

BITS AND BYTES

The Newsletter of the Midland Computer Club

November 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: November 19th

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: Bob Miller will demonstrate converting VCR and camcorder tapes to playable DVD's.

PROGRAM COORDINATORS

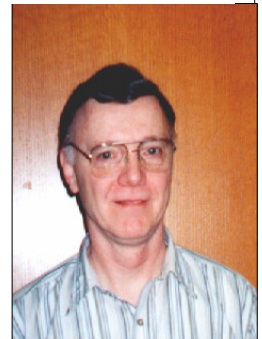
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The President's Corner



It is time for my yearly reminder that the next two club meetings will be on the third Wednesday of the month (November 19 and December 17) instead of the fourth Wednesday. Normally we hold our general club meetings on the third Wednesdays in November and December because of the holidays. Also, don't forget about our annual holiday party at the December meeting. If you have any new toys, be sure to bring them to the December meeting so we can see what you've got! You can find additional information regarding these meetings in the **Upcoming Activities** in the newsletter. In January, we will revert to our regularly scheduled meeting dates (the fourth Wednesdays of the month).

- 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!

The **October** meeting had Joe Lykowski talking about the various video formats, how they are used and what you need to know as you burn CDs/DVDs. The discussion included some of the differences between regular video and High Definition video, the differences between 480i and 1080p, and the various types of video compression used to reduce the size of the video files. These topics are important considerations when buying a new television, DVD player or video capture device.

Upcoming Activities

November will have Bob Miller talking about some of his experiences in converting his large catalog of VCR tapes to playable DVDs. Anyone with a collection of VCRs that wish to preserve them using some of the newer technology will find this presentation informative. This meeting will be on the third Wednesday (November 19). We will also elect new officers for 2009.

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Upcoming Activities Continued:

In **December** we will have our annual holiday party, again on the **third Wednesday (December 17)**. The club will provide pizza and soda. You should bring a dish to share along with any new toys which you would like to show to the club. We will also have a discussion of the various technical terms that are in use today.

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

<http://www.catalogchoice.org/> If you are inundated with more catalogs that you wish, this site will help get you removed from the mailing list of those that you don't wish to receive.

<http://tinyurl.com/3xdf9v> If you fly very much, you may not want to watch this video of a very harried landing approach from CNN earlier this year in Munich, Germany.

<http://59.167.241.229/wvos/> This is the humorous trailer for the movie *Jumper*, coming to theaters this next February.

<http://tinyurl.com/64bdo9> There are plenty of medications that have the potential for mix-up when prescriptions are filled. These mix-ups may be due to poor penmanship, sloppy pronunciation or look-alike labels on the drugs. US Pharmacopeia maintains a list of those potential mix-ups and indicates which ones have happened and the severity of the potential mix-up.

Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be 7 p.m., **January 13**, 2009, 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

Using Additional Clocks in Windows Vista

Straight out of the box, Windows Vista shows the local time in the System Tray in the lower right-hand corner of the Task Bar. If you wish to view more than the local time, you can add up to two additional clocks. To accomplish this:

- 1 Click on the time in the System Tray.
- 2 Select *Change Date and Time Settings...*
- 3 Click on the *Additional Clocks* tab.
- 4 Check *Show this clock*, set the time zone and *Enter display name*.
- 5 If you wish to display another clock, fill in that information too.
- 6 Click on *OK*.

The System Tray will still only show one time, but when you hover the mouse over the time, all of your clocks will be displayed.

Where's the Run Command in Windows Vista?

When you use Windows Vista, you may quickly discover that the **Run** command is nowhere to be found. With Vista, any of the commands that you used to run in Windows XP can be accessed through the **Start Search** box on the **Start** menu. But if you would like to use the **Run** command, you can easily add it to the **Start** menu by following the steps below:

- 1 Right click on the *Start* button.
- 2 Select *Properties*.
- 3 From the **Taskbar and Start Menu Properties** dialog box, click on *Customize*.
- 4 Scroll down through the list and check the box next to the Run command.
- 5 Click OK twice.

The **Run** command will now appear in the right half of the **Start** menu.

Use Small Icons On Your Start Menu

After you install a few dozen applications, your Start menu can become very crowded. One way to reduce the clutter, and see more items at one time, is to use small icons:

- 1 Right-click the *Start* menu and click *Properties*.
- 2 Click the *Start Menu* tab and then click the *Customize* button.
- 3 For Windows XP - Click the *General* tab, click *Small icons*, and then click *OK* twice.
For Windows Vista - Scroll down the list and uncheck *Use large icons* and then click *OK* twice.

