

BITS AND BYTES

The Newsletter of the Midland Computer Club

March 2007

GENERAL CLUB MEETING 7:00 P.M.
Meets 4th Wednesday of the month at the
Midland Community Center
2001 George St., Midland, MI
<http://mcc.apcug.org/>

This month's date: March 28th

**THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: Howard Lewis
will give a brief overview of the new
Microsoft Office 2007 Program
PROGRAM COORDINATORS**

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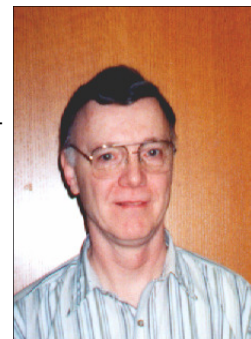
What You Missed

The **February** meeting had Bob Miller giving a demonstration on how to use Intuit's Quicken to manage your household budget. Bob demonstrated the ease in setting up your various accounts (auto, utilities, etc.) to be flexible and useful for the user.

Upcoming Activities

Howard Lewis will give a demonstration on the new interface built into Microsoft Office 2007 at the **March** meeting. Office 2007 — which consists of Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Outlook — has had a complete redesign of the basic interface and has replaced the familiar menus and toolbars with something called a "ribbon." This redesign was done because the toolbars and menus had become so complex that a complete redesign was initiated to make this simpler for the user. This demonstration will show some of the differences and new "ease of use" features which are included in the new Office.

The President's Corner



I think it's been awhile since I've hit upon DRM (Digital Rights Management) — at least a month anyway. But I've been reading one of the many e-mails I get weekly regarding problems in the computer software industry and DRM seems to keep coming up. One of my weekly newsletters was reporting on a problem that someone was having with Adobe's Acrobat. It seems that this guy had been a user of Adobe Acrobat 7 and liked what he was seeing in Acrobat 8, so he upgraded the product and activated it. After not using the product for a couple of months, he went to use it again and found out that it was deactivated. After finding out that he couldn't activate the product again, he called Adobe Tech Support. After managing to get through the voicemail maze, he finally talked to a person who asked him a series of questions and made several suggestions — none of which worked. Finally the support person said (and this is a quote from the Adobe user) "gee, if you upgrade or restore your drive, or change your configuration, or backup to Ghost, or use a RAID array, or use a disk defragger, the activation doesn't like it." Then they started asking the user why he needs to do those things. Based on this quote, I'm of the opinion that tech support at Adobe doesn't think you should do anything to your computer but install the software and let the computer go downhill from there. I would think that a tech support person would think it's a good idea to do some of those things. I know I do. What's your thoughts?

— Howard Lewis

(The above comments are the opinion of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Midland Computer Club.)

April will have Frank Koenig giving a Tech Update. With the continuing changes in technology, it is difficult to keep up. This presentation will look into some of the recent events in technology and how they can impact the user.

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O'Reilly

Marsee wanted us to know that O'Reilly has recently posted some Missing Manual Screencasts (videos) online for Office 2007 if people want some tips and to see it in action. They are by the authors of their Missing Manual books.

http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=missingmanuals&search=Search

<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/consumer-protection/recalls/index.htm> – Consumer Reports is well known for their pro-consumer stance. This site lists all recalls deemed to be potentially harmful or cause extreme inconvenience.

<http://www.ftc.gov/savegas> – With the upcoming summer season and the increasing price of gasoline, it is always worthwhile to see if you can squeeze as many miles out of a tank of gas as possible. The FTC sponsors this site.



<http://www.fueleconomy.gov> – The U.S. Department of Energy also sponsors a site with the goal of helping to reduce our dependence on oil.



Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be 7 p.m., April 10, 2007, at Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church, 5501 Jefferson Ave., Midland.

Strange, useful, and useless (in no particular order) Web Sites:

<http://www.recalls.gov/> – This site will keep you keep up-to-date on various recalls mandated by the government. You can find out the status of recalls ranging from cars to food to children's toys.

