

BITS AND BYTES

The Newsletter of the Midland Computer Club

October 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: October 22nd

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: Joe Lykowski will talk about the various video encoding options available on your computer.

PROGRAM COORDINATORS

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What you missed!

The **September** meeting had Howard Lewis talking about online medical research. The presentation included on things to look for in a website and a list of web sites that appear to be quite good in helping with understanding the issue that you may have. The presentation did not seek to replace your family doctor, but to help you discuss your concerns with your doctor and help you understand what is wrong.

Upcoming Activities

In **October**, Joe Lykowski will talk about the various video encoding options available on your computer. As you create your videos from either pictures or video clips, it is necessary to create a CD/DVD that is readable by various CD/DVD players. This will be an opportunity to review some of the various formats and what are their strengths and weaknesses.

The President's Corner



Recently, I read another article documenting a way to accidentally download malware to your computer. Most of us have some version of Adobe Acrobat Reader, Flash or Shockwave installed on their computer. Sometimes when you go to a website and click on a link to view a pdf or video, you may get a message indicating that Acrobat Reader or Flash needs to be upgraded (even if you have recently updated your copy) and offer to update it for you. **Be careful.** If the site you are visiting has been infected, the link performing the update may instead download some malicious software which will then infect your computer. I recommend that if you wish to update your software, don't do it from that link. Instead go to the vendor's site and download the update directly. If you then go back to the original site and try to view whatever you were trying to view at the start, and you get the same message, you know that site is either a malware site or an infected site. These days, you cannot be too careful!

- Howard Lewis

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

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October is Board
Position Nomination
Time!

President
Vice-President
Treasurer
Membership Secretary
Newsletter Editor
Program Coordinators

If YOU would be
interested in serving
on the computer club
board, speak up @
the meeting on
October 22nd!

Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be 7 p.m.,
October 14th, 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

Finding Office 2003 Commands In Office 2007

If you are a new user to Microsoft Office 2007, you have undoubtedly found that the interfaces for Word, Excel and PowerPoint are significantly different from the interfaces in those products in Office 97 - 2003. (The interface in Office 97, 2000, XP, and 2003 are basically the same with minor differences between the versions.) Although the new interface is significantly easier for new users, the long time user may experience some frustration when trying to figure out how to perform an action in Office 2007 that you knew how to do in those older Office products. Microsoft realized this

and the Help function ( in the upper right-hand corner of the window) contains a helpful **Command Reference Guide** conversion function. To access this function:

1. Click on the *Help* button.
2. In the pop-up Help box, type *Word 2003 help* (substitute Excel or PowerPoint if you are using one of those applications).
3. Click on *Start the guide* (this will start-up the **Interactive: Command Reference Guide**).
4. Click on *Start*.
5. Click on the Menu command in the simulated Word 2003 interface and hover over the subcommand you wish to learn how to use.

This function is quite useful to learn how to use the new interface in the Microsoft Office 2007 products.

Saving Web Graphics

If you subscribe to a site that offers graphic downloads as part of your subscription or visit a place that offers free graphics downloads (check for any copyright issues!), you will probably want to save some of those graphics to your computer. There are actually three ways to download those graphics:

1. To save a graphic file for viewing and printing later, you can download to My Pictures folder or the folder of your specification. To do this, right-click the graphic and then click *Save Picture As* on the pop-up menu.
2. To use the graphic as the wallpaper for your desktop, right-click the graphic and then click *Set as Background*.
3. The third option allows you to place a shortcut to the image on your desktop. To do this, right-click the graphic and then choose *Copy Shortcut* on pop-up menu. Then go to your desktop, right-click on the desktop and select *Paste*.

Note that web graphics (photographs and works of original art in particular) are copyrighted and web designers have a way to disable your right click function while you are surfing their sites.

Printing Your Vista Address Book

If you would like to have a paper copy of your contacts in Windows Mail, here's the way to print out that address book:

1. Click your **username** at the top right-hand corner of your **Start** menu.
2. Next double-click *Contacts* to open your **Contacts folder**.
3. Press *Ctrl+A* to highlight all of your contacts or hold down *Ctrl* and click the names you want to print.

