BITS AND BYTES

The Newsletter of the Midland Computer Club

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: May 26, 2010

This month's topic: PC Hardware

PROGRAM COORDINATORS
Contact : Co-Chairpersons
Howard Lewis   lewis3ha@chartermi.net
Joe Lykowski   joseph@lykowski.com

What you missed! At the April meeting, Joe Lykowski discussed alternative sources for the programs we currently watch on television. You still use your television but may be able to lower or eliminate the cost for cable television. While there may be a cost associated with the alternative sources, total cost may be less and you have more options in selecting just what you want to view.

Upcoming Activities: The June meeting will be a couple different presentations on software and an open discussion on how the club members are using computers.

President Piper's Ponderings
I got the routine phone call inquiring about some aspect of the Club. It turns out we knew one another from 20 years ago when his function at DOW involved the emerging PC technology. My job had involved main frame computers, so he expressed 'shock' that I knew anything about PCs. Then today I saw that PAC-MAN is 30 years old. To both incidents we all would say, "You've come a long way baby."

My point is not to digress down computer memory lane, but to emphasize that (1) the electronic world is rapidly changing and (2) there are no longer any artificial barriers to learning about his/her electronic world. It only takes a willingness to learn and perhaps spend some money.

I have seen the frustrations of members in many different computer clubs as they deal with new technologies, new equipment and new buzz words. And each of us has different needs and goals, so a 'one size fits all' computer approach doesn't cut it.

To restate the obvious, the Internet has opened the world to everyone. While 'knowledge is power' still applies, knowledge has now been spread all over the Internet. No longer is it a secret what your neighbor paid for his house, what is the best price on the latest modem, or even where the cheapest gas is located on any given day.

The reverse side of this coin is that the technology world is flooding us. Choices have to be made as to what we read and embrace, e.g., is Facebook important to us, and how much time should it occupy in our life.

So for those of us Midland Computer Club members who are getting a little long in the tooth, our technology world is a smorgasbord; pick the ones you like, learn about them on the Internet and at Club meetings, and the hell with the rest of the background noise.

(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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http://mcc.apcug.org/

Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be 7 p.m., June 8, 2010, @ Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church, 5501 Jefferson Ave., Midland.

Useful, useless and strange (in no particular order) Web Sites (submitted by Howard Lewis):

http://www.wwiimemorial.com/
While commemorating Memorial Day you might want to visit this site as it remembers those who gave their all in defense of freedom in World War II.

http://www.usflag.org/
Did you know that there have been 27 official U.S. flags during the history of our country? This site talks about the history of the flag and shows the various flags that have flown over our nation's capital.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jhoWsHwU7w
This may be the future of your PC.

http://www.newsweek.com/id/236064
Newsweek recently ran an article on "100 Places To Remember Before They Disappear." These are places which could disappear if climatologist are correct in their global warming predictions.

http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/wri/
The Library of Congress has the original negatives taken by the Wright brothers of their famous flight at Kitty Hawk, NC. There are over 300 pictures taken between 1897 and 1928

Membership Enrollment Form

NAME _____   PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____   CITY _____

ZIP _____   EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Membership dues   FAMILY ($20)   STUDENT ($15)   New Member ـــــ   Renewal ـــــ

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

Tips, Tricks & Techniques
(submitted by Howard Lewis)

Change Your Windows 7 Power Settings
When Windows 7 is installed, it automatically sets up default power plans for your machine hardware. You can change these to meet your needs, either conserve more energy or increase your computer's performance through the settings in **Power Options**.
To change the power options associated with the selected power plan:
> Click *Start*, type *Power Options* in the **Search** box and click the *Power Options* link.
> Click *Change Plan Settings* for your current plan. From here you can change the basic settings for the monitor or when your computer should go to sleep.
> To change advanced settings, select *Change Advanced Power Settings*. From here, you can change the settings for various hardware components that allow for power management.
> Select the power options you want to use and click *OK*.
> Click *Save changes*.
> Next close the *Power Options* window.

Your computer should now use the new settings that you have set.