Add A Page Border To Your Document (Microsoft Word 2007)

If you wish to jazz up your documents somewhat, simply add borders to the pages. There are several different styles, colors, sizes and art available.

To add a page border in Word 2007:

- 1 Open your Word document and click on the *Page Layout* tab.
- 2 In the **Page Background** group, click on *Page Borders*.
- 3 After verifying that the **Page Border** tab is selected in the **Borders and Shading** dialog box, select a border option under *Settings*.
- 4 Next select the *Style*, *Color* and border *Width* you wish to use or select one of the *Art* options available.
- 5 Click on *OK*

Your pages will now contain the border you selected.

Almost everyone needs a little help with Word 2007

By Linda Gonse, Editor and Webmaster, Orange County IBM PC Users' Group, California
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Bear with me while I quote John Dvorak from his August 2008 PC Magazine column, then I will tell you what my point is.

Regarding Vista, he said: "Vista isn't completely unusable; It's simply hard to use. Menus have been reorganized for no apparent reason, features of XP appear to be missing or need to be turned on from some remote directory, and basic functions are now obfuscated.

"In a nutshell, Vista manages to be more complicated than XP, performs more poorly than XP, and is more expensive than XP."

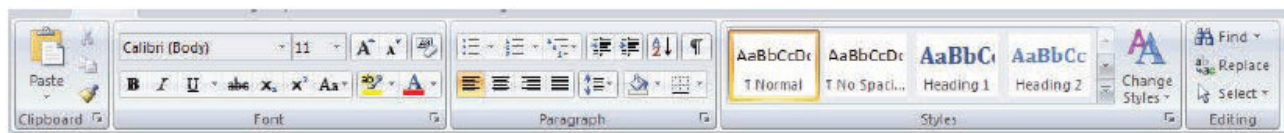
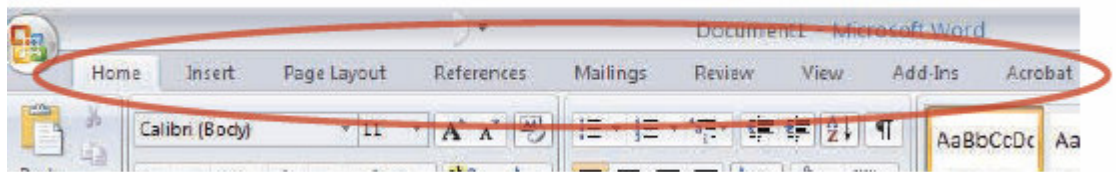
Now, substitute Word 2007 for Vista and Word 2003 for XP and my point is made. Compared with Word 2003, Word 2007 is an involuntary learning experience for anyone already proficient in Word and productive with one or more of the features. To name a couple I use often, are: Mail Merge, tables, labels, and fields. But, first users have to discover where basics like Help, Save As, Print and Close are.

To say Word 2007 has a steep learning curve may not scare everyone. But, to say it has a steep learning curve for experienced Word users should scare everyone, as well as be a cause for serious concern.

Unfortunately, I didn't fully understand how an Office 2007 upgrade for Office 2003 functioned. If you haven't taken the step, yet, let me caution you. The upgrade wipes out Office 2003 and you cannot downgrade. I believe this step was automatically taken by the installation. Perhaps with a full version, you would be given a choice to install the newer version into another directory, leaving the older version intact.

The first thing you notice when you open Word 2007 is the highly touted "ribbon." Nine tabs take the place of menu items across the top of the window. The tabs do not have the same names as the old menu items. In fact, a couple of the tab categories-Home, References and Add-Ins-are enigmatic. And as they say on "Dancing With The Stars," the tabs "are in no particular order."

Tabs that open contextual "ribbons"



The "Ribbon" options that correspond to the Home tab

Clicking on a tab opens a segmented toolbar of options

across the top of the window that relate to that tab's category. Although you may want to add to or rearrange the commands on the Ribbon or change or remove a command or group on the Ribbon - as you might have done with the menu and toolbar of earlier Word versions - you cannot.

And, you can forget about being able to revert to Word's old style toolbars and menus. But, Microsoft helpfully advises that if you are fluent in XML programming code, you can add tabs to the Ribbon.