4. Click the folder's *Print* button and select your printer.
5. Next choose your *Print Style*.
 The **Print Style** section offers three ways to print your contact sheet:
Memo: Print everything about each contact selected.
Business Card: Print standard business card items for each person, including name, phone, address, company, and e-mail address.
Phone List: Print each contact's name and phone numbers (cell, fax, home, business).
6. Click *Print*.

Windows Mail will now print a formatted list according to your specifications.

Political Web Sites:

This month we replace our normal list of random websites with our election year list of some of the political sites available on the Internet. Many of these sites are partisan, whereas some are non-partisan. I'm sure that the classification depends on your point of view. If you haven't made up your mind at this time during the campaign, you might want to purview some of these sites to help in making that decision. If you've already made up your mind, you might want to use these sites to justify your opinions. Some of the sites which sound non-partisan may be linked to people heavily skewed to one party (or issue) or another. You must truly do your research to make an informed decision. This list is not exhaustive as just about all of the candidates have their own personal sites and there are many third-party candidates that may or may not be on the Michigan ballot. There are also many issue specific sites that can give you added insight on a particular topic.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| http://www.barackobama.com/ | The home site of the Obama/Biden ticket. |
| http://www.johnmccain.com/ | The home site of the McCain/Palen ticket. |
| http://www.cqpolitics.com/ | The Congressional Quarterly Politics website. |
| http://www.politifact.com/ | A site rating the truthfulness of the candidates statements by the St. Petersburg Times and Congressional Quarterly. |
| http://tinyurl.com/2hd95h | Information from the University of Michigan on the 2008 elections with links to various issues and candidates. |
| http://www.factcheck.org/ | Checking the statements made (primarily) by the presidential candidates |
| http://fightthesmears.com/ | A site hosted by the Obama/Biden team to combat various negative statements made against them. |
| http://www.lwv.org/ | The League of Women Voters national website. |
| http://www.lwvmi.org/ | The League of Women Voters of Michigan website. |
| http://tinyurl.com/53dksx | A list of some political resources on the Internet. |
| http://www.politicsone.com/p2008.htm | A comprehensive list of the presidential candidates with information and links. |
| http://www.politics1.com/parties.htm | Information on the various political parties in the U.S. |
| http://www.votesmart.org/ | The site of Project Vote Smart, with the goal of education the voting population on the positions of the candidates on various issues. |
| http://tinyurl.com/4svez6 | A list of candidates and issues on the 2008 Michigan ballot from the Michigan eLibrary. |

**Remember, if don't vote,
it won't count.**

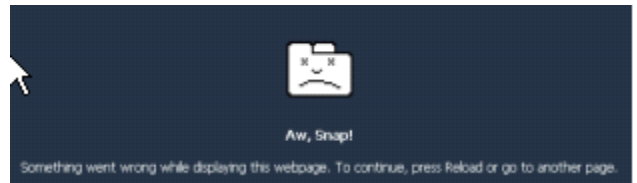
Google's New "Chrome Browser" (Beta) Not Yet Ready for Prime Time

by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX:
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WEBSITE: <http://www.google.com/chrome>

As I type this, the national media is playing up the fact that today is Google's tenth anniversary. In that time it has become the predominate player in the search industry, with a market share of about two-thirds. By more than coincidence, Google also recently announced the public release of a beta version (pre-release) of its free new browser with the moniker "Chrome". It is no secret that Google is in a competitive war with some parts of the Microsoft dynasty, and Chrome is intended to be a competitor of Internet Explorer (IE). By design, Chrome may be a superior browser to IE, but in the few days that I have used it, I have to conclude that the current beta version is "...not yet ready for prime time." Several of the websites that I routinely visit, including two different webmail accounts, My Yahoo, my weather page, and some other sites would partly load and display, and then disappear with a black window with a white font and graphic displayed. The graphic is of a frowning web page, and the expression "Aw Snap! Something went wrong while displaying this webpage. To continue press Reload or go to another page."



Reloading would not fix the problem on any page where the error appeared. This is why I believe that this beta version, while fast, attractive and feature rich, is not quite ready to take its place as a primary or secondary browser. For the record, every page that failed to load in Chrome, loaded flawlessly in IE and Firefox. Despite this nagging bug, Chrome is still a worthwhile free download, because it has several interesting features lacking on the competing browsers, especially its obvious target, Chrome's nemesis, Internet Explorer.

