

Newsletter

Connecticut PC User's Group

July 2010
Vol. 28 No. 10

Preview of the Next CTPC Meeting

July 27, 2010 6:30 p.m.

No Meeting in July

Our regular meeting place isn't available on our meeting date, so we've decided to take the month off.

Stay tuned for details of our August meeting to be held on August 24th. Take note that this is the fourth Tuesday in the month and not the last.

We will have our normal Picks & Pans and Random Access sessions.

After the meeting we will go to Uncle

Joe's for Pizza and refreshments. Join us for an interesting evening.

Be sure to check out Walt Graham's "Random Thoughts" column on page 8 of this issue. ♣

Jul 27th - Tuesday 6:30 p.m.
No meeting this month.

Aug 24th - Tuesday 6:30 p.m.
CTPC Meeting
Norwalk Transit Bus Depot

GENERAL MEETINGS

Meetings are held on the 4th (not last) Tuesday of each month except December. There is no charge to attend general meetings. See back page for direction.

www.ctpc.org

By Ira Wilsker, Member, Golden Triangle PC Club, Texas; Radio Show Host on KLVJ and Columnist, the Examiner, Beaumont, TX, iwilsker (at) sbcglobal.net

Google Books - Millions of Titles Available

WEBSITES:

<http://books.google.com>

<http://books.google.com/google-books/agreement/>

Google needs no introduction here, as it has been discussed in many previous columns. Google is much more than the ubiquitous search engine, as it now provides mapping services, email, public domain name servers, comprehensive portable online document services, and countless other benefits in a highly competitive field. Recently, Google has been quietly entering the e-book field, where as many as a million books (mostly public domain because of expired copyrights) are currently available for free use, and countless others still under copyright will be available for a fee. Google is not alone in providing free public domain books online in a variety of formats, and it will also not be alone in providing commercial e-books for a fee. In terms of commercially available titles, Google will be a direct competitor to the likes of Amazon and Barnes and Noble, both of which already sell ac-

cess to countless thousands of titles, mostly in proprietary formats only readable on their respective readers.

In 2004, Google announced the "Google Books" project, an ambitious plan to digitize and post online 15 million books within 10 years. The primary source of these books was initially libraries from all over the world, but since the announcement, many of the world's universities have volunteered their literary collections to be digitized by Google. The stated aim of Google is to preserve library books and make them universally accessible. Last November in an interview in the New York Times, Google co-founder Sergey Brin said, "The vast majority of books ever written are not accessible to anyone except the most tenacious researchers at premier academic libraries. Inevitably, the few remaining copies of the books are left to deteriorate slowly or are lost to fires, floods and other disasters." According to a recent story published by the BBC, Google has already digitized over 12 million titles, making it the largest repository of digitized books in the world.

While Google obviously has the technology to digitize, catalog, and make available all of the books it can process, there have been some major legal obstacles to completing the project as planned. Books published before 1923 are in the public domain as their

copyrights have expired, allowing them to be freely digitized and distributed. Books published since 1923 may still be under copyright, as the copyright would run for the author's lifetime plus 70 years. Several organizations, including the Authors Guild and the Association of American Publishers have filed lawsuits against Google, which resulted in a settlement in 2008; the problem is that the settlement was never approved by the federal court because of issues raised by government regulators and others. Last November (2009) an amended settlement was reached, but it too is being challenged, and has not been approved by the court. Books that may still be under copyright that have already been digitized cannot be offered in their entirety by Google, but Google can include small parts of the books in its search engine. Compounding the complexity of the issue is the fact that many of the authors and their heirs have become nearly impossible to locate in order to get the requisite permissions to enable Google to post the digitized copies.

Despite the copyright limitations and legal restrictions on many of the books published since 1923, Google has compiled an impressive list of mostly older books that are available for free in digital format, most commonly in the universally readable PDF format. Books digitized and published in PDF retain their original fonts, graphics, and images exactly as published. Since PDF files can be read on almost any type of digital de-

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Creative Griping Makes Friends and Brings Rewards

In a perfect world, there'd be no problems with hardware, software, or services; businesses would be fully staffed with articulate human beings ready to accommodate all requests, and every product would meet or exceed customer expectations.

But that's not how things work on planet Earth in 2010. Instead, things break quickly or are badly designed; customer service is outsourced to far-away lands; and even when they're accessible, company staff often isn't responsive.

So what to do? Nobody I know is cut out for frontier living, self-sufficiency, and subsistence farming. That means we're all making the best of living in our technofragile and sometimes irritating culture. So let's have at it.

First, when life's little outrages intrude, avoid the temptation to accept them as unavoidable — and, worse, unfixable. Just as Slickdeals tips help you find bargains, a few techniques and some practice can remedy a bad situation or even turn it pleasant.

Stay Calm and Be Convincing

Complaining courteously to the right person with a specific remedy in mind can be rewarding. If a company Web site has a "Contact us" link, start there with an email or telephone connection. Be polite, identify yourself, mention how you're connected to the organization (current or potential customer, etc.), and describe your dissatisfaction.

If you're always happy after your initial dialogue with a company, you're a unique individual, and you can stop reading now!

Too frequently, however, a first complaint contact goes nowhere. That's when to escalate. Calling may work but you'll likely deal with a low-level (and low-powered) call center. So writing is better.

No matter how you're communicating — phone, email, instant message, letter, online support chat — keep records of contact names and what's said. These are essential for recapping, summarizing, and (especially) escalating. If it's a large company or you expect to have further contact with them, request a case or "ticket" number for tracing your request.