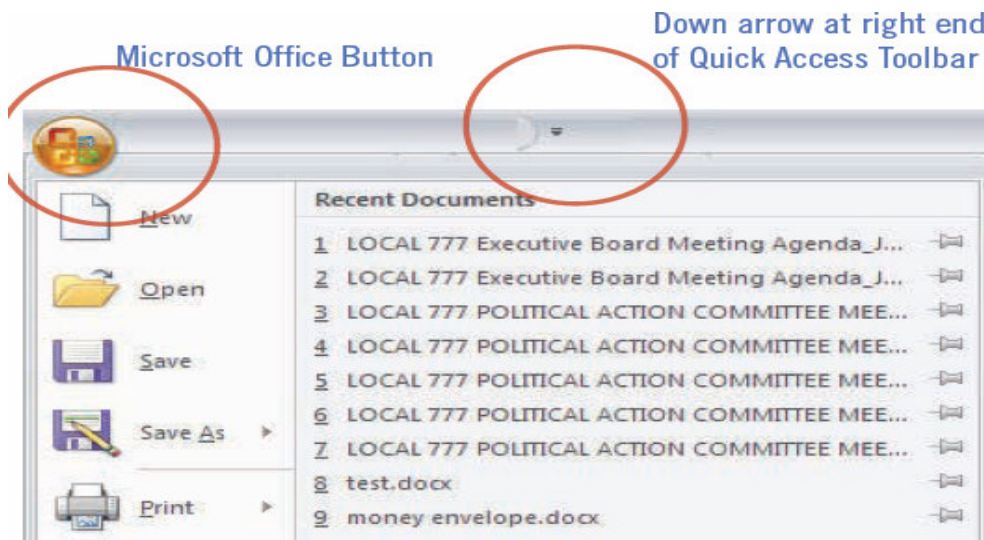
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In Photoshop, the ribbon concept is intuitive and natural, and actually speeds up productivity. In Word, it can be chaotic and time-wasting.

Now, that you have this background in mind, you will better understand the images and steps that follow which is a short tutorial for simplifying Word 2007. My suggestion for anyone using the new Word version is to first set it up to make the features you need easy to locate.

With that in mind, I'll show you how to create a custom toolbar for the tasks that you need to perform most often. It will help to take the aggravation and time-wasting practice of hunting around and calling on Help to figure out where things are and how to use them.

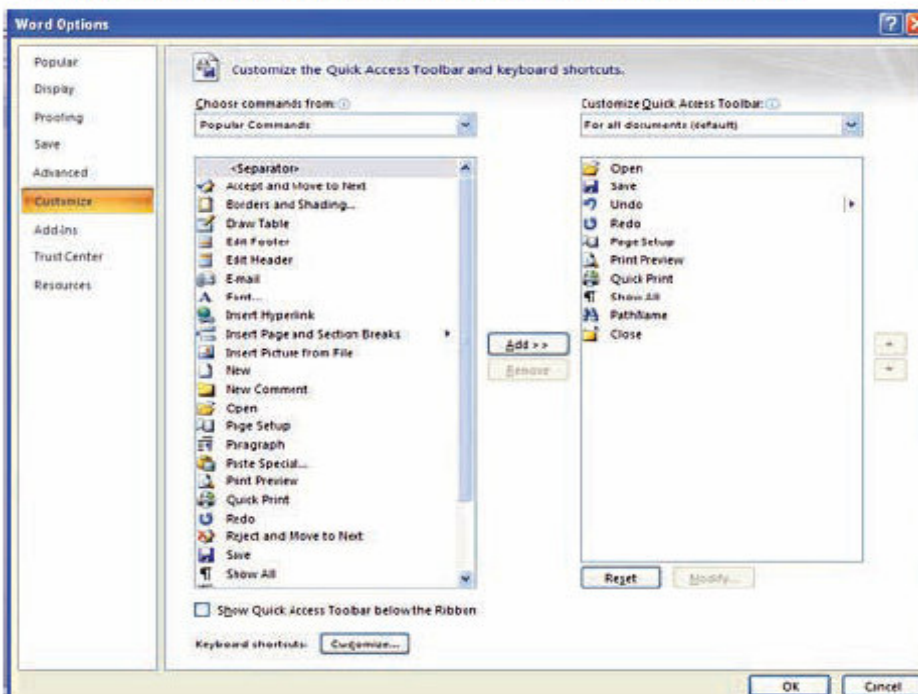


Incidentally, speaking of Help, here's a tip. When you need to turn to Help, don't look for a tab or menu item. Just as in the old days of DOS, you must press the F1 key to make it appear!

In the upper left corner of the Word window is a round Windows logo, called the Microsoft Office Button. It will remind you of the Start button in Windows. Click on this button, it is a kind of command center temporarily until you get Word customized the way you want it. Or, it's possible, you may prefer to use it,

rather than the Quick Access Toolbar. (Nah.)

Select commands here for the Quick Access Toolbar.



The Quick Access Toolbar is just to the right of the Microsoft Office Button. It can be likened to the Quick Launch Toolbar in Windows. (Do you see a pattern here?)

When you first open Word, the Quick Access Toolbar is empty. Click on the down arrow a slight distance away from the Microsoft Office Button. A dropdown list appears, similar to the ones you saw at the end of toolbars in Word 2003. It contains many of the general commands that you might use frequently.

Click on the commands that you want to be on the Quick Launch, er... Quick Access Toolbar. The icons will be added to the bar and available to you with one click.

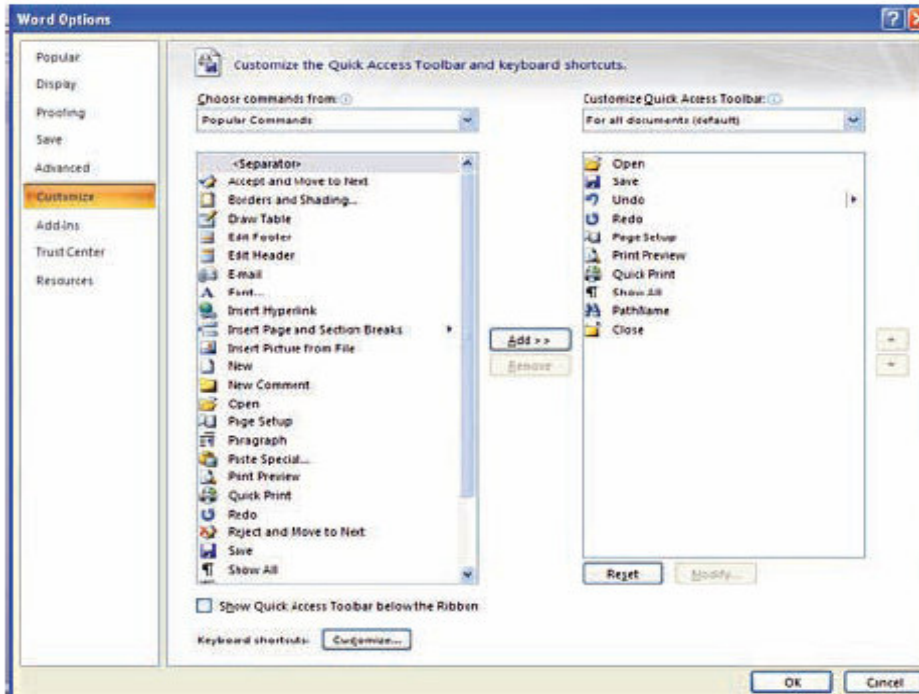
It's almost too easy isn't it? Well, keep in mind that with this Word version, whatever effort you save in one area, you are going to earn by working harder somewhere else.

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You may want to fill in the basic commands on the Quick Access Toolbar with different commands not on the dropdown list. In that case, right click on the down arrow for the dropdown menu and go to More Commands... at the bottom. There are five categories, so click through them to see what they offer. You'll be surprised. In each category, there are dozens of commands for just about any task and circumstance.

Select commands here for the Quick Access Toolbar.



When you find a command you want to use, click to select it in the left window (see screenshot below) and click on the Add button with the arrows to move it to the right window.

Alternatively, you can click on the Microsoft Office Button. At the bottom of the dialog box click on Word Options. Then, in the list that appears on the left, click on Customize.

A familiar box with a double window will open. It is the same box that you can open from the down arrow next to the Quick Access Toolbar.

My Quick Access Toolbar has several preset command buttons and one macro that I recorded (to add the pathname to the bot-

tom of documents). Without intentionally doing so, I nearly recreated the Standard Toolbar offered in earlier versions of Word.

The commands that I found useful to add were Open, Blank Page, Save, Undo, Redo, Page Setup, Print Preview, Print, Show/Hide, PathName (the macro), and Close.



Although a couple of the commands are available by clicking on the Microsoft Office Button, it is still faster and less distracting to have them at the top of the window and only one click away, rather two or more.

Roxio Creator 2009
Sonic Solutions
Review by Howard Lewis

Roxio Creator 2009 is an update to the popular Roxio Easy Media Creator 10. The update provides a much smoother and visually appealing interface than its predecessor and now supports processing HD and Blu-ray DVDs through an additional cost add-in available from Roxio. Since I do not have a Blu-ray capable reader, I did not try this add-in. The four general functions available on the main screen (Data, Video, Music, and Photo), each bring up a sub-screen with the specific features (applications) which are available in that category. Once a feature is selected (i.e., Burn Audio CDs), the application easily walks you through the steps necessary to accomplish the task.

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Overall, I found the package to be very easy to use and thorough in its functionality. All functions worked flawlessly and the burn process seemed to be faster than many of other products that I have recently used (including Easy Media Creator 10). The only drawbacks that I saw during my testing were that it consumed 1.3 gigabytes of disk space and a significantly slower startup time than its predecessor. With today's gargantuan disks, the space issue is not normally a major problem. Once the initial application screen appears, the program appears to be as snappy as or snappier than its predecessor.

The one feature that I would like to see is in the Data Backup application. This application only supports backing up to an optical device. I would like to see support for backing up to other devices either internal or removable (i.e., either internal or external disk drives).

Roxio Creator 2009 has now become my standard program for handling my media needs.

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Chicago Computer Society makes history with Skype presentation

By Irene Ganas, a member of the Chicago Computer Society

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History was made by the Chicago Computer Society, as its Digital Imagery SIG, hosted by Sanford Kolinek, gave its first Main Presentation at our local meeting by its presenter from two thousand miles away.

As one of the largest member turnouts this year assembled in their seats in Lisle, Sanford passed the popcorn for all to enjoy and Jack Jackson, a long-time member of the Chicago Computer Society who now lives

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in Utah, presented his slide-show of gorgeous photographs of Goblin Valley and Arches National Park with his live narrative from his home in Utah. Assisting Jack at the meeting were Alvin Reisbeck and Jerry Sass.

Here is how this unique program came about and was done. Jack had mailed me a DVD of his photographs that I took to the February Digital Imagery Meeting for Show-and-Tell. We had a beautiful show but no tell and our members discussed how nice it would have been had we been able to learn more about how to make such wonderful images by being able to ask Jack about his camera, the settings he chose and why, what post-processing he did, etc.

That led to the idea of using Skype at our meeting. Jack mailed several more DVDs to Alvin and Jerry. Jack downloaded the latest Skype from www.skype.com <<http://www.skype.com/>> and then Sanford, Jerry and Jack worked out and practiced the details ahead of time which made the evening's presentation run perfectly.

The DVD was run from Jerry's notebook PC on site at the meeting. A small "eyeball" video camera connecting to Jerry's notebook allowed "Utah Jack" to see Jerry and a video cam on Utah Jack's computer allowed Jerry to see Jack. When Jerry's notebook was connected to the projector and sound system at our meeting, all of us at the meeting could see and hear Utah Jack.

Here's the fun part: when the video cam "eyeball" was turned around and passed around, Utah Jack was able to see all the members at the meeting to "Howdy" us, each by name because he could see each of us. The video cam eyeball was then positioned to "look at" the screen so that Utah Jack could look at the same show that all of us at the meeting were seeing. It was this setup that enabled Jack to present his live running commentary on the slide show. During the show, people asked Jack questions about everything from the technical aspects of his photographs, the music he chose for the show, commented on "his house" and laughed together about it because it was a photograph of an historic log cabin at a park in Utah.

This historic technical event and the hot popcorn compliments of Sanford made the evening one of the most enjoyable meetings of the year.

Moving on to Vista - Part 10

by Neil Stahfest, Librarian, Tacoma Area PC User Group, Washington
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Most of us who upgrade to Windows Vista from an older version of Windows encounter compatibility problems. Vista doesn't want to recognize some programs as valid or authorized Windows programs even though they worked with Windows XP. Does this mean that you have to abandon them or upgrade to a new — "Vista" version of your favorite programs?

I wish I could say no but the real answer is maybe not. Microsoft has included something called a Program Compatibility Wizard with Vista. The idea is that, if you have an older program that doesn't work with Vista, you can use this program to automatically make some modifications to make it compatible and make it work.

To access the wizard, go to Start, Control Panel and then click on Programs. Next, under Programs and Features, click on —Use an older program with this version of Windows□. This will start the wizard. Now follow the step-by-step, on-screen instructions. When you finish, try to run your program. I'm told that most programs

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that worked with Windows XP will work after you do this but programs that worked with older versions of Windows may not. You shouldn't try to use the wizard with disk utility programs, system programs and anti-virus programs. They usually won't work and may actually cause damage to your computer's system.

While we're on the subject of compatibility and changes, let's look at the Start button, or jelly bean as some call it, in the lower left corner of your screen. Place your mouse the right hand side of the task bar at the bottom of the screen. The box next to Hide Inactive Icons is checked by default. If you click on the Customize button to the right you will see why. You'll probably see dozens of icons listed here. Most are turned off. If you make changes and don't like the results, click on the Default Settings button and then click on OK. We're almost done with the Notification Area box.

The bottom half of the box shows which system icons will show. This is a personal preference (well, so is all of this). If you are using Vista's Clock gadget you can probably uncheck the Clock function because it is redundant. I like to leave Volume checked. Its a convenient place to turn sound on and off and control the volume. I also leave Network checked. It makes it easy to see if my network connection is working. The Power option is useful if you have a laptop computer, otherwise turn it off.

I think we've covered enough for this month. Are you getting comfortable with Windows Vista? I am. For those of you still using Windows XP, don't be in a hurry to change! Wait for Windows 7 if you can (coming in 2010).

THIS AND THAT

By Elizabeth B. Wright, Member, Computer Club of Oklahoma City
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LOST AND GONE FOREVER..... OR NOT.

Well, it finally happened. A picture which had taken far too much of my time was finally ready for printing. I sent it online to my favorite photo store. Expecting to see a picture good enough to share with family, it was a great disappointment when I picked up the print to see that parts of it were not up to that standard. A renewed frenzy of "fiddling" with it resulted in losing track of the names used for the changes. When I thought I had everything in order, I chose to eliminate the extra files. And did I do a good job. Not only did I choose the unwanted files, but also included the one version which was half way good. No recycle bin, no delete, but the ultimate "destroy." In other words, probably only the CIA would be able to recover the file from my hard disk.

Starting from scratch with the original image, I tried to retrace my steps to reach the same quality as the lost file. I had the hard copy print, so I knew what I wanted it to look like. But for some reason nothing worked and my renewed efforts to enhance the picture did not give me the results I had previously attained. But there was real improvement in one area that was so lacking in the lost image.

The newest image was then uploaded to the photo store and while doing so I noticed that the original picture was still online. And as in all things ethernet, the image could be reloaded to my computer via a download. It was a little difficult, but the end result was I got my picture back. Then the problem areas of the picture were corrected and the end result was a very acceptable print. So while a lot of time was spent on a rather insignificant picture, the knowledge obtained as a result made it well worth the effort.

After a recent study group meeting my friend Dorothy asked me if I learned anything. My answer was the same as always. I never attend any kind of meeting that I DON'T learn something. Now maybe it isn't something that will change my life forever, but more often than not it is something that enriches my life, if even in a

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small way. In addition to that, whenever someone asks me for help, usually we both learn something. The most recent request for help reminded me, once again, when helping someone over the phone with a computer problem, it is important to have them start at the very top of their computer screen and describe exactly what they see all the way down. With that information it is often possible to pinpoint a possible area of trouble and generate ideas for solutions. Many times the description of the problem, while usually understandable, does not contain that one little piece of information that will lead to the answer. So by following the procedure of top to bottom on the screen, we solved the problem and I took away at least as much from the experience as did the recipient of my help.

As humans age time seems to fly ever more swiftly by. But I don't think that is what has been happening in real time when it comes to technology. It looks to me like many things are moving so rapidly that we almost miss them.

Not all that long ago it was hard to imagine a small 8 Gig USB drive that could fit on your keychain. So portable, so useful. Of course they came on the market and were being sold at prices often over the \$100 mark. Now they are practically throwaways, good for birthday presents, stocking stuffers for Christmas, Hanukkah and other celebrations as well as any other gift giving occasion. Should this be troubling? Perhaps it signals the end of one technology era and the beginning of another. My crystal ball is a bit cloudy on this one, so I will leave it to the more savvy writers to tell you the answer. All I know is that for now those handy little USB drives are so useful that it's hard to imagine how we did without them. At the present time we are seeing 16 Gig USB drives with prices over \$100. How long before they will be things of the past?