Membership Enrollment form

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MIDLAND COMPUTER CLUB Attn: membership chairman
 P.O. box 132
 Midland, MI 48640-0132

you may also pay for membership at a regular club meeting



Stephen Johnson On Digital Photography

O'Reilly & Associates, Inc.

ISBN: 059652370X

A book review by Bill Fitzgerald

This is a well written book parading under false colors. It is a work which seems to be a combination of personal memoir and an instruction book. The author is a nature photographer who has a good reputation for his photos of places like Yellowstone Park, Kennedy Space Center, and other large scale panoramas. Therein lays the difficulty.

He is used to using a high-end special landscape camera and all his instructions, hints, etc seem to deal with that camera. For those of us on the other end of the scale of cameras, there really is not a lot of useful material on digital photography.

On the other hand, the book is an excellent instruction manual on the use of Photoshop for processing of digital photographs. It would make an excellent instruction book for a beginner in the art. If someone, though, had a library of Photoshop books it might be considered overkill and repetition.

If the title had been *On The Use of Photoshop In Digital Photography* it might have been worth the cost.

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Leaving AOL

by Larry Piper

Today I decided, after 12+ years with AOL, to terminate my account. During much of this time period my account was a free, ambassador account so cost was never a big issue. Spam also was not an issue. I have long ago transferred all my personal and business email away from AOL, and I have two ISP accounts plus many other free email accounts to handle all my needs. I really did not need AOL any more. The word on the street is that you can continue to use your AOL email screen name even after you cancel your account. So, here is my experience of canceling with AOL.

Despite hearing all the bad publicity in dealing with AOL, particularly terminating accounts, I have to confess that today's termination procedure came off without a problem. I probably spent 5-7 minutes on the phone, most of it talking with a computer. Although I have used voice response before when dealing with utility and financial companies I nevertheless was impressed with AOL's Star Trek-like customer service voice response.

The toughest step in the entire cancellation procedure may be to determine how to reach AOL. I have never had much success with their Help or Keyword functions. My technique is to obtain a recent, free AOL CD and call the number listed for help. When you call this number the usual recorded message comes on the line, only this time it is not a choice of numbers. I am asked to select my question as in: New User, Installation, Tech Support, Billing and Cancellation. I avoid the word cancellation and instead ask for Billing since I don't want to raise a red flag and get shuffled off into some long phone hold loop. I say yes when asked if I am already a customer. In order to identify who I am I choose ZIP code—I could have chosen phone or address. Eventually I am asked to spell my screen name. In order to further verify that I am really me I am asked to say my complete mailing address. The final check asked me for the answer to my security question. I am really impressed because this is a word not easily said or understood, but the computer didn't even hesitate.

At this point I am point-blank asked (still by the computer) to describe my problem. I quickly run through in my mind some things not to say, take a deep breath and say, 'Cancel my account'. A calm reassuring voice responds, without any changes in inflection, that it understands that I want to cancel my account,

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Tips, Tricks & Techniques

Hide Icons in the System Tray

If you don't need to see all of the icons in the *System Tray* (the area near the clock on your *Taskbar*), they can be removed which in turn increases the space on the *Taskbar* for your applications. To hide these icons, perform the following steps:

Right-click the *Start* menu and select *Properties*.

Click the *Taskbar* tab and make sure the *Hide inactive icons* is checked.

Next click the *Customize* button.

Now scroll to the icon to be removed and click in the *Behavior* column listed on the right.

Change the icon's status by scrolling through the options in the drop-down menu and selecting option desired.

When you are finished, click *OK* to the *Customize Notification* window.

Click *OK* in the *Taskbar and Start Menu Properties* window.

The icons will now perform the behavior that you requested.

What to Do When Your Computer Freezes up

Occasionally, most computers end up freezing or locking up. Some people simply turn their computers off and then back on. This is not always the best way to unlock the computer. There may be a simpler solution that won't cause you to lose any other application data that you may have open. Whenever your computer stops responding, try this simple step:

Press *Ctrl-Alt-Delete* on your keyboard. This opens the *Windows Task Manager*.