Use company Web sites, Google, and other online resources to identify and locate senior executives. Check Web site links such as "About us", "Press room", and "Investor relations". Write to the

CEO by name and title, briefly describing, with a tone of regret, what went wrong. You certainly won't hear back in person from Ms/Mr. CEO, but most large companies have an Office of the Chairman with staff to calm down and cheer up unhappy customers. Pursuing matters to the top works. After Starbucks' Web staffers were unresponsive to a complaint, escalating to the chairman resulted in an apology and a \$50 store card.

Remain courteous. Don't rant or threaten and surely don't overuse CAPITAL letters. That makes your message hard to read and look like a crude ransom note. No matter what you're told, emphasize that you're not angry at whoever you're speaking or emailing with and that you understand they're probably bound by company policies. Staying calm and cheerful sets you apart from most people and improves the odds of your getting satisfaction.

Be brief but complete. Provide enough history and detail to be clear and compelling but don't ramble or include non-essential details.

Be precise. Quote error messages, identify people involved, list event sequences so you're believable. When I complained that a Web site didn't use encryption for processing credit card information, the owner at first disagreed but when I proved my assertion, he was outraged — at his Webmaster, for botching security. He then asked what I'd intended to purchase and sent it to me free, along with other items.

Include good news. If you're a long-time customer, had a recent pleasant experience with the company, can praise a particular employee, or have ever recommended the company's products or services, say so. If whatever you're griping about was a mixed picture, begin by describing what you liked.

Let Companies Turn Problems Into Rewards

Raise issues when there's time and flexibility to remedy them. For example, when finalizing a stay at Nemacolin, a luxury Pennsylvania resort, I was unhappy to learn that two signature restaurants would be closed during our planned stay. Instead of suffering in silence or — with difficulty — changing our travel dates, I politely contacted the general manager to suggest that guests be informed of such restrictions

when initially making reservations. He agreed, and offered to have his Five-Diamond chef prepare a fantasy meal for us including anything we requested. His only advice was, "Challenge the chef." So we did — and the world-class chef and two assistants spent three hours serving us privately, with Champagne and cocktails, on a day that the restaurant was indeed closed. And — as arranged in advance — one of the most memorable meals of my life cost half the normal price of dining there. So a problem identified early and solved graciously resulted in my being a huge fan of the resort, the general manager, and the chef.

Complaining, even to the top, doesn't always work. I've certainly been ignored — received no response — and received dismissive responses offering neither apology nor any gesture of atonement. When this happens, the final option is going public via Twitter, blogs, etc. Many companies monitor their online reputations and respond to credible complaints with remedies.

But usually, company management values and responds to customer feedback; I've established cordial relationships with executives by identifying areas needing improvement. Writing letters is easy and inexpensive enough — and after sending a few you'll have stock phrases that make it simple — that it's worth doing to remedy all but the smallest problems.

Five minutes and a stamp has been a small price to pay for a \$50 Starbucks card, a unique luxury meal, Web site merchandise, and many hundreds of dollars worth of refunds, merchandise, and services. ♠

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A Font of Knowledge

Have you ever gotten a small print from your camera or cell phone and thought it looked pretty nice? And decided to have an 8x10 made? And discovered that diagonal lines stair stepped across the page and everything else looked like they were made of colored Legos? And realized why that happened? It's because all pictures are made out of pixels, this is called bit-mapped, and there were not enough pixels in your image. So, when it was enlarged, you saw the individual pixels. Now, try an experiment. Open Word (or your favorite word processor,) select Times New Roman, size 6 point, and put an "s" on a page. Now change the size to 60 point and put another "s" on the page next to it. Now add a third "s", this time at 600 points. Now print the page out. Look Ma, no pixels! What happened? Why don't characters pixilate also? Welcome to the wonderful, and confusing, world of typography. Let's see why, and learn a bit about what's going on.

First, a given character set, or typeface, is contained in a file and is called a font. Now, if you've ever thought about it, you probably assumed that there was a bitmap for each character in the font, and when you pressed a key the system found that bitmap and printed it. Not so easy. If that were the case you would get pixilation. And that was the way it was done, once upon a time, and there are a few cases where it is still useful. (I'll get to those later.) Instead, each character is stored as a set of formulas, or equations. If you remember your analytic geometry you will know that any equation can be plotted as a line or curve. So, for a character, there is a set of equations, each of which defines a part of the outline or the character. A straight dash would be easy, four equations, one for each side. A dollar sign would be more complicated. When you key in a character the equations are adjusted to define the point size you specified, then the outline of the character is created, then it is filled with the color you selected. (For those seeking more enlightenment, Google "Bezier curves.") But it gets a lot more complicated. For each character there is more than one set. Bold type is not just fat type, if so the "counters" (the little openings in letters like e and o) would get filled in. So the typographer has to design an entirely unique shape for each bold character, one that looks like the normal one, but is heavier. Italics? Same

thing. Another design. Italic Bold. Yep, another design. And so on. And how many characters are there? Well, let's see. There's the 26 letters of the alphabet of course, 10 digits, and, say, 14 special characters. That's fifty. But how about upper and lower case. Add another 26. Small caps. Another. But just 14 special characters? Did you know there are four different dashes? And points of ellipsis. And umlauts. And so on. In fact, one of the formats for storing fonts can contain more than a million characters, and it's not uncommon for a well designed font to have over one thousand.