Add Or Remove Fields In Outlook 2007
By default, Outlook automatically displays specific fields while in your various folders.
However, Outlook lets you customize the fields that are displayed. If you do not want a field displayed, you can simply remove it from the view. You can also add other fields that might be helpful to you.

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MCC Member Profile — Al Adams

As with a lot of other folks over the years, my use of computers has changed as the years have changed. When I first started using computers in the late seventies and early eighties, my first PC was a Ohio Scientific C2-4P (later called just the 4P by OSI) that loaded all of its programs to RAM 8K, (I started with 8K of RAM, many other OSI PC user's had 4K or 6K of Ram to start with). I loaded and saved my computer software from and to a cassette tape using a standard called the Kansas City Standard(1200 baud). For the video display, we used modified small B&W portable TV's (13-inch screen) to view the 48 character per line 32 lines per screen (Later to be extended to 64 characters line length). These computers were based on the MOS Technology 6502 Processor, and ninety-six percent of the programs ran in 5K of RAM or LESS. You only needed more working memory for Compilers like FBASIC, or very large Assembler Editor Source Code programs.

Later I upgraded from the 4P to a C2-8P, (or sometimes just called 8P), by adding a board that allowed me to access eight inch floppy disk drives. By adding the eight inch disk setup the configuration was re-named by OSI to C2-8P or just 8P for short, not too bad from going from loading my programs from cassette tape to 8-inch floppy drives. 48k of RAM was standard maximum working memory, which I later expanded twice from 56K to 64K of RAM the last time I ran this Computer. The system always had a small 512 bytes of ROM that worked for both the cassette and 8-inch or a 5-inch floppy disk that was standard with the C2-4P setup, this allowed use of video, Machine window, etc. To boot the computer, from power on. People who used these early computers should remember the 8K Basic in ROM, PEEK [65], MICRO and the AARDVARK JOURNAL or do you remember? C/W/M ? or D/C/W/M ? Prompt at power on and burning our own 2716 EPROM {Erasable Programmable Read Only Memory}

I can still remember one of the Machine addresses for one of the Keyboard input routines for the OSI Micro Computer $FEED was the Hexadecimal Address location. Cool huh.

These Computer's were far from perfect but we learned a lot of things using the OSI Micro Computers

(Al Adams—member Profile-continued from Page 3)

I also used a PASCAL Compiler for a short while on this OSI PC. I learned how to work with Hexadecimal numbers convert from Binary to Hexadecimal (Hex for Short), use of things like programs called an Extended Monitor, Assembler Editor, wrote many small Machine Language Programs in 6502 processor code language. I learned how to make internal changes to the OS65D Operating System, adding a Machine Code Screen Clear, Line Editor for the Microsoft BASIC, I also changed (sped up) the Stepping Rate on the Floppy Disk motor for faster disk access and built sub-routines to print both to the printer and the video display at the same time, so I could tell when a remote printer was finished printing.

Later I purchased a Commodore AMIGA 2000 PC. I still have both of these PC's at home. I haven't run them in years. The great thing about the AMIGA was I could format more than one disk at a time and delete multiple files from more than one disk or location at the same time. Even the Microsoft Windows 7 OS Doesn't DO THIS TODAY. Try it. On a test set of windows, open two or three windows, select a file or two in each window, and try to delete only the files you have selected in all of the open windows at the same time. The AMIGA could do this with No Problem. Or try formatting three USB Drives at the same time. The AMIGA could format two or more floppy or CD disks at the same time, and not even blink over a trivial task such as this.

I used to do a lot of game playing on the early PC's. They did this with fantastic graphics, even the Amiga's graphics by today's standards are still out standing. The resolution may not be as good as the High Definition current generation, but the Multiprocessing Multitasking that the Amiga had in the late eighties still has not been seen on any consumer PC on the market to this day that I've seen.

My current use of computers breaks down like this: (on Intel based PC's)
email, General Research 25%
Download and install desired Programs 40%
Music and Podcast Library 30%
Burning CD and DVD's 4%
Miscellaneous 1% {Includes Anti Virus, Anti Spyware, Firewall, etc.}

Some of my favorite Programs Are
iTunes 9.1.1.12,
OpenOffice.org 3.2.0,
PerfectDisk 11 Professional (Build 170) some really handy tools come with it.