Click the *Applications* tab.

In the *Windows Task Manager* window, select the program that's not responding, and click *End Task*.

A confirmation window appears and click *End Now*.

If this doesn't unfreeze your computer, you can click on *Shut Down* on the menu bar and select *Restart*.

Switching between Worksheets Using the Keyboard

When your workbook contains multiple sheets, most people use their mouse to change the focus from one sheet to another by going to the bottom of the Window and clicking on the desired sheet. However you can move between the various sheets without moving your hands off of the keyboard. If you want to move to the next worksheet in a workbook, simply press *Ctrl+PgDn*. If you want to move to the previous worksheet in a workbook, press *Ctrl+PgUp*. If you need to move over several sheets, keep pressing the key combination several times until you get to the sheet you need. The use of keyboard shortcuts can be much faster than moving your hand back and forth between the keyboard and the mouse.

Emphasizing Text in Microsoft Word

If you want to emphasize something in Microsoft Word, you simply **bold** the text by using *Ctrl-B*. However, you may wish to put different emphasis on several different words. To accomplish this, try using **colors** in the text.

To change the color of the text, follow these steps:

Select the text. Click the down arrow beside the *Font Color* button on your Taskbar and click on a color — **red**, **green**, **blue**, or one of the 16+ million colors that are available on your computer. If the *Font Color* button is not available, you can use the *Format/Font* menu item and select a color using *Font color* to select the desired color.

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Is this correct? I say yes and answer a couple other verifying questions. Now the voice (it was a male I think) says that all the information I have entered will be transferred to a live person to complete the transaction. I think, 'Oh no, here comes the hassle'. With zero wait time a person comes on the line and says her name is Alice—appropriate enough since I had already given the 'voice' a name of Alice On Line. When she asks me how she can help, I figure I have once again entered that medical twilight zone where you have to keep repeating your name and symptoms to every person you deal with. I again take a deep breath and confidently say, 'As you can see on your screen before you, I am a long-time AOL user and I want to cancel my account.' Without hesitation Alice says she can help me. She notes that my billing date is the 21st of the month and since this is the 14th when I am calling, I will not receive any more bills from AOL unless I had incurred some extra charges since the 21st of last month. (I assume, like many other services, you pay a month ahead from AOL.) Alice then read one scripted message that offered me a \$10/month service. This might be a deal to the average user who pays \$25/month, but since I had been paying less than \$8/month, it politely declined. She further explained that, even though I had canceled my AOL account, I would still be able to use my AOL email—only I would not have any spam/antivirus protection or any Tech Support. She said something about using Keywords if I had further questions. Finally, she said I would receive a letter by snail mail in the next 10 days verifying my account cancellation.

Alice then summarized what had transpired during our conversation (much like what happens when I make a financial transaction by phone), and she asked me if I had any further questions. I did ask her to spell her name—she had a strong Spanish accent, but she spoke slow enough that I had little trouble understanding her.

Only time will tell if all of what Alice promised does actually come to fruition. But the reader can assume all went well if nothing further is mentioned. I was impressed with AOL's service, particularly in lieu of all the past horror stories in dealing with ISPs. (Personal Note: I have always assumed that most horror stories are really caused by the persons lack of knowledge, lack of patience, lack of interpersonal skills and/or attempts to defraud the system.) It will be interesting to watch the changes in AOL's business model as they go from a 20+ million user base paying \$25/month to essentially free email service supported by advertising revenues.

Larry Piper (larryp56@chartermi.net) is a member and officer in the Midland Computer Club, Midland, MI

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Dufferdom

Kingdom of the Ordinary User

Written by David D. Uffer, a member of the Chicago Computer Society, IL

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

Ever think about this, one of the consequences of Internet spam: missed genuine messages? Calling them "false phonies" may make them sound less serious but it is a real loss. Having a publicly known e-mail address would only add to the risk of garbage, obnoxious, or offensive messages, which is why I do not announce my address here—and no longer elsewhere—and why I wonder at the bravery of those who do. As it stands, I get a bunch of suspicious messages, a consequence of having previously been too open and trusting. I assume a lot of readers have the same experience.