Back to you pressing a key. What happens? First, the character formulas are selected. Then a kerning table that's also built into the font is read. This compares the character you selected with the character immediately before it. Certain combinations of characters have to be printed closer together or farther apart to look correct; this is the function of the kerning table. Next another table is checked. It's been found that if exactly the same shape of character is printed in two different sizes they won't look the same to the eye. So this table looks at the point size you selected and adjusts the character thickness appropriately. (Larger sizes are thinner and closer together.) Then a "hints" table is referred to. This is used when the character is going to a device with low resolu-

tion, such as a monitor. (It adds anti-aliasing to reduce the "threshold effect.") It also makes adjustments to the character to make it display more legibly. Finally, after some more manipulation which I won't take the space to go into here, your character appears somewhere.

Now, all of this is the responsibility of the font designer. And good ones take all of the above into consideration. It's certainly possible to skip some of the above. Ever seen these CD's "Thousand's of fonts for \$29.95?" I seriously doubt that they've put much time into each of the above factors. You get what you pay for.

And lastly, I had mentioned above that there are still a few bitmapped fonts around. Why? Because regular fonts, no matter how well designed, have problems with legibility when displayed at small sizes on a monitor. This is a common problem in web design. Bit-mapped fonts are specifically designed for this purpose. So, the next time you key in "Dear Sirs," take a few seconds to think and appreciate the over-worked, under-appreciated font designer who spent many sleepless hours to let you make your document look pretty.

Still curious? There are many books on the subject; the one to start with is "The Complete Manual of Typography" by James Felici. ♠

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Best Windows Shortcuts

One of the better qualities of a good operating system like Windows is that there is almost always more than one way to do something. There are items you can select from a file menu, use a shortcut or execute some kind of keystroke combination to carry out an action.

There are some things you do almost every time you use your computer. The six following shortcuts all use a similar series of keystrokes. If you don't know about these shortcuts you probably haven't been using computers for very long, and you don't know what you're missing.

It doesn't matter whether you're working with music files, photos, videos, documents, spreadsheets or portions of a document. Simply highlight what you want with your mouse, hold down the Ctrl

key, then press and release the indicated key. Don't forget to release the Ctrl key when you're done.

- For example, to copy a file, some text or any object: Highlight or select the item with your mouse and then hold the **Ctrl** button down, press the **C** key and release. **Ctrl+C**
- To paste the copied item or items: **Ctrl+V** (P was already taken for Print)
- Sometimes you want to move an object from one location to another: **Ctrl+X**
- Select everything on a screen or in a folder: **Ctrl+A**
- Print something: **Ctrl+P** (This is why you can't use this combination to paste).

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Sights and Sounds of Multimedia

Desktop Emergency Weather Station



Here's a compact device that gives you temperature inside and out, humidity, forecast, barometric pressure and more. One of the benefits of this is that

all US Hazards and Emergency Alert Systems are monitored for bulletins, warnings and watches. You get indications when one or more is being broadcast and can listen to it. The device has an LCD screen that is about 4 X 4 inches with a display that shows: barometric pressure (Inches of mercury or millibars), outdoor temperature (C or F) and humidity, weather forecast, indoor temperature (or F) and humidity, clock or alert messages. There are four buttons in a vertical line next to the LCD: Menu, Exit, Increase, and Decrease. The Menu button allows setting the various variables for each of the display items. The Exit button takes you out of setting mode. The Increase and Decrease buttons cycle through the various settings.

The back of the device has six buttons along its top edge. The first is the NOAA button, which cycles through NOAA on, standby, mute and off. The third button cycles through current, maximum and minimum temperature and humidity records. The sixth allows you to adjust for altitude, so that barometric pressure is read correctly.

In addition to the base unit, the device comes with an outdoor remote sensor for measuring outdoor temperature and humidity. You may read from up to three remote sensors, but only one is included with the unit. Both the base and remote are battery operated, although the base unit is normally operated from a wall outlet. The batteries in the base unit are for back-up power.

The alert service provided by this device is very interesting. The information is obtained from NOAA, which operates NWS, the National Weather Service. NWS is the official source of warnings about life-threatening weather phenomena and hazardous events. Most TV stations get their information from NWS sources.

You can configure the Weather Station to sound an alert and play the warnings as they occur. A problem, though, is that you probably aren't concerned with warnings

that apply to areas from away from yours. Enter SAME, Specific Area Message Encoding, a facility included in the Weather Station. Using this facility you can restrict the warnings to your county or those nearby. These are the ones you're really interested in. SAME can keep you from being awakened by an alert that doesn't concern you, a very nice feature.

Vendor: Oregon Scientific
www.oregonscientificstore.com
Price: about \$71.95

Rebit SaveMe



There are many ways to back up your computer these days. One group of methods backs up your files and folders, which is certainly important. The other group backs up everything, creating an image of your hard drive partition at a point in time.

Rebit SaveMe is one of the second groups. You always have at your fingertips a method for restoring your hard drive if Windows won't boot. Either group involves installing software on your computer that will do the back-up job whenever you specify, or on a scheduled basis. You then must go through the required process to define what is to be backed up and when. This takes a certain amount of knowledge and time. Rebit SaveMe also installs on your computer, but that's about it. You do have to specify what the backup drive is, whether an external drive or a separate partition. Once that's done, Rebit SaveMe goes about its business without further intervention from you.