Google Chrome (BETA) for Windows

Google Chrome is a browser that combines a minimal design with sophisticated technology to make the web faster, safer, and easier.

Select a language

Download Google Chrome

For Windows Vista/XP SP2

One box for everything
Type in the address bar and get suggestions for both search and web pages.

Thumbnails of your top sites
Access your favorite pages instantly with lightning speed from any new tab.

Shortcuts for your apps
Get desktop shortcuts to launch your favorite web applications.

[Learn about Google Chrome >](#)

Chrome (beta) was fast and easy to download from www.google.com/chrome, and effortlessly installed on my XP machine. During the install I was given the option to import bookmarks (favorites), cookies, and passwords from Internet Explorer, which I chose to do. While unstated by Google, it appears obvious that later versions of Chrome will be able to import data from Firefox. Chrome will also run on Vista, and versions for Mac and Linux are in the works.

After reading about Chrome and its features, I was excited about its potential. It is written in open source code using some of the best features of other open source products such as Firefox and Apple's WebKit. The code is tight and compact, and when it works, appears to load and display websites much faster than IE. Some of the technical websites have actually tested the load times of popular websites, and Chrome may be the fastest browser available. One feature about Chrome, which I was especially interested in, was its default display of thumbnails of the websites most frequently visited by the user. Clicking on the thumb-

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nail would instantly open the website either in that window, or in another tab (window) at the user's discretion. The appearance of the Chrome browser is clean and uncluttered. Each Chrome tab or window is loaded in a virtual "sandbox" such that if one web page crashes, it will not take down the entire browser, but instead only close the affected tab.

More and more applications are being integrated, many of which can be run directly from Chrome. Clicking on the control icon on the toolbar of Chrome gives several options, one of which is to create instant application shortcuts which can load applications into Chrome. An icon is created and placed on the desktop by Chrome, and clicking on that icon directly opens the application in a Chrome tab, even if Chrome is not loaded or is offline. This can give near instant access to such services as Gmail, Google Calendar, or most other applications.

Utilizing a concept "one box for everything" enables the traditional address bar of the browser to perform several simultaneous functions. As information is typed in the address bar, Google (by default) will identify previous websites visited as well as suggested search topics which become more detailed as more is typed. While Google is the factory default search setting, it can be easily changed to other major search engines, such as Yahoo. Multiple sites, such as EBay, Amazon, and others can also be selectively searched as determined by the user.

Chrome uses tabbed browsing long a staple of Firefox, but fairly new in IE. The tabs are dynamic, in that they can be dragged changing their order on the top of the screen, or into a window creating a new window. This gives the user total control over the appearance of the pages displayed for comparison or other purposes, and is an attractive feature. Another useful feature in Chrome that also previously appeared as a default in Firefox is a safe browsing function. Chrome dynamically checks websites entered in the address bar against a continuously updated database of malware and phishing (identity theft) websites, and displays the following in a red warning window in a large font, "WARNING: Visiting this site may harm your computer!".

Many users like to create lists of bookmarks and favorites, and Chrome makes book marking sites very fast and easy. There is a small star on the address bar, and clicking on the star creates the bookmark, with the option to modify the bookmark. Another common task that Chrome handles very well is downloading files. Rather than using a download manager, Chrome displays download progress in the bottom of the window. When completed, the downloaded file can be dragged to the desktop or elsewhere, or opened directly by clicking on the filename in Chrome.

Chrome has been a lot of fun to play with, despite my frustrations trying to open some web sites. Google will be releasing frequent updates, and hopefully the page loading bug will be quickly remedied. If you want to try the latest in browser technology, being fully cognizant that it is currently a beta version, then Chrome may be a worthy browser to download and install. Chrome coexists just fine with IE and Firefox, and does not interfere with them.

Anti-Virus Virus

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS
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I hate writing about computer viruses. It always reminds me of how many unscrupulous, money-hungry people there are in the world. Yet, there are times when I feel that I must write about a certain virus because it is causing so much havoc for everyday computer users. Unfortunately, that time has come again. In the past two weeks, my company has removed a very bad group of viruses from six different com-

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puters. So I feel it is time to send out a warning.

There are many different variations of this virus and its cousins. They have many different names, including Antivirus 2008, Antivirus 2009, SpywareScanner 2008, and AntiVirXP08. Some experts are calling them viruses. Some are calling them malware. Symantec calls them misleading applications. McAfee lists them as a PUPs (potentially unwanted programs). Whatever you call them, they are terribly invasive.

By most accounts, these awful applications piggy-back on programs that are downloaded from the Internet. However, some experts are warning that your computer may become infected by simply visiting certain websites, especially if your operating system and/or antivirus software is not up-to-date.

The gist of the matter is that once your computer is infected, you will begin to see pop-up windows that give an exaggerated report of the number of threats that your computer is infected with. The window may say something like "Your computer has become infected with 231 computer viruses and spyware." These pop-ups try to scare you into purchasing their antivirus or antispyware software. If you purchase it, they send you a registry key, but it doesn't work because the program they sell you doesn't exist. These viruses are also being spread by malicious websites that sell fake antispyware software.

On top of that, there are many other viruses or pieces of malware that can piggyback on the main virus. So this malware can dramatically slow down or even stop your computer. The infections being caused by these viruses and malware programs are extremely harmful and can be very difficult to remove. They often require a cleanup by a professional or a complete reformatting of the hard drive and reinstallation of the software.

As an everyday computer user, you need to be very careful about the software that you download from the Internet. Make sure that it is from a source that you know to be reputable or a website that has been recommended by a trustworthy source. You can also use a program like the McAfee Site Advisor to help you assess the validity of the website before you download the program. McAfee's Site Advisor is a small program that is used by your Internet browser to indicate the safety of websites. It is a free download available at www.siteadvisor.com and it is a valuable tool.

Also, as usual, be sure that you update your operating system and antivirus software regularly. Don't fall for any program that pops up on your computer trying to scare you into purchasing antivirus or antispyware software.

Yes, the bad guys are out there and they have a lot of computer savvy. So we all need to be smart about the software we download and the websites we visit.

Outlook & Xobni, a Good Match

by Vinny La Bash, Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida
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Xobni is Inbox spelled backwards, but there is nothing backward about this free plug-in module from www.xobni.com. The more email you receive, the more you will like and appreciate Xobni. The program works as a data mining machine for your stored emails. Without Xobni, the best you can do with Outlook is to organize your email by folders, messages, and dates. With Xobni, you can organize your email by people, email histories, and personal, social or business relationships.

You need Outlook 2003 or 2007 to use Xobni. Either XP or Vista will work fine with the program. The folks

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at Xobni are also working on versions for other email programs such as Gmail and Yahoo Mail. How long this will take is unknown. Downloading and installation is quick, easy, and seamless. The program requires some time to synchronize itself with outlook. The amount of time will be determined by the size of the email data base you have accumulated. I had slightly over two thousand emails in eighteen different folders, and that took about ten minutes.

If you keep a lot of information on your contacts, it's difficult to extract that information in a way that can be useful with Outlook. All that changes once Xobni is installed. Changes begin with an attractive panel that sits on the right side of your Outlook screen and doesn't infringe or interfere with any of Outlook's standard functions. The panel interface slides open when you need it, and discretely closes when you don't.

You get two options within this panel. The first brings up a blank email which is nice. For you organizational types, the second option lets you send meeting requests. A real time saver is the simultaneous display of open time slots that Xobni drags from your Outlook calendar.

Your contact profiles display at the top of the Xobni panel with pictures if one is in the profile. That's followed by the phone number and a thread of any conversations you've had along with files you've exchanged. Specifics topics are quickly found with Xobni's search tool, and there is a handy slider that exposes or hides lines of email text. While it appears you could be getting bogged down in details, the material is organized so that navigating through the information is an easy, pleasant journey filled with discovery.

Skype's VoIP service integrates with PC, Xobni quite well. A mouse click on a phone number within a Xobni profile generates a SkypeOut call.

You can use Xobni for simple searches within Outlook, and Xobni searching is lightning fast in comparison. That's probably because it's integrated within Outlook rather than running on top of it like most third party applications. Xobni gives you more than express searching. It organizes social information logically with additional functions that Outlook simply can't match. How often have you given up searching with Outlook because the program lacks even the simplest logic for intelligent searching?

Instead of treating mail conversations, contacts and calendars as separate entities, Xobni weaves them together in a responsive, intuitive interface. It's hard to go wrong with this tool. Go to www.Xobni.com and get started.

Ubuntu & Linux Software

by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida
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I suppose some of you might be wondering why I have been writing about the Ubuntu Linux operating system and Linux software. As I noted in last month's article my laptop is now my sole computer. Although it has a Pentium 4 processor it only has 512 MB of RAM. Naturally, that means it is incapable of running Windows Vista. But it does easily run Ubuntu with more than enough memory to do multi-tasking with no reduction in speed. I also know that there are a number of the members of the SPCUG that use computers that are running Windows 98 or Windows XP. The point is, that it is not necessary to try to upgrade these computers to run Vista or to buy a new computer. Instead you have the free alternative of installing Ubuntu or another version of Linux. This article will discuss some of the range of free Linux software and how easy it is to install it.

The original installation CD of Ubuntu included the OpenOffice software. OpenOffice includes a word processor, spreadsheet and presentation applications. These are fully compatible with the components of Microsoft Office. I frequently receive documents prepared in MS Word and they open directly into OpenOffice Writer. I can edit, com-

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ment and save a copy in the OpenOffice format. Then I can return the modified document to the originator in MS Word format with all the edits and comments intact. The same is true for spreadsheets. The OpenOffice presentation application (Impress) reads, writes and modifies PowerPoint files as easily as Writer works with documents. OpenOffice also includes a Drawing application. Drawing is an application that I haven't used.

Other included software with Ubuntu are Ekiga (internet phone software), Pidgeon (internet messenger), Evolution (e-mail), and a remote desktop viewer. Graphics software includes the F-Spot photo manager, GIMP Image Editor and Xsane scanner software. Also, there is a CD burner, movie player for DVDs and two music players.

I grant you that the included software doesn't always meet all the needs for many users. So Ubuntu has several ways of installing additional software. I mentioned last month about installing the drivers for my printer, scanner and the wireless modem. This month I will continue with other applications that are the equivalent of those that I used under Windows. The installation of these applications was much easier than installing drivers for the accessory hardware.

The first step in installing any application is to go to the Applications - Add/Remove menu. When this application runs it provides you with a list of all the software available through Ubuntu and its third-party providers. On the left side of the window are listed various categories that you can highlight and the appropriate applications are then listed on the right side. When you highlight a specific application, a description appears in the lower portion of the window. There is also a search box that you can use to find a specific program or a group of programs.

Since I maintain my financial records on my computer I wanted a financial program that ran under Ubuntu. Not knowing the specific name, I just searched on the term "finances". This brought up a list of financial software. One of the interesting aspects of the Add/Remove application is that programs are rated based on feedback from users using 1 to 5 stars. There was a 5 star application listed, GNUcash, which can import files in the Quicken format. So I put a check mark in the box by the application name and then clicked on the "Apply Changes" button. This brought up another window for verification of the changes to be made. After clicking on "OK", the application was downloaded from the Internet and installed on the hard drive without any further action on my part. A shortcut icon was also added to the Office portion of the applications menu. There was no reboot required to complete this process. After the installation, the "Add/Remove" application reported the successful installation and remained open in case I wanted to use it further.

My Windows financial software was Microsoft Money. Supposedly it will export its data files in the Quicken format. I did that and then copied the files from the Windows partition to the Ubuntu partition. However, the import into GNUcash was not really successful. I'm not sure why but I suspect there was information missing which resulted in misidentification of some of the accounts. Anyway, I selected an arbitrary date and entered opening balances for that date. So now, it is working perfectly and is in agreement with my bank balances. Using it is even somewhat easier than working with either Money or Quicken. Plus, the price is right.

Another application that I needed for Ubuntu was a genealogy program. Here again I was able to find a five star program, GRAMPS. (Very appropriate name I thought.) It was also available through the "Add/Remove" application so installation was completed quickly. GRAMPS imports GED files as do many genealogy programs. So I exported my files from my Windows software in the GED format then copied the GED file to the Ubuntu partition. The import into GRAMPS was essentially a two-click operation. Everything, including notes and references, were now available in an Ubuntu application. GRAMPS also has more report formats than my Windows software included. So I consider it a very successful replacement.

For quite some time I have used a PDA, specifically a Sony Clie which runs Palm Pilot software. The Sony CD loaded the Windows version to the hard drive and also included software to synchronize with the PDA. Since I have considerable contact information in the Clie along with many memoranda, I really wanted to be able to run this under Ubuntu. In the System-Preferences menu there is a selection for PalmOS devices. Now that sounded like it would be quite simple to install the applications necessary to run the Clie. Clicking on the selection runs the Gnome-Pilot application which helps the user to determine the settings for synchronizing with the Clie. Unfortunately, it could not find the Clie PDA. So I had to go back online to the Ubuntu forums to see if I could find the secret. It turns out that getting a PDA recognized and synced with Ubuntu is not always simple. After spending considerable time reading various solutions I came across a command line entry that showed the entries where my Clie was being recognized by Ubuntu. The PDA was properly identified by vendor and product ID's. Now all the information I had gathered indicated that the PDA should be listed as using a USB connection and usually ttyUSB0 and ttyUSB1. Much to my surprise my printout showed the Clie as using ttyUSB9 and ttyUSB10. The Gnome-Pilot software refused to accept either of these as valid locations. However, another application, J-Pilot, accepted ttyUSB10 and synced with the Clie

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when the sync button was clicked. The synchronization transferred all of my information directly into the J-Pilot software. This software works on the desktop in a very similar manner to the Clie and Pilot software I had used under Windows. Successive synchronizations have also been successful. So that was one less application that would need to run under Windows.

There has been one big disappointment in the hardware setup. I have a multi-function media card reader built into the laptop. It reads SD cards as well as xD, MMC, and memory sticks. This reader works great under Windows as a way to transfer photos from my camera to the computer. However, there is apparently no driver available for this to work under Ubuntu. The card reader is manufactured by 02 Micro and they apparently don't believe Linux is here to stay so they have no plans to create Linux drivers for any of their products. At least that's the quotation from a response to a query from a Ubuntu user. So when I have photos to transfer to my computer I can either reboot into Windows, or I can connect the camera with a USB cable. The USB cable works fine as Ubuntu recognizes the camera right away. It also opens the F-Spot Photo Manager which allows me to choose the pictures and the location where I want them saved.

One of the applications included with Ubuntu is Brasero, a CD/DVD burner. When I first tried to use it, it refused to recognize my DVD+R discs. It would read and write DVD-R/RW with no difficulty. Since I had a supply of the +R discs I decided to look for other DVD burning software. In the ADD/Remove application there were several CD/DVD burners listed. One of them was five star application called K3B. It was written primarily to work with the KDE desktop that is an alternative to the GNOME desktop. The KDE desktop comes with Kubuntu and has an interface that is closer to the one found in Windows. Anyway, K3B will work with GNOME, so let ADD/Remove install it. Any software that you add through Add/Remove can be removed simply by locating it in the list and removing the checkmark that indicates it has been installed. So now I have both Brasero and K3B installed. I also found, the next time I wanted to burn a DVD, that Brasero would now work with my external burner and the +R discs. I do like the interface for K3B better than Brasero, but they both work.

As you can see one of the nice attributes of using open license software is the ability to install it and use it at no cost. If you don't like it, you simply remove it. It's certainly not that simple in Windows. So, if you want to try a Linux OS on your computer download a "Live CD" and try it out. Also check out the online help forums. I think you'll find them easier to understand than much of the material Microsoft makes available. Whatever you decide, enjoy your computing!

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years, developing software and assembling systems.

Broadsides

by Ron Broadhurst, a member of the Space Coast PC Users Group, Inc., Florida

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These ideas are compiled from years of accumulations from various magazines, books, on-line sites, and my own personal experience. I claim neither originality nor ownership to any of its contents. My only intent is to share the various "tips, "tricks", & "hints" in hopes of helping & maybe enhancing your computing experiences. They are all intended for anyone who uses a PC. It is for beginners as well as advanced users. Enjoy and use as you will.

-Ron Broadhurst

HOW TO GET RID OF "SEND ERROR REPORT TO MICROSOFT

Right click My Computer on the desktop or in the Start menu.
Click Properties.

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Click the Advanced tab.

Click the Error Reporting button at the bottom.

Click Disable error reporting. You can select the checkbox under it if you still want to be notified when errors occur.

Click OK.

Note that you can disable error reporting for the operating system only, or for programs only, by unchecking the appropriate box under the Enable error reporting option.

You can also configure error reporting only for specific programs by clicking the Choose Programs button.

ALPHABETIZE START MENU LISTINGS

When you install a new program on your system, it will often appear at the end of your Start menu. Reorganizing files alphabetically in the All Programs menu does not affect how they appear in your start menu. In order to alphabetize your start menu, you'll want to click Start and select All Programs. On any file or folder right-click and then select Sort By Name. Now all of your Start menu programs are in alphabetical order. You can also sort subfolders in your Start menu the same way.

MAKE YOUR QUICK LAUNCH ICONS BIGGER

Unlock the Toolbar

Right click the QL toolbar

Select the View tab

Select large icons

PIN AN APPLICATION TO START MENU

The Windows XP Start menu includes an area where two or more Microsoft applications, usually Internet Explorer and Outlook Express, are permanently positioned for easy access. You can add your favorite application to this same convenient location. Open Windows Explorer and locate the executable file for the application. Right-click

the file and select Pin To Start Menu. The application will now appear in the Start menu. To remove an application, locate it, right-click it, and select Unpin From Start Menu.

Alternatively, you can right-click the app in the Start menu and click Unpin From Start Menu.

CHANGE SYSTEM SOUNDS

Through the Control Panel you can change your system's program event sounds. Click Start and Control Panel. If you're using Category View, click Sounds, Speech, and

Audio Devices; and Sounds and Audio Devices. If you are using the Classic View, click Sounds and Audio Devices. This loads the Sounds and Audio Devices Properties

dialog box. Choose the Sounds tab. Select the sound you'd like to change in the Program events box, and then select a new sound from the Sounds drop-down menu. Or select a sound you've saved to the hard drive by using the Browse button to navigate to the sound file. Change as many sounds as you like. Save your changes as a sort of theme from the Sound Scheme drop-down menu above the Program events box. (Select the blank line and click Save As.) You can also choose to disable program event sounds. When you're finished click OK.

SAVING E-MAIL MESSAGES

To save e-mail messages highlight the message you want to save, then click on File -Save As. Select where you want to save the message and then save it as a txt file.

NTI Media Maker 8
NTI
Review by Howard Lewis

Over the years, we have frequently heard of *Easy Media Creator* by Roxio and *Nero* by Nero AG. Some people were familiar with a product called *CD & DVD Maker 7* by NTI. That package has now been updated and is called *Media Maker 8*. Media Maker 8 is a full-featured package that supports just about all of your burning needs and is a viable alternative to the two afore mentioned products. In addition to burning audio, video, photos, and data, *Media Maker 8* provides a built-in backup utility called NTI Backup Now. The package also includes tools for editing audio files, creating slideshows and jewel case labels. You can burn data, audio, mixed-mode (a combination of data and audio tracks), and standard video formats including Blu-ray. The backup utility allows you to back up to any writeable device on your system (hard disk, flash drive, CD or DVD).



The program has a rather interesting interface (Figure 1), which is clearly labeled for any data tasks that you wish to perform. When you click on any one of the buttons, another wheel pops up to display a number of specific tools available in that category (i.e., Audio allows you to rip a CD, create an audio CD or an MP3 CD, create a music DVD, record from your microphone or line-in jack, or edit an audio file.) I found all of the tools to be easy-to-use and logically laid out. This is perhaps the easiest-to-use tools that I have used.

During my testing, the software performed as expected and the burned CDs and DVDs performed flawlessly in other devices. This is an excellent tool for all of your burning needs.

Figure 1