Happily, most of the current garbage is obviously that. Crude spelling, offensive wording, or silly or too-cute sender names are a giveaway, a tip to delete and not open the e-mail, which would probably an-

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chor some form of evil in my PC. That evil could just be a spam target sign that in effect announces DUMB GUY HERE or GULLIBLE TARGET or KICK ME or BUYS ANYTHING or BUYS SOFTWARE ON or BUYS GARDEN TOOLS or it could open a little secret program in your PC that transmits further activities to an eager collector of such information. There goes your assumed anonymity. Scary, huh?

So, ways to avoid such nasties include: 1) leading a Simon-pure life, 2) keeping your address as secret as possible, 3) having some anti-spam, anti-spy program that does some measure of safeguarding, and 4) opening only those from e-mailers you can trust. Since (1) & (2) are difficult to do, (3) is a lot of trouble, costs time and money, may be harmful, and may not work, (4) is the simplest “solution” for most of us. That brings us back to the starting question. What do we miss and what do we care are valid questions. Steve Bass, of *PC World*, says he also automatically filters out e-mail containing the word, “Free”.

There’s a realist for you.

There was a time when a popular target for complaint was the Postal Service. Then that became too common and they got better. Then we’d also had the Phone Company as a favorite repository of reluctance. Then they got so eager to help that they got beside themselves, splitting up into competing companies all claiming to be offering the best deals. In that situation, all but one must be lying, which one being unclear. But you do observe that the most extended claims gather the big market share and the revenue, which brings us to Microsoft.

A colleague of mine has a sigh and a quip, “Every morning when I get up I send Microsoft \$10 and beg them not to give me any trouble this day.” It may well be that this favored MS—not the medical condition but the requisite host—will be an occasional target for this column. It’s hard to choose among the many cases of places bearing target signs. No, I could not do what they do, nor so well, nor so profitably, nor so annoyingly. My annoyances include new versions of *MS Word* that do not easily recognize output from an older sibling. Or older versions that also need a format change in order to be useful now. That’s one, a big one. But I found a new annoyance more suited to my scale, a small one.

I needed a new mouse, a chance to get steadier, smoother cursor movement. Guess what. Microsoft had just the ticket. A new, red-boxed optical mouse. Buy it, try it. No more interruptions to clean off the ball inside. But guess what. The new scroll wheel klacked along like a marble over gravel. Take it back. Surprise; Microsoft also offers the red-boxed MS Comfort Optical Mouse 3000, with magnifier and Tilt Wheel, no less. For more money of course but you do get wonderfully smooth scrolling, a click-on & -off magnified region, and some limited side-to-side shifting for off-screen text. A new slim thumb button triggers the variable area magnifier on & off and the scrolling wheel can be tilted to get the off-screen text.

Nice, but down the road there’s a surprise and a memory aid.

While using the enlarged on-screen area, you can fiddle with it some to adjust height and width of the magnified area. You find that using it also slows down any screen operation. Further, having the region move one way while the cursor moves another could make you something akin to airsick. You can probably make your peace with that and find it useful. Then, after some 15 or 20 periods of using and adapting to it, I found a new function for the magic thumb trigger. It makes the current screen vanish. Permanently. Then, if you push it again, that next screen also disappears. Permanently. I find it a new way to get back to the desktop screen in a hurry, if I don’t mind losing access to the intervening screens.

But what of the magic magnifier? Where is it hiding? Back on the desktop. That must be its new home. Maybe it goes there to rest. That is now where I must go to find it and call it forth. Then it becomes a creature pet, almost domesticated, and accompanies me for a while, ready to enlarge anything on the screen at my beck and call. Until it tires of the adventure and goes home, at some stage not predictable by me. Sort of a game it is.

But you may ask, where is the memory aid? A simple learning process it is. I learn by doing. Self-

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education. I learn and must remember that if I want the creature pet critter to accompany me I must summon it early or not at all. Failure to do so is penalized by progressive loss of screens and data. The learning is thus hastened and reinforced. So I get these gifts from Microsoft: surprises, memory aid reminders, and gently enforced self-education. Clever, resourceful, and wholesome, these MS folks in Redmond, WA. Or maybe I'm just one of their famous charities. But I did pay for the entry. And now Vista has arrived, with open doors and ticket booths beckoning.

Originally from Denver, Dave Uffer wended way to Chicago and the Big Iron by a not quite corporate route. He is a friend and long-time admirer of the Chicago Computer Society, a member of some standing. He knows that ordinary users are now the main body of the field and deserve some say. So he began Dufferdom as their realm.

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The Big Red X

Written by Vinny La Bash, a member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida

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

Email, along with the spreadsheet, is one of the greatest computer applications ever developed. Along with its usefulness are a few minor, but irritating inconveniences. The one we'll address in this article is the frustration with observing a red X where an image should appear.

There are several possible causes for pictures failing to materialize. They are not particularly difficult to correct, but the method is far from obvious. Start by right-clicking the red X and from the popup menu select "**Show Picture**". If this works, consider yourself blessed. More likely is that either your email setup is not allowing the picture to be viewed or the sender's options are not allowing the picture to be sent. Let's make sure that your setup isn't causing the problem, and then we'll figure out what to do with the sender.

If the problem is at your end, it could be caused by having Internet Explorer's email settings too restrictive. To reset the default settings for Internet Explorer 6.0 open Internet Explorer, click Tools from the top menu bar, and select Internet Options.

Click on the General tab to make sure it's active.

Click Delete Files.

Check Delete All Offline Content, and click OK.

Click the Delete Cookies button, and click OK.

Click the Settings button.

Set cache to 25 MB or less, and select Every Visit to Page, then click OK.

Next, make the Security tab active by clicking on it. There are four zones listed on the security tab: Internet, Local Intranet, Trusted Sites, and Restricted Sites.

Click Internet.

Click the Default Level button.

Repeat the steps for each of the remaining zones.

Third, click on the Privacy tab, and click the Default button. If the Default button is grayed out, ignore this step.

Now click the Connections tab.

Click the LAN Settings button.

Make sure nothing is checked, and click OK.

Last, click on the Advanced tab.

Click Restore Defaults.

Click Apply and OK.

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Internet Explorer 7 is similar, but there are enough differences to warrant its own set of instructions. Open Internet Explorer, click Tools, and select Internet Options.

First, look at the General tab.

Click the Delete button.

The Delete Browsing History dialog box appears. Click the Delete Files button.

Select Yes in the confirmation box.

Repeat step 2 for the Delete cookies, and Delete history buttons.

Click Close.

Click the Settings button in the Browsing history section.

Select "Every time I visit the webpage," then set the "Disk space to use" value to 50 Megabytes or less.

Click OK.

Next, click the Security tab. There are four zones listed on the security tab: Internet, Local Intranet, Trusted Sites, and Restricted Sites.

If the **Set all zones to default level button** is not grayed, out click it and you're done with this section. Otherwise continue with step 2.

Click Internet.

Click the Default level button (if it is not grayed out).

Repeat the steps for the remaining zones.

Click on the Privacy tab, and click the Default button unless it's grayed out. Then click the Connections tab.

Click the LAN settings button to activate another dialog box.

Make sure nothing is checked, and click OK.

Finally, click on the Advanced tab.

Click the Restore advanced settings button. **Don't**, repeat **don't** click the Reset button as that will delete any forms and passwords saved through auto-complete.

Click Apply and OK.

That takes care of your browser. If you're using Outlook or Outlook Express, you need to check several more options that control how images are received or sent. There are two ways to send pictures in Emails. You can embed the picture in the email or you can send the picture as an attachment. Whichever way you choose, you need to set your email client so it can handle pictures, and you do that by setting your email to work in HTML format. We'll start with Outlook Express and finish up with Outlook.

We'll make a big assumption that all of your recipients are set up to receive their Email in HTML format. You need to make sure that you have Outlook Express set up to send Email in HTML. Service Pack 2 should be installed on your system. Because of its extra security features, you need to avoid blocking attachments when you send or receive email.

Open Outlook Express, go to the Tools/menu, and click "Options",

Click the "Send" tab, and then select "HTML" as the format to send mail.

Click the Button to the right that's named "HTML Settings", and put a check in the box that says "Send Pictures with Messages". Be sure that "Quoted Printable" is the selected in the "Encode text using" box.

Click OK.

Click the Read tab.

Confirm that the "Read all messages in plain text" is not checked.

Your machine is now setup to correctly send and receive images. If people who are receiving your email complain about red Xs, send them these instructions. If you want to check out your system, try sending some emails to yourself.

If you're using Outlook, perform the following check.

Open Outlook and select Options from the Tools menu.

Select the Mail Format tab.

In the "Message format" section select HTML from the drop down menu.

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Click the Internet Format button

In the HTML options section, confirm there is no checkmark in any of the boxes in the dialog box.

In the Outlook Rich Text options section, select "Convert to HTML format" from the drop down menu.

Click OK to save the settings.

Click OK to exit.

Other possibilities that could prevent pictures being displayed in your email are your anti-virus and firewall settings. You may need to relax the security settings on these programs. We can't provide instructions for this because we don't know whose software you're using. You may need to contact the producer of the software for information.

If you create and send an email with a photo image or forward an email with a photo in it and the recipient gets a red X instead of the picture, you can be fairly confident that their email, firewall or anti-virus setup is preventing the picture from being seen. Send these instructions to them.

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Fun with Freeware

Written by Cary Quinn, a member of the Pikes Peak Computer Application Society, CO

<http://ppcompas.apcug.org/>

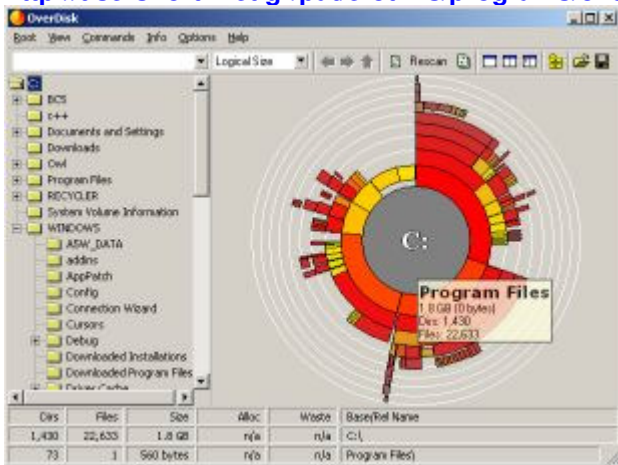
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(Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups)

Here are a couple of utilities I have been using lately to correct a couple of bumps in the road to a positive Windows experience.

OverDisk (v0.11 beta) (freeware)

<http://users.forthnet.gr/pat/efotinis/programs/overdisk.html>



Elias Fotinis, a programmer from Greece, is one of those programmers you often find on the net who in their spare time writes little apps and utilities to solve some personal issue they might have getting the operating system, or some other program, to work the way they want it to.

One of the programs he has written is a disk space monitor called Overdisk. It basically scans a drive or folders of your choice and tells you how much space is being taken up by the files therein. One special difference with Overdisk though, is the way it graphs that data to your screen.

Instead of representing the files as a pie chart, or bar graph, Overdisk shows a breakdown of folders and files as a

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series of concentric rings, as if you were looking down onto the disk itself and seeing the files laid out below. But it's even better than that.

When you mouse-over a particular section of the chart, a tooltip window will appear to give you more information about that particular folder (size, number of subdirectories, and the number of files); and if you click on a specific point of the chart you can drill down to get the same information for individual files. Clicking on the center of the chart takes you back up the directory path, or you can click on the tree view on the side of the screen to better select a particular folder to view.

I find this utility most useful when trying to identify what parts of a drive need to have a cleanup, or which folders I need to prioritize for backups.

Taskbar Shuffle (free, but accepting donations)

<http://www.freewebs.com/nerdcave/taskbarshuffle.htm>

From the home of the nerd cave, comes a pretty nifty little tool that answers a minor nit I have had with the Windows Taskbar for a while—why you cannot drag and drop the programs listed on the taskbar to better arrange your programs to your preference. With Taskbar Shuffle, you can. That seems pretty simple, and it appears to work quite seamlessly within the OS.

The utility leaves an icon running on your system tray that you can use to turn it on or off, or close it down completely. I've been using it for a few months, and haven't noticed any conflicts with other windows or programs that have caused me to want to shut it off.

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U3 Drives

By Diane George, Webmaster, PC Community, California

<http://www.pcc.org>

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

This month's column is half tips and half product review. I recently got interested in U3 drives, partly as a result of some software I saw at the Southwest PC User Group conference in San Diego in July.

What is U3 and why do I want to know? It's not the successor to the rock band U2. U3 is an open-standard platform that allows you to take applications and store and launch them on a flash drive. Several flash drives are offered with U3 with pre-loaded U3 applications on them. Verbatim, Memorex, Ativa and SanDisk all offer U3 smart drives. Go to <http://www.u3.com/smartdrives/default.aspx> for a list of U3 drives and more information.

The drives come with software preloaded, such as an application that will allow you to take Office documents created on your desktop computer, and work on them on another computer (also with Office installed), without a trace of the files being left on the second computer. This means that you can take your work with you without a laptop, use a computer elsewhere, like in an Internet cafe, without having to copy the files to the new computer, including your e-mail.

Other applications that come preloaded include antivirus software for the flash drive, password storage and management, SKYPE, Zinio Reader for digital magazines, ACDSee for photo management, and Migo (more about that later). In addition, there are other free and commercial applications available at the U3 Central site that are accessed from the drive, including games.

How does this work? The flash drive has a small partition that pretends to be a CD-ROM so that your computer will autorun a launch pad that makes the rest of the drive storage accessible—did I mention that it is password pro-

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tected and can be encrypted? When you start up, a launchpad for the drive is opened. You can password protect the flash drive itself so the first thing you see is a login screen. The launch pad is part of the U3 system and is the same on different brands of drive. The launchpad gives you access to the applications on the drive and is required to remove the drive—you must use the launchpad to eject the disk or you risk damaging the drive.

When you plug in the drive, your system recognizes it as a USB drive and you can see it in My Computer, as a very small 3.78 MB CD-ROM drive, that will autoplay. It also appears as a 2 GB removable drive that you can copy files on like any other flash drive. In general the device works, but I have a couple of quibbles. I have had difficulty with installation on one of my two computers and I have not yet been able to determine what the problem is. The first time I put the drive in, it caused my computer to slow to a crawl and it never did recognize the drive. Only when I had the drive inserted at startup did it allow me to use it. I have tried it on two other systems and it worked fine.

One of the software applications allows you to save selected files, Outlook email, contacts, tasks and calendar information, and creates a desktop that represents the desktop on a particular computer. You can create two of these desktops. When you take the device to another computer and launch the software, you have the choice of using either desktop. A tab is added to the top of your screen and when you click on it, you see thumbnails. (See Figure 3.) Each picture is the desktop of the other computers. When you click on one of the names or images, your desktop changes—the My Documents folder contains only the items that you brought from the other computer and your e-mail client will show the contents of your inbox and the other shortcuts are different.

I haven't figured out yet why some are the icons from the desktop of the computer I am on and some are from the computer on the flash drive. I need more time with the applications and will write a follow-up. In the meantime, these drives present some interesting possibilities and should be fun to explore.

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