As the files on your computer change, Rebit SaveMe backs them up – automatically. Not only that, previous file versions are saved, so that you can go back to a prior one. So what about recovery? There are two ways to do that. If all you want is to recover one file or folder, you can go to the backup location to restore the file you want. If, instead, you want to restore the entire hard disk, you use the Restore application, which you can download or start from the

backup drive. The product I was given to review will back up multiple computers. The limit to the number of computers is 6, assuming the hard drive is big enough. It's almost as easy to back up the second and later computers as it is the first. The external hard drive you used for the first contains a file that will install the application on the next computer. Once installed, the backup process continues as before.

The contents of the product consist of a CD-ROM, which is used to install Rebit SaveMe on your computer, and a Quick Start booklet. The latter is extremely brief, showing in 3 steps how to back up the first computer and in another 3 steps how to back up the next one.

I recommend this product because it is simple to use and requires no user interaction after the installation step. What could be simpler?

Author: Rebit SaveMe
Vendor: Rebit
www.rebit.com
Price: \$30 for one computer, \$40 for multiple computer backup

LG Netbook X120



The popularity of laptop computers has led to a proliferation of sizes, styles, colors and shapes. The frequency of travel and the need to keep carry-ons small has produced a new category of laptop called the netbook. They are not only physically small, but have limited capacity in terms of storage, included devices, screen size and speed. The physical size is less than a sheet of paper and the thickness can be described as "slim." The screen and keyboard necessarily fit within this narrow package, but are sufficient for occasional use. The hard drive is smaller than most laptops, but is adequate. You would not want to use a laptop for video

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Make Firefox Even Better

I know many of you still stubbornly use Internet Explorer. I used to, as well. But Firefox, with all its lovely add-ons and tweaks, is just more fun to use.

Let's start with a something you might not know about: Firefox's hidden visual tab switching tweak. Right now, you can use Ctrl-Tab to cycle through Firefox's tabs. But if you're using Firefox 3.6, the current revision, this tweak will give you a visual look at the tabs, just like using Alt-Tab in Windows.



Firefox has a hidden feature: Visual tab switching

Turning on the feature takes two steps:

1. Go to Firefox's address bar, type *about:config*, and hit Enter. (Didn't know about this, eh?)

2. Type *browser.ctrlTab.previews* into the Filter field. When it appears, double-click it. (The value will change to true.)

Five Handy Firefox Add-ons

Here are five add-ons I've recently used; they're easy to install and don't take much time to figure out how to use. Pay attention to the version of Firefox you have installed (*Help, About Mozilla Firefox*) to make sure the add-on is compatible with it.

- Tired of squinting at sites with tiny fonts or weird background colors? Experiment with NoSquint to override a site's font and image sizes as well as change its foreground and background colors. If you like the results, tell NoSquint to remember the settings for your return visit to the specific site. <http://urandom.ca/nosquint/>
- I've experimented with SwiftTabs for a few weeks. It lets you use the F-keys to go to the next or previous open tab. It's a keeper — and especially useful for those of us with Function keys along the side the keyboard. (Careful, the site has a name sure to offend.) <http://ti-nyurl.com/3746xsx>
- I like the idea behind Fox Splitter, an add-on that rearranges tabs as separate windows. The problem is I had trouble adjusting to splitting off tabs and keep-

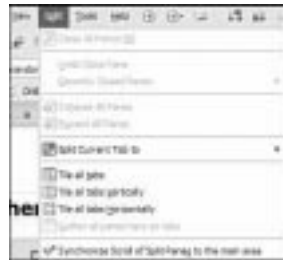
ing track of what went where. You might like it, and it's easy enough to install and uninstall, so give it a try.

<http://ti-nyurl.com/24n3ct>

Rearrange Firefox's windows with Fox Splitter.

• Not all of Firefox's icons are easy to recognize; Menu Icons Plus gives me a nicer array of choices. I'm using it with XP, but Vista and Win7 may give you problems. <http://ti-nyurl.com/34op9fx>

• You know about Firefox's built-in Find features. Find All highlights every occurrence of the word, shows it in a separate window, and lets you click to go to the word. (See the screens below for instructions.) Très cool, no? <http://ti-nyurl.com/cc7apq>



Start Typing and Firefox starts a search.

Click Ctrl-F to expand Firefox's Find feature.

Now use Find All: It does tons more than Firefox's default Find feature.

Steve Bass is the publisher and self-appointed Chief Content Officer at TechBite; he continues to experience the cool feeling of having his own newsletter. Send him your feedback at TechBite stevebass@techbite.com. To sign up for TechBite's free Steve Bass Technology newsletter, head for our signup page. <http://www.techbite.com/>

Steve's also the author of "PC Annoyances, 2nd Edition: How to Fix the Most Annoying Things About Your Personal Computer," available on Amazon. It covers XP, but not Vista. If you haven't purchased your copy today, don't wait, supplies always seem to be limited...

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Dick's Clicks

This month I clicked on "email etiquette" in Google, and found 163,000 hits, with myriad suggestions for doing the right thing. I realize that many of you do not need this, but others, including my own kith and kin, should take note of these pet peeves. Please take the quiz:

1. A friend emails you with the subject "Meg's birthday," and attaches three nice pics of the little sweetie with her cake and candles. Do you immediately reply and comment on the happy occasion, leaving the subject unchanged?

2. A month later, when you email this same friend about your successful hip replacement, and you use Reply to get started, do you use something relevant, like "I'm so Hippy," instead of lazily leaving "Meg's birthday" as the subject line?

3. When a friend sends you anything welcome, do you give them the courtesy of a prompt reply/thank you, knowing that they'll appreciate that you received it and cared enough to respond?

4. When you Reply, do you delete all traces of the incoming email, especially

any pics or a long attachment, thus saving clutter on your friend's hard disk which, after all, already has a copy of what was sent?

5. Someone emails you a scary warning of impending doom if you get an email with a certain clickable link. Or, it might be an amazing come on, saying that Microsoft will pay you cash for every person to whom you relay this message, so they can check a new method of email tracking. You are begged to forward this to everyone in your address book. You notice that this email has already been successively forwarded several times, each time accumulating long visible lists of email addresses of previous recipients.

Do you take time to check a hoax or urban legend web site, such as www.snopes.com or www.scambusters.org, to see if this message has validity? Most likely you'll find that it has been debunked, perhaps still making the rounds after several years. Do you spare others needless anxiety and wasted time by sim-

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· Oops, I shouldn't have done that:
Ctrl+Z (Undoes your mistakes)

Now that we've covered the basics, we can move on to some good stuff. Microsoft introduced something called the Windows key when it announced Windows 95 back in the Stone Age. Also known as the Super key, Windows logo key, the WinKey, the Start key, and sometimes the Flag key, it has been with us ever since. Tapping the Windows key opens or closes the Start menu. If that were all it did there would be nothing else to say. There are several dozen shortcuts that you can easily use with the Windows key in combination with other keys to call up common functions. Here are a few of them:

- Win+D: Shows the Desktop
- Win+F: Opens the search function
- Win+L: Locks the Desktop and lets you switch users
- Win+M: Minimizes all open windows
- Win+R: Opens the Run box so you can type DOS like commands
- Win+P: Very useful with multiple monitors or an external projector
- Win+Spacebar: All open windows become transparent so you can see through to the desktop.

There are many others, but these are probably the ones most computer users would invoke most of the time.

Microsoft sometimes does something really terrific, but for whatever reason doesn't tell anyone about it. The company has created an alternate control panel which blows away any tool I've previously seen. Why the company keeps it a secret is beyond me. To create this tool you will need to create a folder, name it, put in a period, and type something called a Globally Unique Identifier (GUID). A GUID is a special type of identifier used in software applications to provide a unique reference number. The value is represented as a 32 character hexadecimal character string. All you need to be concerned with is to type it accurately. Let Microsoft's engineers worry about the details.

1. You can create the folder anywhere, but the most logical place for it is on the Desktop. Make sure you're on the desktop and all windows are closed or minimized.
2. Right-click on an empty area of the desktop and choose New/Folder.
3. Name the folder. It doesn't matter

what you call it, the magic is performed by the GUID.

4. After the folder name, type a period.
5. After the period type the GUID {ED7BA470-8E54-465E-825C-99712043E01C} (No spaces are allowed).

6. Press Enter

Open the folder and you have complete control over Windows 7. You might need several hours to count how many things you can do without having to hunt through layers of screens to access an important, but obscure function. ♠

Google Books— continued from Page 1

vice, Google may have a competitive advantage over its competitors selling e-books that can only be read on their re-

cosm of the innocence of American life that is now lost forever. I did download a PDF of the May to October 1893 edition of Popular Science (copyright expired), and found the scientific technology and writings of the day fascinating, as were the portraits of the scientists referenced; the clothing the scientists were wearing looked archaic compared to today's styles. Some of the advertisements of 1893 were most educational, as were stories about life of the day. One story about the homes displayed at the 1892 Columbian Exposition, honoring the 400th anniversary of Columbus discovering America, described the mod-



ernistic (circa 1892) homes of the day, including a \$1000 "Workingman's Model Home", two stories plus a cellar, 20x28 feet per story (560 square feet per floor), including three bedrooms. The furniture for this three bedroom home was listed at an aggregate cost of \$300, and total family expenses for a year were listed as food at \$200, clothing at \$100, fuel at \$50, and annual miscellaneous expenses of \$50. Feeding a family of five was listed as 50 to 60 cents per day. We can learn a lot about history and economics by reading these antique magazines on Google Books.

During my Christmas break, I stumbled on Google Books by accident while doing personal research on some historical items. I was amazed to find entire texts, complete with all of their pictures, on Google, and downloaded over two dozen entire books from Google. Most of these books were published between 1880 and 1910, and most have the stamp of the New York City Public Library emblazoned on the inside of the front cover, and elsewhere in the books, making their source obvious.

I have always had a fascination for old magazines, and Google Books has helped to satiate my needs. Google Books has a large collection of old magazines, including LIFE, Popular Science, Popular Mechanics, and others available for viewing. I recently viewed a 1938 LIFE magazine (still under copyright, but available for viewing) which included stark images of the wars in Spain and China, historical facts that my current college students are oblivious to. It is not just the news and photos of that date that are of interest to me, as the advertisements display a micro-

ernistic (circa 1892) homes of the day, including a \$1000 "Workingman's Model Home", two stories plus a cellar, 20x28 feet per story (560 square feet per floor), including three bedrooms. The furniture for this three bedroom home was listed at an aggregate cost of \$300, and total family expenses for a year were listed as food at \$200, clothing at \$100, fuel at \$50, and annual miscellaneous expenses of \$50. Feeding a family of five was listed as 50 to 60 cents per day. We can learn a lot about history and economics by reading these antique magazines on Google Books.

Thousands of more recent books are available for free viewing on Google Books. I teach courses in Business and Economics at LIT, and Google Books lists 14,868 titles in its Business & Economics directory. Google Books also has 149,600 medical books listed, as well as 62,800 cookbooks. While many of the newer books are complete and can be viewed online, many others say, "This is a preview. The total pages displayed will be limited." One cookbook I looked at that

Continued on Page 7

contained that statement was the 1975 version of the “Joy of Cooking”. While some pages were omitted, I was able to find a lot of interesting recipes in the 900+ pages that were available. On the edge of the browser window was a statement from Google that said, “You can order full cop-



ies of any book using the “Get this book” links to the side of the preview page.” Along with the 481,600 books available in the “Law” category, 60,566 under “Humor”, and 161,600 under “Travel”, as well as the dozens of other categories, anyone should be able to find a huge selection of books of interest.

Being Google, the entire library of millions of titles is fully searchable, and both the directory and the search results can be sorted into those titles that are either public domain (mostly downloadable as a PDF file), full view, and limited view. Google has provided an excellent re-

source for readers of all ages. The selection of books currently available is outstanding, and according to some published resources, only makes up about 30% of all of the titles that Google has scanned because of unresolved copyright issues. Once the final legal issues are resolved, the selection of titles should be much bigger. I eagerly look forward to what else might become available from books.google.com. ♠

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Multimedia – continued from Page 4

recording or to store lots of pictures.

A significant limitation is the absence of an external disk drive, either floppy or CD/DVD. This makes installing new applications difficult, although devices attachable through USB are available.

Screen size is the most visible limitation, making the display of web pages rather truncated. Web designers tend to put a lot of extraneous stuff at the top of a page, leaving important things farther down the page, which forces one to move the page up in order to see what one wants to see.

In spite of these limitations, netbooks are one of the most popular computers on the market today, and the LG X120 is an excellent example of them. The processor, hard drive size and memory limitations are not evident in everyday use. It has the usual Intel Atom processor, 1 GB memory, 160 GB hard drive and 3 USB ports. The keyboard is as large as most laptops and has a nice touch.

The operating system is XP Home, the screen is 10.1” diagonally and the battery provides up to 7 hours of life, according to LG (I was not able to get more than 4 hours). The unit also has a 1.3 megapixel web cam. The LG X120 has two features unique among netbooks. One is the ability to connect to either a Wi-Fi network

or the GSM cell phone network. This means that wherever you are (almost), you can access the Internet. LG describes this facility as “3G+, Anytime, Anywhere.”

The GSM connection seems somewhat slower than the WiFi connection, but that may be subjective. I had no way to accurately measure speed of either. The other unique feature is an alternate interface called Smart On by Splashtop. It starts with a very simple screen showing Web, Music, Online Games, Photo and Chat buttons. The Web button opens a Splashtop browser set to initially access LG’s web site. The bottom of the resulting browser screen has a rectangular “toolbar” with the same four buttons, plus several more, one

of which transfers you to the XP OS.

The Smart On interface is not only simple, but loads very quickly. Loading took 6 seconds, shutdown 1 second. XP load took 55 seconds, shutdown 15 seconds.

I had difficulty connecting to the Internet on a recent trip to Indianapolis. In my room, the network appliance showed multiple available wireless networks, but the motel’s was not one of them. When I went to the motel’s office, their network showed up, but connecting to it did not allow me to connect to the Internet. The motel’s computer connected OK, but why the LG would not was unexplained. I had no trouble connecting at home. ♠

Dick’s Clicks – continued from Page 5

ply deleting such emails? They’re meant to deceive gullible readers, which is rather funny given that “gullible” is not even in the dictionary.

6. When you Forward an email that is legit, perhaps a collection of cute rattlesnake pics, do you delete any previously-accumulated email addresses? When you write to multiple email addresses, do you Send using BCC (blind carbon copies)? In both cases, it’s a matter of protecting email address privacies.

7. For all emails, before clicking on Send, do you read your composition to find typos, poor phrasing, bad punctuation and misspelled words? Do you avoid all upper-case words except when you want to be read as SHOUTING? Do you minimize those !!!s? It’s all a matter of caring, courtesy and competence.

8. Did you get a perfect score, without “No” answers to any of the questions? ♠

“Random Thoughts”

There’s no meeting this month. Since our meeting place was unavailable and we hadn’t firmed up a program for July we decided to cancel the July meeting. The mid-summer turnout is often light and this also gives Ben Wilson a well deserved break after arranging what I believe were two of our all-time best programs: Richard Frisch’s comprehensive look at smart phones and the Norwalk Police Department field trip where we saw first hand the amazing new license plate reading technology they’re using on two of their patrol cars so far.

Since we won’t be together again until August, I wanted to share a few random thoughts.

JPEG Corruption

I mentioned this at a meeting a few months ago. My wife had found that a batch of jpeg files on her computer had become corrupted. They were files from our old Canon camera that I had moved from her old Windows XP drive to a new drive when I updated all our computers to Windows 7. Some of the files wouldn’t open and the ones that did had blank lines or gray bands running through them. I did a Google search and found that this is a known issue with .jpeg files and it has some professional photographers scared to death because there’s no assurance that their large portfolios are intact. The files appear to be normal and the only way to tell if there’s a problem is to try to open the file.

I had backed the photo files up in several places (including Mozy - more on that later) so I was able to restore the uncorrupted copies to her computer.

Then this past week I discovered another batch of corrupted jpegs, this time it was on my notebook - they were the first 90 photos we had taken with our current Casio camera. Fortunately these photos resided in other locations including my wife’s hard drive where they were fine. Again, I replaced the corrupted files.

Years ago I had a similar problem with audio .wav files that I’d copied from one drive to another. In that case it turned out to be a known issue when transferring large files with a particular MOBO’s hard drive controller - the one I happened to have. I assume the .jpeg issue is similar and I guess the lesson here is that even our backups aren’t bulletproof. Don’t assume

anything.

Facebook

This week I received an email from someone I’d never heard of. It said, “Hi Walt, I set up a Facebook profile where I can post my pictures, videos and events and I want to add you as a friend so you can see it. First, you need to join Facebook! Once you join, you can also create your own profile. Thanks, Giuseppe.” The email also contained two elements of Facebook boilerplate: “See who else has invited you to Facebook,” and, “Other people you might know on Facebook.” The invite was from Richard Frisch as part of his CTPC presentation awhile back, so that’s fine, I was fully aware of it. But the “people I might know” are indeed acquaintances; mostly work related, who probably commented on their Facebook page that they had been to my studio, and the Facebook stealth marketing ‘bots must have picked it up.

I’ve always resisted having anything to do with Facebook, mainly because I’m not really interested in what people are up to, especially if I haven’t seen or heard from them in 40 years. I find Facebook superfluous. With a website and an email address, why do I need a third-party site to communicate with anyone? I am a member of a couple of forums, but that’s to discuss specific interests, not just to chew the fat.

My wife points out that Facebook is a good way to keep up with our granddaughter, and she’s right. But I think it’s a shame that more people haven’t learned to set up their own websites where they can be in control instead of relying on Facebook. To me, Facebook is the 2010 equivalent of America Online in the 1990’s - a proprietary community where users are at the mercy of the proprietor.

And while Facebook is prowling around your private pages, letting others know you’re thinking of them, I suspect they’re even more eager to let a few local car dealers know that you happened to mention you’re in the market for a new car. Not a big deal, I suppose, but it seems creepy to me.

Mozy

While I puzzle over why so many people I know use Facebook, I can’t understand why so few people I know use Mozy (or Carbonite.) Both these companies

provide secure, unlimited online data backups for around \$5 a month. I happen to use Mozy.

The real beauty of Mozy (or Carbonite) is that it’s automatic - you don’t need to think about it. It runs in the background and it not only keeps a mirror of your current data, it provides “versioning” by saving another copy of every file you change. Those individual versions are stored by date and stay active for a month. If you accidentally delete a file, or overwrite one as I did last week, all you need to do is log into your account, choose a prior date and you’ll see your hard drive exactly as it looked on that date. Select the missing or overwritten file and retrieve it.

In my case it was a file I revise each week by accessing last week’s file and doing a “save as” with a new name. I had forgotten the “save as” step and a week went by before I noticed that the previous week’s file had been overwritten. No problem.

Firefox 4 Beta

Last week Mozilla released the initial beta of its version 4 Firefox browser. I switched from Microsoft’s Internet Explorer to Firefox 1 several years ago but jumped ship last year when Google released it’s Chrome browser. Chrome was elegantly simple, extremely fast and virtually free of bloat compared with Firefox 3. Now I believe the game is changing again. I’ve been using the Firefox 4 portable version which can be run from a thumb drive but, if used on a hard drive, has the advantage of keeping all its files in one folder instead of scattering them around in various obscure Documents and Settings or Application Data folders. Just like the old days!

Firefox 4 has a new, fresh user interface remarkably similar to Chrome. The speed is very close - I haven’t done any time tests but it feels fast enough. When I switch to it from Chrome I don’t notice a difference anymore. It seems rock solid which is a great sign for an initial beta. Firefox is configurable in many ways that Chrome is not and it doesn’t keep track of your Internet travels the way Google is likely to with Chrome.

I think I’ll be switching back to Firefox. The lesson here, in my opinion, is that competition is a great thing! In this case the increasing popularity of Chrome

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Will Our Computing Experience be Shaped by Microsoft Competitors?

Our total computing experience may well be shaped in the future by Microsoft competitors. Think that is an over statement? Just think of the changes Microsoft is making to keep up with new demands from a changing computer environment based on more mobile devices and the need to share documents quickly in a web-based environment. Many changes are being pioneered by competitors that are stepping up with new devices, applications, and software.

One competitor is Google. Google Docs were designed to allow the creation of documents online in an environment similar to Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, making it easy to collaborate in real time. Price? No charge. A few months ago Google released the new Chrome Browser. Google also released the Android operating system for phones which are very popular and not susceptible to the viruses written for Windows. Droid phones allow

“Random Thoughts”

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woke up the Firefox development team and we now have two excellent browser choices. Will Google's Chrome OS do the same for Microsoft Windows? Stay tuned.

A Final Note

I started writing this article on my netbook in WordPad. Then I remembered that WordPad has no spell check so I saved and reopened the document in Word. After awhile I noticed that my spelling was perfect – not likely – so I hit F7 for a complete document spell check. A message popped up saying that various dll's related to the dictionary could not be found. Later I opened the document on my notebook, then on my desktop machine – same problem!

By now I realized that the problem was with this particular document and not Word itself. I tried cutting and pasting the text to a new document – no luck. I saved it as an .rtf (rich text format) file – no luck. The only way I was able to finish the article with spell checking was to save as a pure .txt file and then reformat it. Gee, computers have become so much easier and more reliable these days!

Have a safe and happy rest of the summer and I'll see you in late August. ♠

users to browse the internet, exchange email, take pictures, and do hundreds of tasks quickly and efficiently. Oh, yes. People talk on them too.

We have been waiting for Google's new Chrome Operating System, wondering how it will compare to Windows.

To answer that question, I visited Google's official blog. Here is some of what I learned from the July 7, 2009, entry.

“Google Chrome OS will run on both x86 as well as ARM chips and we are working with multiple OEMs to bring a number of netbooks to market next year. The software architecture is simple — Google Chrome running within a new windowing system on top of a Linux kernel. For application developers, the web is the platform. All web-based applications will automatically work and new applications can be written using your favorite web technologies. And, of course, these apps will run not only on Google Chrome OS, but on any standards-based browser on Windows, Mac and Linux thereby giving developers the largest user base of any platform.

“Google Chrome OS is a new project, separate from Android. Android was designed from the beginning to work across a variety of devices from phones to set-top boxes to netbooks. Google Chrome OS is being created for people who spend most of their time on the web, and is being designed to power computers ranging from small netbooks to full-size desktop systems. While there are areas where Google Chrome OS and Android overlap, we believe choice will drive innovation for the benefit of everyone, including Google.”

“We hear a lot from our users and their message is clear — computers need to get better. People want to get to their email instantly, without wasting time waiting for their computers to boot and browsers to start up. They want their computers to always run as fast as when they first bought them. They want their data to be accessible to them wherever they are and not have to worry about losing their computer or forgetting to back up files. Even more importantly, they don't want to spend hours configuring their computers to work with every new piece of hardware, or have to worry about constant software updates.”

On November 19, 2009, Google open-sourced the code for Chrome OS, a year

before the developers anticipate that the OS will be ready for general use. Anyone who wishes to download the code and contribute to the development of the operating system may do so. I am not a developer and have no interest in writing code. But I am interested in the results. It is a totally new way of computing. Here are excerpts from Google's official blog on November 19.

“First, it's all about the web. All apps are web apps. The entire experience takes place within the browser and there are no conventional desktop applications. This means users do not have to deal with installing, managing and updating programs.”

“Second, because all apps live within the browser, there are significant benefits to security. Unlike traditional operating systems, Chrome OS doesn't trust the applications you run. Each app is contained within a security sandbox making it harder for malware and viruses to infect your computer. Furthermore, Chrome OS barely trusts itself. Every time you restart your computer the operating system verifies the integrity of its code. If your system has been compromised, it is designed to fix itself with a reboot. While no computer can be made completely secure, we're going to make life much harder (and less profitable) for the bad guys. If you dig security, read the Chrome OS Security Overview or watch the video.”

“Most of all, we are obsessed with speed. We are taking out every unnecessary process, optimizing many operations and running everything possible in parallel. This means you can go from turning on the computer to surfing the web in a few seconds. Our obsession with speed goes all the way down to the metal. We are specifying reference hardware components to create the fastest experience for Google Chrome OS.”

No doubt this new model will change the way we use computers in the future—at least for most people. Things will not change suddenly. But it is highly likely that a web based computing environment will be the norm for most users in the future. ♠

CTPC MEETINGS

The CTPC meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month (not the last) except for December when there is no meeting. E-mail Editor@CTPC.org for information.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Annual membership dues are \$25.00 (payable to CPC). Partial year memberships will be charged at the rate of \$2.00 per month. Send your check to CTPC, PO Box 291, New Canaan CT 06840.

Please also provide your e-mail address so that we can send you meeting announcements each month.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

1. All members will receive an e-mail notice during December requesting their dues payment.
2. Members whose checks have not been received by early February will be reminded once by mail.
3. Since we really would like to have you as a member, the Membership Chairman will try one last time with another e-mail in early March.

DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the CTPC or its members.

Neither the CTPC, contributors nor the Editor of this newsletter assume any liability for damages arising out of the publication or non-publication of any advertisement, article or any other item in this newsletter. Articles are published at the discretion of the Editor.

NEWSLETTER INFORMATION

The CTPC newsletter is a monthly publication of the Connecticut Personal Computer User's Group (CTPC). Information is drawn from both the member-

ship of the CTPC and other user group newsletters. Its intent is to inform members of meetings and provide them with other information related to the use of their computers.

SUBMISSION OF ARTICLES

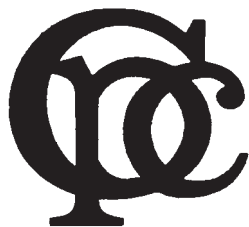
Articles for the CTPC newsletter may be submitted by e-mailing the editor at Editor@CTPC.org. Please include the article in the body of the e-mail and attach it as a simple ASCII, rtf or Word file (any version). The deadline for material is the second Tuesday of the month.

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The CTPC newsletter does not accept advertising.



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HERE'S WHERE THE MEETING WILL BE

Norwalk Transit District Offices 275 Wilson Avenue Norwalk, CT

From the North

Connecticut Turnpike to Exit 15 (Exit forks at the top, take right fork. Take the left fork at the bottom of the ramp). Left onto West Ave. at Fourth traffic light, about .5 mile, bear right onto Martin Luther King Drive for 1.8 miles to 7th traffic light. Left at light onto Wilson Avenue (Rte. 136) then .4 mile to facility on left.

From the South

Connecticut Turnpike to Exit 14 (Fairfield Avenue). Right at the end of the ramp onto Fairfield Avenue. Continue for .4 miles (second traffic light) to Martin Luther King Drive Right on Martin Luther King Drive. Continue on Martin Luther King Drive for 1.6 miles to 5th light. Left at light onto Wilson Avenue (Rte. 136) then .4 mile to facility on left.

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