After using PerfectDisk 11 Professional for the last three months I have only between one to six fragmented files {on average} on my 500 Gigabyte hard drive at the end of its Fragmentation Process. (I consider this not too bad.) I am working on a write up (Review on Raxco's PerfectDisk 11 Professional) for a future newsletter.

In short, I started with computers, that to Load and Save, both my BASIC {Microsoft Basic©® a programming language} programs, Assembler Editor Source Code and Machine Language, and 6502 machine code from & to cassette tapes, then moved on to 8-inch floppy disk on the OSI PC for my program storage and now an Intel multi-core CPU, 8 Gigabyte of RAM, 1 Gig of video RAM and to top it off 500 Gigabyte hard drive, which forces me to have not too much of a hard drive to backup. I still am not ready for a Terabyte hard drive, it still seems too big for my use.

I have friends that use 120 Gigabyte hard drives and they can't believe I can use most of 500 Gigabyte hard drive, I have one 500 Gigabyte hard drive that has only 52 Gigabytes of free space on a DELL XPS PC.

That's My Story of my early Computer Activities, What's Yours?

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Google Voice, Free Long Distance

Reviewed by Hank Pearson, Webmaster, and has served in many capacities including President, Treasurer, and Editor, ASCIi (Arizona Society for Computer Information, inc.)
The ASCIi Clipboard, October 2009, www.asciigroup.org, hank.pearson (at) asciigroup.org

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What is Google Voice?
  A phone line? No
  Instant messaging? No
  A new Google telephone? No

  A new wireless phone plan? No
  VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol)? No

      It is totally free? Yes!
      Free long distance? Yes!
      Free phone number? Yes!
      Intelligent forwarding? Yes!
      More versatile voicemail? Yes!
      And a lot more free features? Yes!

Do you have to be at a computer to use Google Voice? No. Use Google Voice from any phone. Google Voice is free, but you need an invitation.

Just Google for 'Google Voice invitation.' When you receive your invitation, select a free phone number.

When someone calls your Google number, some or all of your phones can ring at once - your home phone, mobile phone, work phone, your cousin's phone where you are visiting. You can answer from any of them.

You can organize your contacts into groups and let some contacts ring all your phones, others ring certain phones, others go straight to voicemail, and still others get blocked.

You can personalize your voicemail greeting for groups or even individuals.

You can listen to your voicemail from any phone or listen online, or receive email or SMS (texting) notification. You can read voicemail transcripts visually online, and see each word underlined as it is spoken by your callers.

When you are online, you can just click a contact to call local or long distance. Or you can call from any phone by dialing extra digits. You can call any number without setting up a contact. All calls to the contiguous 48 states are free! Check out the rates for other locations

You can send, receive, and store SMS (texting) messages.

You can screen calls and record calls.

Similar to a mobile phone interface, you can review calls placed, received, missed, and so on.

Can you port your existing phone number? Officially, not quite yet. "We hope to offer this option in the near future." But a few people have been reported to have ported their numbers. News on this subject might change fast. To keep up with the latest stories, Google for 'Google Voice port existing number.'

There's even more to Google Voice! And it's free!

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Adobe Reader Alternatives

Submitted by Carol Picard, Midland Computer Club, Bits & Bytes, webbyte (at) yahoo.com
This article has been printed with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

Adobe Acrobat Reader used to be the only program available for reading PDF files. Today the Adobe Reader program has gotten a lot bigger (installer = 37.28Mb – space on disk = 181Mb) and comes with extra baggage such as the Adobe Download Manger, Acrobat.com and Adobe® Air®. After installing Adobe Reader it seems like it prompts for updates a couple times a week.

Since I only use Adobe Reader for its most basic purpose, reading and printing PDF files, I started looking for alternatives that are also free.

The programs listed below are not the only ones available. All the PDF Readers in this review do a good job of providing basic functionality for reading and printing PDF documents. The choice of which you use will probably depend on ease of use and what additional features you want.

Foxit PDF Reader
Foxit Corporation – US Headquarters – Fremont CA
http://www.foxitsoftware.com/pdf/reader/

Foxit PDF Reader (installer = 2.5Mb – space on disk = 10.5Mb) supports Windows 2000/XP/2003/Vista/Windows 7. Foxit documentation indicates it does not connect to the Internet without the user's permission.
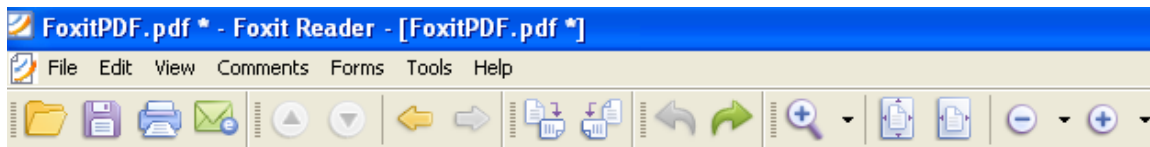
Installs components associated with Ask.com and adds Foxit Toolbar to Firefox and Internet Explorer. Did not find an option to not install the Foxit Toolbar, even when using Custom install. Can go to Add/Remove programs and remove the Foxit Toolbar from the system and it doesn't seem to have any affect on using the program. .

Install process also prompts to add an eBay shortcut and it wants to set your homepage to Foxit Software, so you probably want to unselect those options when installing.
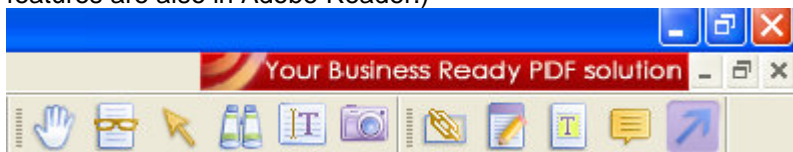
If using AVG antivirus, you may get and AVG Warning message when installing Foxit Reader. This is due to a virus definitions error with the AVG software. This is not an error in the Reader.

Program provides the basic functionality to read and print PDF files as well as additional functionality. The top toolbar has multiple options. The following two images are separated to better fit in this article but will display continuously across the top of the screen.

The left portion of the toolbar contains many common toolbar features, such as open, save, print, page forward or backward, zoom, see the entire page of the PDF document on the screen or make the page fit the width of the screen, etc.

The right portion of the toolbar contains options to move around in the PDF document, view as a text file, select a portion of the document to save as an image, and search. In addition there are options to highlight text, add annotations, etc., which are helpful if you want to add comments directly to the PDF document. (Some of these features are also in Adobe Reader.)

When a PDF document is opened, the bottom toolbar provides page numbers, zoom percentage, etc.

Some Foxit Reader features are limited in the free version. If you use one of those features and attempt to save the PDF document, evaluation marks will be added, and a notification window will display - which is an ad for the paid version, called Foxit Reader Pro Pack.

If you are viewing more than one PDF document at the same time, Foxit opens both in the same window and uses tabs to move between them.

Find and Search are separate functions. Search can be done on multiple PDF documents in a specific location. If two PDF documents are open, Find or Search will not look in both documents at the same time. However, you can enter the search terms and leave the Find or Search window option to switch to a second document and restart the search without having to retype the search term(s).

Foxit Reader is available as a U3 application (for flash drives running U3). Foxit Reader for Windows Mobile is available for a variety of mobile devices, including Pocket PC, Smartphone and Windows CE.

A user manual (143 pages) is available at:
        http://cdn01.foxitsoftware.com/pub/foxit/manual/enu/FoxitReader32_Manual.pdf

Nuance PDF Reader
Nuance – Worldwide Headquarters - Burlington, Massachusetts
http://www.nuance.com/imaging/products/pdf-reader.asp
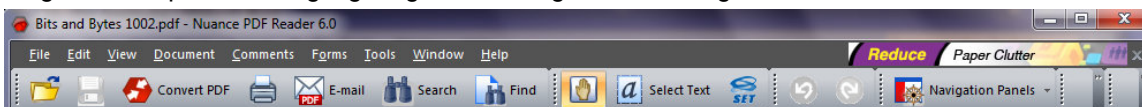
Nuance PDF Reader (installer = 18.1Mb; space on disk = 42.9Mb) supports Microsoft Windows 2000/XP/2003/Vista/7.
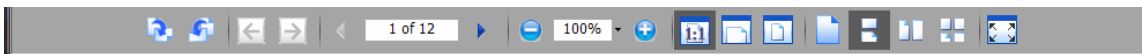
Requires registration before downloading, including email address. Cannot opt out of emails from the registration screen. Will have option to opt-out of e-mails when you receive them.

A splash screen displays on start up but this can be turned off under Edit - Preferences - General - Startup

Nuance PDF Reader top toolbar has the basic options, such as open, save, print, search, find, select text, and select images, etc. Options for highlighting, underlining, and crossing out text are found under Comments in the Menu Bar.

The bottom toolbar displays after a PDF document is opened and has options for next page, previous page, zoom, fit width, etc.

Nuance opens each PDF document in a separate window. Find and Search can be done in the current PDF document or multiple PDF documents in a specific location. However, if two PDF documents are open, the Find and Search functions will not look in both documents at the same time. You can enter the search terms and leave the Find or Search window open and switch to the second document and restart the search without having to retype the search term(s).

After highlighting, crossing out, or underlining text, you can save the PDF document without any nag screens or evaluation marks being put on the document.

Documentation indicates the program provides option for preventing JavaScript installation from a PDF document. Hackers have used the PDF JavaScript vulnerability to gain control of a user's computer — exposing users to system attacks and the transfer of personal information simply by viewing infected PDF files.
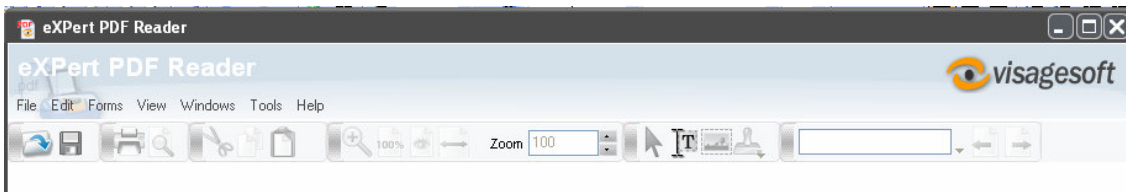
There is a 21 page PDF Reader Guide that can be viewed or downloaded from Nuance website -
http://support.nuance.com/NuancePDFReader/

eXPert PDF
Visagesoft - Athens, Greece, http://www.visagesoft.com/products/pdfreader/index.php

eXPert PDF Reader (installer = 8.6Mb; space on disk = 16.8Mb) supports Windows 2000/XP/2003/Vista or later.

eXPert PDF Reader top toolbar contains basic options such as open, print, copy/paste, zoom.

When a PDF document is open, there is also a bottom toolbar that shows the pages and allows moving through the document, changing how the pages are displayed, etc.

Multiple PDF documents open in a single window and tabs are used to move between the documents.

The Search function gives a list of where the term appears in the document and you click on a match to go to the location in the document.

The Find function requires using the arrow keys in the toolbar to go to the next or previous occurrence of the search term.

If multiple PDF documents are open, Search or Find doesn't automatically check all open documents, but you can enter the search term, search through the selected document, then click on the tab for another document and click the Search button or a back or forward arrow to search the other document for the same search term. There doesn't appear to be an option to Search or Find a term in all PDF documents in a specific folder as with Foxit or Nuance.

Text or Graphics can be selected and copied from the PDF document to paste in another program.

After clicking the Selection tool, the cursor has to be carefully positioned close to the first or last character you want to select until the cursor changes to an I beam, then hold down the left mouse button and drag to highlight the selection.

Was unable to find help information for the program. Clicking Help in the toolbar presented an option to go to the Internet and open the home page for the program but didn't provide any help information. It did provide the option to sign up to receive the eXPert PDF Newsletter, but I didn't check that out.

There is no Privacy Policy posted on the website which may be a concern.

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"2010: A Live Chat Tech Support Odyssey"

By Gay Jenson*, www.ccokc.org, wright599new (at) sbcglobal.net
This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

My experience with computers began professionally and personally at the same time: 1984. George Orwell would have been quite proud, particularly if he could have read this article.

I don't know how many people in this big, web-wide world of ours have ever had the unusual experience of utilizing an "online tech support chat" service, whether it be for help with purchasing an item from a catalog, filing your income taxes, or simply downloading a program necessary for your computer. Until recently, I hadn't had this unique opportunity of the 21st century version of "letting your fingers do the walking."

It began simply enough; my husband and I had experienced marked slowness in our operating speed for Windows XP (yes, we're still in that mode), and Norton products had issued us several friendly reminders that our computer was low on memory (as, I might add, are the two of us). This, they explained, might help our computer open programs easier, download quicker, and in general, simply improve the overall speed and function. Sounded logical. Sign us up.

In the past, when we've purchased/updated our security, anti-virus, anti-spyware, etc. type programs, it's usually been done by ordering and paying online, and then simply downloading from their site. No problem. However, this time, there seemed to be a vicious cycle running against us…we'd try to download the program (for which we had already paid), and yet, because the program wasn't downloaded yet, the computer's memory was still too low, thus creating a bottleneck usually reserved for matters of Congress. And so, the decision was made to go ahead and use the online tech support service, in its "friendly chat format."

If you have not gone through this before, a brief explanation of the "chat": it is exactly like Instant Messaging (IM), in that you and the other person on the other end of the chat are typing back and forth in real time. The difference would be that in a tech support situation, you have no idea with whom you are chatting, or if it's even a person, for that matter. In my instance, my tech support representative's name was "Chithra," and I don't know if that's a male or a female, but I decided it was a woman and left it at that. For some reason I felt more nurtured that way, even as a 47-year-old wife and mother myself.

In a way, it's a bit like the ultimate blind date: neither of you have a clue as to the other's actual range of understanding, what you look like, how you like your coffee in the morning, and so on. And so, as what I thought was a bit cheesy, the grand marshal of the technical support site announces (in typed form) that I (Gay Jenson) have now entered the Chat Room. I felt a bit like Elvis. And then it waits.

Now, at this point, I'm wondering if I should do the polite thing and figuratively shake my hand and introduce myself? No need, as it turns out, because now, my "date," Chithra, has done just that. She introduces herself and asks me what my particular problem is (which I had already done in the previous section, but that's okay, I'm willing to go over it once more for the sake of problem-solving). Chithra understands immediately and is quite willing to get started on this as soon as possible. Would that okay?

Well, yes, I believe it would, I typed back to Chithra.

Automatically, I'm assigned a case number, so that if our blind date gets cut short by some power surge, I can bring them back up and get started again. Now, at this point, Chithra is rapidly typing me, giving me the appropriate links that should get me where I need to go in order to download this additional memory program….and of course, the same problem occurs, it won't download. Chithra—the ultimate chatty cathy—has now offered (or asked permission) to simply take it into her own tiny hands and handle it herself.

This is the part I have never done before…I'd participated in online chats with tech support before, but never had I simply handed over the keyboard keys to the kingdom! Such trust, such blind faith, such fear of major security breach! I began searching for a paper bag in case I began hyperventilating at some point. I doubt Chithra needed one.

While I reluctantly agreed, I sat back and was amazed at how quickly Chithra's fingers flew across my screen….it was quite disconcerting, and I was almost afraid to look at my keyboard for fear that I would see the keys moving as well, like something from an old late-night movie where the invisible ghost is playing the massive organ but no one can see the hands….just the keys moving….

Chithra not only typed at lightning speed, she was also bringing up windows right and left, up and down, resembling a CNN news story during an earthquake report or election night results. I decided to throw in a little levity by sending Chithra a quick note in the chat room: "Thank goodness I don't have ADD, with all these windows popping up, right and left," I wrote, laughing to myself at the cleverness of my remark.

Chithra did not respond. Worse yet, my innocent action of using my mouse to direct it to the chat room box, and then actually type, caused Chithra to quickly regain control of the process. This was a stern reminder that I was no longer in control here. I began looking around my home office for evidence of tiny cameras and/or listening devices. They could have been in the tissue box, or the stapler! You never know!

By now, it had become clear to me, as well as poor Chithra, that this wasn't going to be as smooth as she thought it would be. And so, she had to go to another chat room (presumably one with more fresh air and/or cubicles), and then once again, introduced herself to me and announced to everyone that Gay Jenson had entered the room. Elvis again. And, what's worse, Chithra and I both seemed to be in 3 rooms at once: she in her office (presumably, again); me in mine; and then our "chat-bodies" in two separate chat rooms. Those are quite a few places for a person to be at once.

So, at this point, Chithra is once again on overdrive, now in the second chat room, opening, closing, pointing, clicking, dragging, deleting, busting through her own firewalls, and in general, just really making a name for herself in the world of online tech support chat rooms. I continued to watch in careful amazement, not wanting to touch anything and risk the wrath of Chithra, should I throw her off her game. I did sneak over to the first chat room to see if she had responded to my ADD joke, but still hadn't.

Okay….now we had gotten to the point where it appeared that it had been successfully downloaded, and she told me that it would be necessary for me to hit "restart" after her final process concluded. So, while there was still a bit of time left on the clock, I switched over to the first chat room to see if she'd ever answered the ADD joke….and she swiftly moved my curser back to the window where that final process was counting down the seconds to the restart. "Stay focused!" is what it seemed she was telling me. I decided no matter what, I would NOT touch that mouse again unless it was time to restart.

The clock winds down, I'm poised to hit "restart," and wouldn't you know it, but good ole' Chithra had beaten me to the punch and did it for me after all. She never did trust me. "Can't trust those humans, after all," is what she was probably saying to her counterparts.

Once "we" restarted, it did seem, at least in the beginning, that things were starting up more quickly at this point— perhaps downloading the extra memory was worth it after all. But then, OH NO!, Chithra hit a brick wall, too. Now from where I was sitting, I don't think she was going to take that lying down, and I certainly wasn't going to get in her way. A few well-placed keystrokes later, and she had that thing up and running in no time.

I may have forgotten to mention this earlier, but in the beginning of the "chat," Chithra had asked for my telephone number, so that they could call me if anything else was necessary in human form. I can't imagine what that would be, but I gave in. So, afraid that someone might call at the same time as Chithra, I decided to take preemptive strike and I texted both my mother, my husband and my daughter to let them know I was under home-computer arrest, and needed to keep the land-line open for the time being. In all actuality, I was joking, but figured it was kind of funny….until the phone rang….and it was Chithra! (or at least it said the name of the organization on the Caller ID) I quickly answered, nervous and worried that I had somehow given away the secret recipe for tomato soup, but no sooner had I answered, than she (?) hung up on me! The nerve! And not even an apology in either of our chat

rooms.

And still no recognition of my ADD joke, which frankly, wasn't all that funny, but sometimes you just want to be noticed.

 Well, fast-forward, and in conclusion Chithra did get the program downloaded, we have a lot more memory now (more than I have in my head, which is kind of sad), and Chithra assured me that she knew I was valuable to their company and that my time should NOT be wasted! I felt this was a very thoughtful thing to chat.

In the distance, my television was on, and the old classic Stanley Kubrick movie, "2001: A Space Oddessy" was playing. I wonder if Chithra knew HAL? What I do know for certain is that I couldn't have outwitted Chithra the way the Kubrick's astronaut did with HAL. Chithra was way onto me from the very beginning.

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iPad Shoppers Beware!
By Gregory West, Member of Computers Operators of Marysville and Port Huron (C.O.M.P.), Michigan
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If you are bent on getting an iPad don't read any further. However, if you are trying to decide between buying a laptop and an iPad this article is for you.

I like my laptop because I can load any software, connect any device such as a digital camera, memory stick, backup drives, by USB connections. I like the idea of being able to load free software from any company or source and not be restricted to one company such as Apple.

"Your computer should be yours to control," said Peter Brown, the Free Software Foundation's executive director. "By imposing such restrictions on users, Steve Jobs (APPLE CEO) is building a legacy that endangers our freedom for his profits (The Microsoft Blog)."

