining a stock investment club please call Bob Mohar at 707-0434.

Having pretty well mastered evaluating a company's stock, we are currently involved in learning about selling. June's educational segment will be an introduction to selling.

Even in the current bear market condition CAIC has achieved a return of over 10% on our current holdings. By focusing on companies with strong earnings growth and minimizing losses the Club's investment performance is exceeding all indices. Two of our strong performers are Central European Distribution Corp. (CEDC) where we've taken some profits and Mindray Medical International Ltd. (MR) who's earnings are growing over 40% per year.



July 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4 1 pm Photography Club Mtg	5
6	7	8	9 2 pm Board Mtg	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19 10 am Investment SIG
20	21 6 pm Q & A Session Followed by General Mtg	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

PLATEAU PC USERS GROUP, INC.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Return this application, with check for annual dues (\$25 family, \$20 individual, \$10 student membership) payable to "PLATEAU PC USERS GROUP." Return to the club Treasurer during our meeting or mail to PPCUG Treasurer. P.O. Box 3787, Crossville, TN 38557.

Date

Last Name First Name Family Members (if family membership)

Address: City State Zip Code Phone Number

E-Mail address

I have used PCs since (year): I have belonged to a Computer Club before. Yes No

I have knowledge in the following areas and would be willing to share my knowledge with club members:

I would like to learn more about the following areas:
