

BITS AND BYTES

The Newsletter of the Midland Computer Club

June 2008

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: June 25th

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: Howard Lewis will be reviewing some of the various options available for file compression.

PROGRAM COORDINATORS

Contact :

Larry Piper larryP56@chartermi.net
Co-Chairman-Joe Lykowski joseph@lykowski.com

The President's Corner



Not too long ago, a friend of mine called me with a computer issue that he was having during boot up with a system file being missing. I figured that it would not be a problem to restore that file and his system would be fine. However, when I got to his house I discovered that the system was now indicating that the boot drive was missing. I switched to his secondary hard drive and the system recognized it fine. The problem appeared to be that his system hard drive had painfully died. I asked him when he had last done a backup and he said the week before. I figured that it would be a fairly simple (although time consuming) task to install a new drive and reinstall Windows and his applications. In checking out his backup though we discovered that although he did indeed have a fairly recent backup of his documents, his Outlook file was nowhere to be found! I asked him about that and he said that he hadn't thought about backing that up! I quickly found out it was extremely important to be able to recover that file for his contact information, but I did not have the tools to perform that task. With further investigation, we found someone who would try to recover his data but it would be expensive. The price was \$160 just to look at the drive with the fees being much more if they could recover the data. I'm happy to say he was able to recover his data, but at a significant cost. So that begs the question: Are you sure you are backing up everything you need on your computer? Could you live with what you have on your backups? Or are you missing something important that might take significant time and money to recover (if at all)? This guy now makes sure that he has included his Outlook file in his backup procedure..

The June meeting will be the last meeting for the summer. We will resume our meetings in August with our annual picnic.

— Howard Lewis

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

What you missed!

At the **May** meeting, Terry Brown discussed the reasons that people do genealogy research and quite a few resources to get one started on learning about their family history.

Upcoming Activities

In **June**, Howard Lewis will be reviewing some of the various options available for file compression. The reasons for using compression are almost as many as there are options available to perform this task. One of the biggest reasons for compressing files is to make them smaller to transfer via diskette, CD, or e-mail. Howard will also discuss a process called "slip-streaming," whereby you can take an old version of a Windows CD (i.e., Windows XP pre-SP2) and create a Windows XP SP2 CD with up-to-date security patches.

There will be no meeting in July. The **August** meeting

will feature our annual picnic. As in years past, the club will provide hot dogs and soft drinks and everyone should bring a dish to share.

2008 MCC OFFICERS

POSITION

President Howard Lewis
 Vice Pres. Bill Tower
 Treasurer Bob Miller
 Membership Gary Ensing
 Editor Jan Ensing

EMAIL:

lewis3ha@chartermi.net
 stressed@tir.com
 barloshelties@sbcglobal.net
 gensing@juno.com
 btiger6@juno.com

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

Special Interest Groups:

CLUB PROGRAM COORDINATORS

Chairman Larry Piper larryP56@chartermi.net
 Co-Chairman Joe Lykowski joseph@lylowski.com

BOARD MEMBER

Mary Branson molly688@chartermi.net
 Robert Hughes MIDItunez@yahoo.com

INTERNET SIG

Terry Brown t_bbrown@yahoo.com

PUBLICITY

Kathy Bohl kbohl30265@aol.com

Moving on to Vista – Part 7

by Neil Stahfest, Librarian, Tacoma Area PC User Group, Washington
www.tapcug.org
 ncstahfest(at)msn.com

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

Does your computer go to sleep? By default, Windows Vista was designed to go to sleep after an hour of inactivity. This feature is primarily designed to conserve laptop battery power. Microsoft estimates that allowing a PC to go to sleep during off hours, as compared to leaving it on all the time, saves anywhere from \$55 to \$70 a year so this feature has some value for desktop users. Of course the amount you save will vary depending on the type of monitor that you use and your local electric utility rates. Here in the Pacific Northwest, with our relatively low electric rates, I suspect that the savings will be something less than \$55 a year but multiply that amount by the number of computer monitors that you have and you can probably fill your gas tank once or twice. ;-)

With Windows XP, application programs can veto a user's request for the PC to go to enter sleep mode. Consequently, laptop owners who thought they had put their computer to sleep, might discover a few hours later that the machine had remained on and the battery had been drained. Vista features a —group policy tool□ that can enforce power management settings over the —wishes□ of application programs. Vista's new sleep option, allows you to wake up your computer to install security updates, while letting it remain in the power-saving mode the rest of the time.

(Continued on page 8)

Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be 7 p.m., **August 12, 2008**, at Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church, 5501 Jefferson Ave., Midland.

Membership Enrollment form

NAME _____ PHONE _____
 ADDRESS _____ CITY _____
 ZIP _____ EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Membership dues FAMILY (\$20) STUDENT (\$15) NEW Member ____ renewal ____

Please fill out the above form and mail it along with payment of check or money order to :

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

Useful, useless and strange (in no particular order) Web Sites:

http://tinyurl.com/25kpke	While browsing the web, we've all encountered the famous "Error 404" page (page not found). This is usually caused by the website existing, but an individual page not being available. Here is a collection of some rather unique 404 web pages.
http://tinyurl.com/64sjyq	If you think you are a big cog in this universe, take a look at this site and see where you stand!
Mywebpages.comcast.net/matchgame	If you are a fan of the Match Game on TV, then this website will give you a chance to play!
http://www.mouseprint.org/	If you've ever gotten frustrated with some of the tiny printing (mouse prints) on some of today's packaging, this site will show some and give the manufactures responses as to what it means.
http://losanjealous.com/nfc/	This site pairs a random Family Circus cartoon with a random Nietzsche quote. Some of the combinations can be rather humorous while some are rather profound.

Tips, Tricks & Techniques

Desktop Icons Too Small? (Windows XP)

If your Desktop icons look small and you are having trouble reading them, you can make them larger and easier to read. To make these icons larger:

Click the *Start* button and click on **Control Panel**.

If *Control Panel* is using *Classic View* double-click the **Display** icon. If *Control Panel* is using *Category View*, click **Appearance and Themes** and select **Display**.

In the *Display Properties* window, click the **Appearance** tab and select the **Effects** button.

To make your icons larger, check the **Use large icons** checkbox.

On the other hand, if your icons appear too large, you may need to uncheck the **Use large icons** checkbox using the above procedure.

Setting Desktop Colors in Windows Vista

One way to personalize your own Vista system is to change the Desktop colors. By changing the color scheme, you change the look of the windows, Start menu and the taskbar. Vista ships with eight built-in color schemes or you can make your own. To change color schemes, follow these steps:

Right-click any empty part of the Windows desktop and choose **Personalize**.

In the *Personalize Appearance and Sounds* dialog box, click the **Window Color and Appearance** icon.

Now in the *Window Color and Appearance* dialog box select one of the built-in schemes or click the **Show Color Mixer** down arrow and adjust the **Hue, Saturation, Brightness**, and **Color Intensity** sliders to meet your fancy.

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

If you prefer to make Vista look more like the older versions of Windows, click the **Open classic appearance properties for more color options** link. This will open the *Appearance Settings* dialog box which allows you to change each window property to make Windows Vista look more like its predecessors.

Using the Keyboard Instead of the Mouse in Microsoft Word

If you need to move to another location within a document, most people will take their hands off the keyboard and use the mouse to move the insertion pointer to the spot they want. If you would like to speed up your typing, it is typically faster to use the keyboard to move the insertion pointer short distances within a document. The following list describes some of the keyboard options for moving the insertion pointer within a document.

One character to the left: Left-arrow key

One character to the right: Right-arrow key

One line up: Up-arrow key

One line down: Down-arrow key

One word to the left: Ctrl+left-arrow key

One word to the right: Ctrl+right-arrow key

To the end of a line: End

To the beginning of a line: Home

To the beginning of the current paragraph: Ctrl+up-arrow key

To the beginning of the preceding paragraph: Ctrl+up-arrow key twice

To the beginning of the next paragraph: Ctrl+down-arrow key

Up one screen: Page Up

Down one screen: Page Down

To the bottom of the screen: Alt+Ctrl+Page Down

To the top of the screen: Alt+Ctrl+Page Up

To the top of the previous page: Ctrl+Page Up

To the top of the next page: Ctrl+Page Down

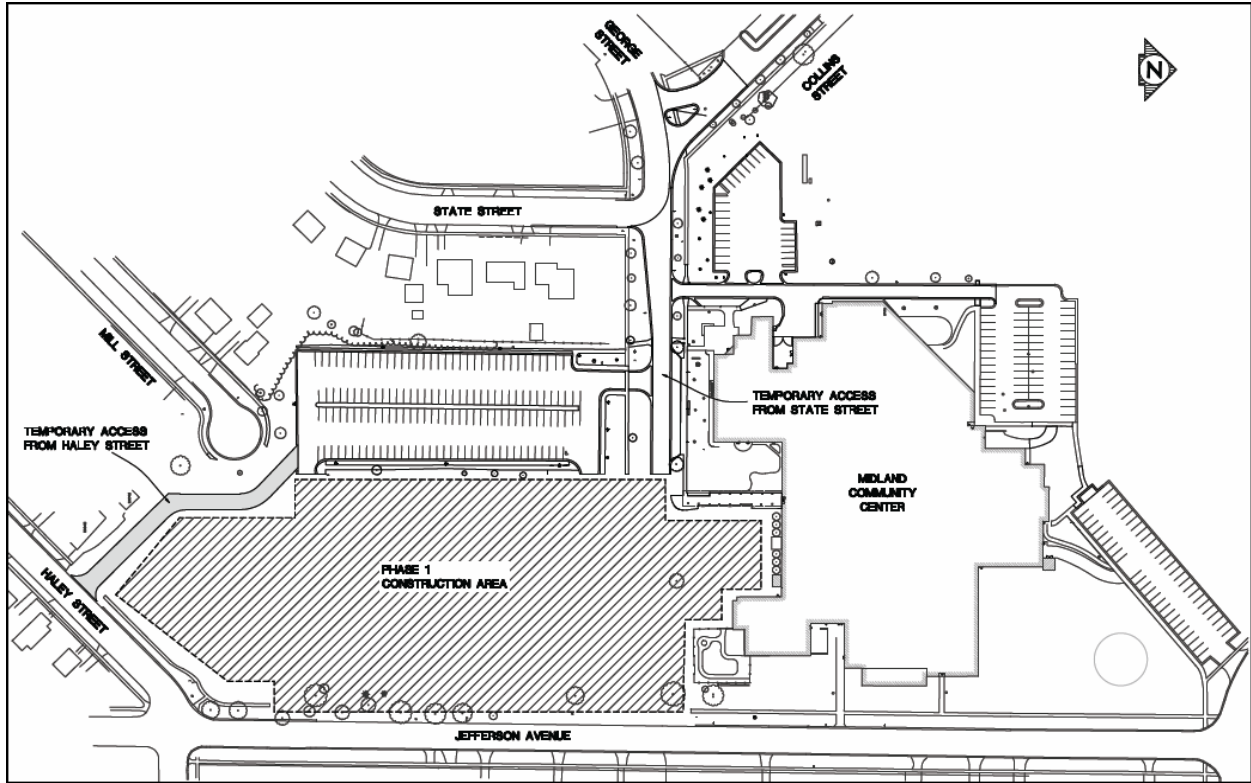
To the end of the document: Ctrl+End

To the beginning of the document: Ctrl+Home

To the preceding insertion point location: Shift+F5 or Alt+Ctrl+Z

Midland Community Center Parking Lot Construction

The actual status of the new Community Center parking lot at the time of the club meeting is up in the air as they have poured the curbs for the east portion of the lot and are starting to lay the actual parking surface as this is being written. Plans call for the east portion of the lot to be open by July 1 and if it is ahead of schedule it will open sooner and the west portion (including access to the Senior Center) will be closed. If the east portion is not completed, access will be as it has been the past two months. If construction is ahead of schedule, then the only access to the parking lot will be via the new entrance on Jefferson Ave. and we will have to use the front entrance to the building.



Updated maps will be maintained on the Midland Community Center website (www.mymcc.org) as work progresses. If you have any questions, please either let me know or call the Midland Community Center at 989-832-7937 extension 0.

Howard

Microsoft Office Professional 2007

Microsoft Review by Howard Lewis

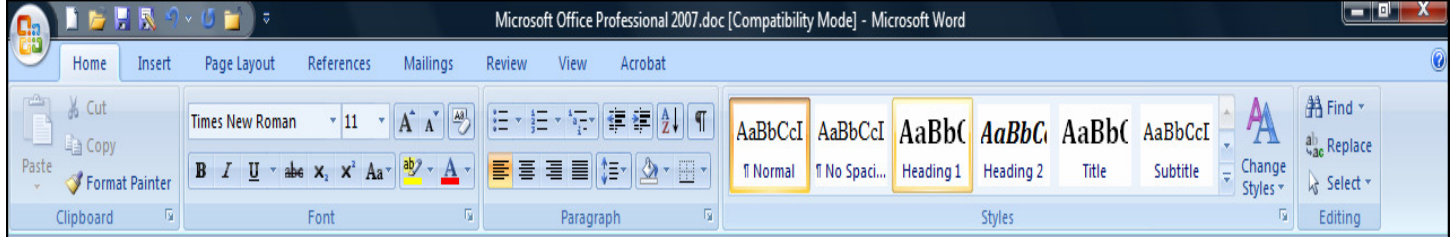
When I first heard about the new look of Microsoft Office Professional 2007, I wondered why are they changing an interface with which so many people are familiar? (I have used Microsoft Office for over ten years.) But then as more information came out, I started to think that maybe these changes might be good. But after I installed Office 2007, I again started wondering why they had to go ahead and make this change when I was so comfortable with the old. Now after using it for a couple of months, my thinking is why didn't they do this to start out!

For those who have lived in a cave and haven't heard about the new interface the old menu/toolbar structure has been replaced with something called a "ribbon." (The ribbon is currently only available in Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, however, the next release of Office will introduce the ribbon to the rest of the Office components.)

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

The new ribbon in Microsoft Word 2007



Various studies that I have read indicate that people can be much more productive once they are familiar with the ribbon. The learning curve can be very short for some people (15-30 minutes) to several months for others. I must admit that I think I have made the transition to the new ribbon quite well. There are some functions that I still need to go to the Help feature to find out how to do but Help contains an Interactive Guide to assist you in converting the old menu/toolbar commands to the ribbon. One feature of the ribbon that is convenient is that it is dynamic. Only those items which are appropriate for the object selected are visible. If a graphic is selected, only those items which can be applied to the picture will appear. If a table is selected only those items are displayed. This cuts down significantly in searching through menus and toolbars looking for the feature you need.

Word 2007 Menu

Perhaps my first frustration was to figure out where to find the “Open” dialogue box. It didn’t take long to discover it was located in the new Microsoft Office button located in the upper-left hand corner of the window. Once I clicked on the button, all sorts of things started to become clear as many of the old “File” commands (“Open,” “Close,” “Save,” “Print,” etc.) appeared. Also, this menu contains a “Word Options” button which allows you to change many of the standard configuration options.

There are two additional changes in Office 2007 that bears mentioning. The first is the use of dynamic formatting in the text. What this means is that once you have selected some text, as you scroll over different formatting options you see the effect of that option without actually implementing the change. To actually cause the change to take place, you simply click on the option as in the past. This feature has been available in many of the Microsoft Office competitors’ products for quite a few years and is a much needed feature. The second major change is the use of Microsoft’s “open” formats (Open XML Format) instead the previous proprietary format used by the Office products. This means that Word documents are now saved by default with the .docx extension instead of the old .doc. Excel files are also saved as .xlsx instead of .xls. These files can be significantly smaller than the previous files however this causes compatibility problems for people who have older programs that support the old format rather than the new. You can change your default “save” format to use the old structure but you may lose some of the new formatting features of Office 2007. Microsoft does offer a free Compatibility Pack which can be installed with Microsoft Office 2000 through Office 2003 to allow opening up the new formats in those versions. Also, if someone does not use Microsoft Office, free viewers are available on the Microsoft web site.

After using Microsoft Office Professional for several months (primarily Word, Excel and PowerPoint), I have found the package to be quite solid and I can heartily recommend it for people who use the Microsoft products. At this point there is a service pack out to correct some of the bugs in the original release (I never saw any as far as I know). The Office Professional product contains Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Publisher, Accounting Express, and Access which may be overkill for a lot of home users (suggested retail price \$499.95/upgrade \$329.95 — I have seen online prices of about \$400 for the full package and \$300 for the upgrade). If you simply need word processing and spreadsheet you might consider the Microsoft Office Home & Student version (Word, Excel and PowerPoint) for \$130 to \$150. Microsoft Office 2007 requires Windows XP SP2 or later with 512 MB memory and 2 GB of hard disk space. Office runs in 32-bit and 64-bit modes.

By George Whitesell, a member of the Sarastoa PCUG, Florida
www.spcug.org
pcug(at)Comcast.net

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

Service Pack 1 for Windows Vista and Service Pack 3 for Windows XP are going to be released soon, perhaps even by the time you are reading this. I recommend not being one of the first on your block to install either of the new service packs. Let others discover any problems with the installation of the final versions of the Service Packs!

What are service packs? They are a compilation of all critical updates released since the initial release of an operating system or the last service pack. They often contain new features or enhancements as well. Service Pack 2 for Windows XP contained a number of security improvements and was arguably the most significant Service pack ever released. I think it was only because of the negative publicity Microsoft was receiving over weak security that led them to release it as a free Service Pack and not "Windows XP Second Edition" which they would have charged us for. You will not see any major changes or additions to XP in Service Pack 3 but you will still want to install it. Service Pack 1 for Vista is reported to have sped up some aspects of the operating system.

There is an article at <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/935796> listing 11 programs that are blocked, do not run, or have a "loss of functionality" after the installation of Service pack 1 for Vista. Three of the programs listed are Zone Alarm, Bit-Defender AntiVirus or Internet Security and the New York Times Reader. Check the list before you install the service pack. Personally I will wait at least one week (maybe more) to make sure there are not any other problems that are affected by the final release of either new service pack. If you have been installing all Microsoft updates as they were released, you already have most of the service pack installed.

Here are some general guidelines for the installation of any service pack:

1. Run complete scans of your computer for viruses and spyware. A majority of the problems people encountered while installing Windows XP Service Pack 2 were caused by viruses and/or spyware on their computer. Service packs replace or update a number of system files. You want to make sure your computer is free of any malware.

2. Fix any hardware or software problems. If you are experiencing frequent lockups or system crashes, or extremely slow performance, resolve those problems before trying to install a service pack. Many people assume the installation of a service pack will clear up problems they may be experiencing. This usually is not the case. This is another frequent cause of service pack installations failing or causing more problems.

3. Create a System Restore point. If you found any viruses or spyware delete all of your old Restore Points and then create a new one. If you have a problem and use a System Restore point prior to the time you removed any viruses or spyware, guess what happens? That's right; you reload the viruses and/or spyware! Instructions on deleting System Restore points are at the end of this article.

4. If you installed a beta version of a service pack, uninstall that version before you install the final service pack.

5. NEVER attempt to abort the installation of a service pack (or any program). If you have started the installation and then decide you do not want to continue, allow the installation to complete; reboot the computer; and then uninstall the service pack (or program).

Follow the steps below if you need (or want) to delete all System Restore points:

Windows XP

1. Click the Start Button.
2. From the Start menu click Control panel.
3. Click on "Switch to Classic View" in the upper left portion of the Control Panel window.
4. In Control Panel double-click the "System" Icon.
5. Click the "System Restore" tab.
6. Check the box next to "Turn off System Restore on all drives".
7. Click "Apply" at the bottom right corner.
8. Click "Yes" in the warning box asking if you want to turn off system restore.
9. Click "OK" and close all windows.
10. Reboot the computer to clear all System Restore points.
11. To re-enable system restore repeat the above steps; this time removing the check in the box next to "Turn off System Restore on all drives".
12. Reboot Again.

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

Windows Vista

1. Click the Start Button.
2. From the Start menu click Control panel.
3. Click on "Classic View" in the upper left portion of the Control Panel window
4. In Control Panel double-click the "System" Icon.
5. On the Left of the System properties window you will see a list of Tasks, click on the "System protection" link.
6. Click "Continue" on the 'User Account Control' box if it appears.
7. In the System protection window remove the "check" mark for the drive you want to disable system restore on. A message will now appear asking: 'Are you sure you want to turn System restore off'.
8. Press the "Turn System restore Off" button. System Restore will now be turned off permanently on that particular drive.
9. Click "OK" and close all windows.
10. Reboot the computer to clear all System Restore points.

To re-enable system restore repeat the above steps, but click the box next to the drive you require system restore to monitor (a check will appear in the box), then click the Apply button and system restore will resume monitoring the drive.

(Continued from page 2)

(Moving onto Vista)

So how can you control this energy/battery saving feature?

1. Go to your **Control Panel** and select the —**Classic View** .
2. Double-click on —**Power Options** .
3. The right pane of the **Power Option Window** shows the main power plans which are currently available or in use. In the top left pane of the **Power Option Window** you'll see the following options:

Require a password on wakeup is self explanatory.

Choose what power buttons to use opens a new window where you can select implementing the sleep mode by pressing a —sleep button, the power button or closing a laptop's lid. Actually there are a number of options available here including Hibernate and shut down.

Choose what closing the lid does is similar to the above option (it even uses the same window).

Create a power plan offers three basic plans plus an option to create customized plans.

Choose when to turn off the display offers sixteen different time intervals to activate this feature.

Change when the computer sleeps works the same as the turn off the display feature.

Adjust the display brightness obviously controls the screen's brightness and the amount of power consumed by the screen.

So make your choice(s). Save power, your battery and the environment.

On another topic, when I first tested the pre-release version of Windows Vista I noted that file transfers seemed to be much slower than with Windows XP. This problem was not corrected when Vista was released to the general public. The problem becomes very noticeable when you try to transfer very large files from one partition to another. Maybe it will be corrected when Vista Service Pack 1 is released but, in case it isn't, here's how you can fix it.

The cause for slow file transfers is apparently something called Remote Differential Compression which is used when files are transferred from one partition to another. The —fix is to disable Remote Differential Compression. How do you do that?

1. From the **Start button**, open the **Control Panel**.
2. Go to the **Programs and Features** section.
3. In the left pane select —**Turn on or off Windows features** .
4. Uncheck the option for **Remote Differential Compression**.

That's all there is to it! Enjoy your faster file transfers.

The Art of Keeping Cool

Part 2: Non-fan Computer Cooling

by Jerry Goldstein, Vice President & Newsletter Editor, The PC Users Group of Connecticut
www.tpcug-ct.org
Attygoldstein(at)tiac.net

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

Last month we went into how to cool off your desktop PC with fans. In Part 2 we look at alternative and leading edge ways to cool your computer. We also discuss how to keep your laptop from frying.

To reduce computer noise pollution computer designers have come up with many solutions to reduce the heat. Strangely, liquids have proven successful in cooling computers. Liquids provide two benefits over air cooling your computer. Liquid computers run quieter than fan cooled ones and water is better than drawing out heat than air. For complete submersion of computer parts manufacturers have immersed the computer in a variety of oil, synthetic motor oil works well but cooking oil is also used. The oil is low conducive so the electrical parts are not damaged. Complete submersion is typically only used on extreme density computers made for business purposes. One problem with oil is that it evaporates so proper maintenance of topping off the oil must be done.

You may say water and electronics don't mix (go ahead and say it, no ones around) but computer designers have worked out a way. The water flows inside tubes through the computer passively pulling the heat off the components of the computer. It works the same as your cooling system in your car. A number of computers hit the market last year using water cooling systems. The obvious problem is leaks but since water cooling has proven successful with gamers, due to waters increased heat absorbing ability over air cooling, you'll probably see more computers next year cooled by water. Just make sure you don't change a water cooled computers parts in excess of the manufacturer's parameters or you may overheat the computer and cause a pipe to leak or burst.

To assist in reducing CPU heat sinks are used. Heat sinks are the fins you see rising above the CPU. Often the CPU fan rests on top of the fins as well. The heat sink works by giving additional square footage for the heat to dissipate. Kind of like when you spread out to cool off in a summer breeze. The extra space lets the air get to the heat.

Laptops pose a unique cooling problem as they are tightly packed and sit flat and horizontally and compared to the desktop's vertical tower. Heat likes to rise but, with the laptops configuration the heat gets trapped and needs to be blown out the bottom or sides. Laptops are more to user error as people tend to forget the laptop sides need to be kept free of anything that could block the exhausts. No exhaust equals a fried computer.

When this happens it may be cheaper to buy new laptop than to try to fix the parts. Than again it may be better for you to avoid laptops if you can not remember to keep them clear of blockage.

A common mistake laptop users make is to use them in bed. The laptop sits ensconced in the bedding getting all nice, warm, and cozy. That is until they fry. If you want to use your laptop in bed buy a laptop writing pillow. These are pillows with a hard surface on one side to keep the laptop free to breathe. Than you only have to make sure you don't fall asleep with your finger on the delete key erasing your "great American novel".

To assist the cooling of laptops you can buy a laptop external fan. These are powered off the laptop's usb and some even come with additional usb ports so you don't lose the port. These fans blow cool air on the bottom of the laptop helping to drop the temperature. You can also try to save some money by buying a notebook stand that will raise your laptop a bit off the desk to give the laptop a bit more air space below it to cool off. I find that the stands are being penny wise and pound foolish though. The money you invest in the laptop fan will save you more in the long run giving your laptop added longevity

+++++

Why I like the Ubuntu Operating System

By Phil Vogel, Director at Large, The Olympia Microcomputer User Group, Washington
www.oly mug.org
director3(at)oly mug.org

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

My interest in alternative operating systems started 20 years ago when I worked for the State of Maryland during a year of computer chaos. We had a good office system using WordPerfect but some high State

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

official(s) made a decision to go with Microsoft Word. At our facility WordPerfect was no longer funded and we were no longer able to use it. Yet our mental facility didn't have the budget to buy all the copies for all of our computer, only a few.

Thus my co-workers and I became interested in alternative sources of software. One of the writing programs that we used was the predecessor of OpenOffice and not very good. And because of the high prices charged for an inferior product (Word compared to WordPerfect) at the time, we looked to finding an alternative Operating System to Microsoft products. I remember investigating Red Hat distribution of Red Hat Linux at the time. But at the time it was not up to par with Microsoft's Windows 95.

When I joined OMUG, I was delighted to find that there was a Linux SIG. "Linux" is a term for many operating systems (OS) using the Linux "kernel" or "heart" or "engine." The kernel "drives" the system like a car engine powers a car. Conrad Schuler, one of the leaders of the Linux SIG was promoting SUSE, a "distribution" of Linux which originally came from Germany. Paul Braget, another leader, liked Ubuntu. When joined, I found I was totally lost. However, I stuck it out and some of the understanding and data is beginning to stick to the walls of my mind.

I listened, worked on the Linux programs on the computers in the Senior Center and became convinced that I wanted to try it out for myself. I like laptops. I can grab a computer and move it to a room or across the country easily. In this country all computers are Microsoft friendly but only some brands and some models of the other brands such as Dell are Linux-compatible.

I decided after some research to take a chance on a new Toshiba Qosmio. We had difficulty installing SUSE and because of inexperience it became corrupted. However, it was easier to install Ubuntu.

"Ubuntu" is a South African word which means, "I am because you are." I am writing this article because you are here, OMUG. I am using Ubuntu because a lot of people around the world contribute to its innovation, maintenance, and security. By the way, the Toshiba came with Windows Vista Home Edition. I only use it for QuickBooks; that is, I can boot into Vista when I need to, but use Ubuntu most of the time

I use Ubuntu to surf the web because it has a very secure hard kernel. It is almost impossible to attack a Linux based machine because all the software programs are attached to the outside of the kernel. At most a particular program will become dysfunctional but not the operating system. For this reason about 90 percent of the servers around the world use Linux based software. Some servers are so reliable that service is minimal.

The Linux kernel is simple, clean and fast, allowing me to turn it on and be on the web in a fraction of the time required by my Windows machine. My web browser is FireFox, an excellent free program.

I am writing this article with OpenOffice because it is another excellent writing program that is on a par with Microsoft Office. And it is a free program also. I must admit that Microsoft's "Access" program is superior to OpenOffice's "Data."

All the above programs are "open source" which means that you can obtain them for free by a download, or on DVD or CD for a nominal charge. However, there are also companies that will supply a person with disks, manuals and service contract just like Microsoft. But everyone is bound by the EULA of the "open source" contract, including companies and also users like me. For instance anyone who comes up with a change or improvement must make it available to any one else for free.

So this is why I like Ubuntu, FireFox and OpenOffice. I also use other features such as watching movies, burning DVD's, and WiFi—and they work well. Now I want to edit and burn a home made movie. Plus Ubuntu has an extensive Internet support system. New programs and updates are coming out all the time. It is an example of a technology rising up from the grassroots rather than from the top down.