Who uses USB drives? There probably isn't anyone out there who travels with a computer who doesn't keep some information on them. They are somewhat safer than storing everything on the hard drive of a laptop. Thieves target laptops in airports, hotel rooms and any other place people might be careless enough to leave one unattended. If all the information a person needs to do his/her job is on the machine, and if it gets stolen or damaged then the consequences could be disastrous. Even a one or two Gig USB drive will hold a lot of information and can be so much more easily protected. In an emergency situation, a new laptop with enough software already installed on it to do business can be purchased, sometimes even in large airports, and keeping essential files on the USB drive will get a person back up and working almost without missing a stride.

Of course there are other uses for them. My favorite use for the little devices is to transport image files whenever it is necessary. Those occasions usually are to share pictures with family or to use digital images in study groups or classes and also occasionally to get prints from a kiosk in the stores which offer that service. Mostly I do that when I just have a few prints that I need. For large orders I still upload my image files online.



Maybe Santa Claus will put a 16G drive in my stocking this year.

Let Me Count the Ways I Like Linux

by Kerry Miller, a member of the Front Range PCUG, Colorado
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n0wiq (at) comcast.net.

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I used to use Microsoft Windows up to Windows 98. I then switched to Windows NT in a dual boot system with Linux. However, when I went to boot NT one more time and NT gave me a message to the effect "I'm sick, fix me," I said goodbye to Windows and Linux has been my main operating system since. I found Linux applications to match all my user data. I was able to move all that data from the NT file system (NTFS) to the earlier Windows file system (FAT). From there I copied all the data into the ext2 file system, which was used by Linux at the time.

Now let me count the ways I like Linux:

1. Linux resembled the HP-UX operating system (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HP-UX>) I was using at work. This made going between work and home easier.
2. The roots of the Linux operating system go back to the late 1980's. By the time I decided to switch to Linux, it was a viable (if little known) multi-user, multi-tasking operating system for Personal Computers. That meant I could establish more than one user for my PC and run multiple programs simultaneously-I was not restricted to either the Windows or MAC operating systems for those PC capabilities. And, of course, Linux was (and still is) free.
3. Linux comes with a distribution of the X windows protocol produced by an international consortium. To understand this capability, think of it as "...providing the basic framework for building Graphical User Interfaces (GUIs), and moving windows on the screen and interacting with a mouse and/or keyboard." (extracted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/X_windows). Because this capability was (and is) not built into the operating system, it provides greatly enhanced flexibility for anyone creating Linux applications.
4. For those familiar with the Windows and MAC operating systems, it is surprising to realize that the software that creates what you see as the "desktop" can actually be a separate application program. I use the GNOME desktop together with X windows. This desktop (one of several that can be used with Linux) allows me to use a number of different screens and switch between them as I wish. This allows me to open an application on one screen and switch to a different screen to open another application. From <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GNOME>: "The GNOME project puts heavy emphasis on simplicity, usability, and making things 'just work....'"
5. There are a wide range of user applications available, as well as tools to write your own applications.
6. Linux has (and has had for some time) a reputation for stability. The operating system doesn't crash unless the user does something to make it crash. Around 1997 (about the time I decided to change to the Linux operating system) I read

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an article (in a Linux magazine) professing to use two computers as near identical as production processes allow. They loaded one computer with Microsoft Windows and the loaded the second computer with Linux. They ran similar bench mark programs on both computers. The machine loaded with Microsoft operating system crashed in a short time. The machine loaded with Linux continued to run for as long as the comparison experiment was set to run.

7. Many distributions of Linux are as easy, or easier to install than Microsoft Windows.
8. A person can customize and/or build a Linux operating system to meet individual needs.
9. Many distributions of Linux include such primary applications such as the Firefox web browser, OpenOffice, an office suite similar to Microsoft Office (word processor, spread-sheet, presentations, etc.), and a number of other "name brand" applications.
10. Linux can be cost free. There are hundreds (or more) of applications written for Linux and there is a growing library of applications.

Microsoft Windows was the new kid on the block at the time I switched to Linux from my point of view and it did NOT do many ordinary things well.