For me, choosing a laptop is simple: Macbook. I run Windows XP and Windows 7 on my Mac laptop without a glitch. Of course there are many other laptops, notebooks and net books that work great too and all of them avail you the opportunity to install third party applications, many at no cost.

The iPad has landed in North America and is creating huge hype. Rightfully so! It is a wonderful device allowing for various functions. According to Wikipedia the iPad "is part of a device category between a smartphone and a laptop computer." This may be true but it is not close to my Macbook laptop, not by a long shot.

For starters the hard drive is only 16 to 64 gigabytes (GB) of flash memory (a technology that is primarily used in camera memory cards). My laptop is 250 GBs and with a terabyte hard drive connected by USB. I now have a grand total of 1274 GBs of hard drive space. Very different from 16 to 64 GBs of the iPad.

The iPad's 9.7-inch (25 cm) screen has a low end resolution of 1024 X 768. What this tech talk means is that the iPad will not support HDMI video which many have come to love. With high definition the rave...Why go back to a lesser screen resolution. This does not make sense.

Other features lacking in the iPad are: no camera, no webcam, no multitasking, no drag and drop file management,

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no USB port, no SD slot, no Flash, no HDMI out, no 1080p playback, and no native widescreen. Are we going

backwards here? In 2005 it was "the Year of High Definition Video," according to cnet.com. How come the iPad lacks these features?

Many are saying the iPad has its neat functions and is esthetically appealing. Just make sure you are getting the exact features you require in any tech device. Do your homework on this one.

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Email Scams
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There are at least two dozen people in Nigeria that want to give me twelve million dollars. Imagine that! People are vigorously competing with each other to make me rich. You would think that after all the publicity over the last dozen years everyone would know about the Nigerian scam. Headhunters in New Guinea know about the Nigerian scheme. Lost tribes in the Amazon know about the Nigerian scheme. So why do the scammers keep doing it? Because people keep falling for it. Some folks want to believe, and nothing will stop them no matter what evidence sits in front of them.

Email scams like the one that keeps flowing out of Nigeria can be downright dangerous. Not only have people been scammed out of money, but in a few instances have actually lost their lives. That is a high price to pay for credulity.

Most unsolicited commercial messages (SPAM) may be annoying, but they do little more than eat up some bandwidth. The originators don't want to harm you, just entice you to buy something. It's sometimes called online advertising.

As the Internet evolves, so do the scammers. They have become more sophisticated at attempting to trick us out of our money, hand over personal information, reveal passwords, frighten us or make us believe in something that isn't true.

For example, our current polarized political system has generated distrust of government in some places. A band of swindlers has used these sentiments to construct an email that "warns" you that the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI believe that you are involved in either money laundering activities or somehow complicit in terrorist activity. Information like that, even if false, can make people uneasy.

Fortunately, the scammers have a solution. For the small sum of $370 the Economic Financial Crimes Commission Chairman will send documentation certifying you as a proper upstanding citizen, thereby avoiding a messy prosecution and jail time. How could anyone pass that up? These government agencies must be terribly busy, and isn't it a great comfort to know that they can resolve important matters by email if you're willing to send them only a few hundred dollars?

Congratulations! You've won the lottery! There are many variations to this theme, but they all involve filling out a form before you can claim your prize. Don't forget to include your social security number since they need to inform the IRS. What makes this scam so devious is that legitimate lotteries really do need this information. One thing that should puzzle you is how could you possibly win a lottery you haven't entered?

Suppose you really did enter the contest or bought a lottery ticket, what then? Legitimate enterprises are aware of these scams and will almost always provide you with an alternate way of supplying the information. In other words,

never be careless with personal information.

You receive an email informing you of a "problem" with your bank account. Strange, you don't recall doing business with the bank. All you have to do to resolve the "problem" is click on the provided link and supply information that the bank already knows if you are a customer.

Tens of thousands of people receive these messages. A few may actually be customers of the bank. Some believing the email is real, click on the link, and are taken to a bogus site. Any information provided won't be used to resolve any "problems", but instead be used to clean out your bank account.

There are so many scams out there perpetrated by email it makes you want to give up in disgust. That would be understandable if there were no way to protect yourself, but many people forget the obvious: **Use Common Sense**.

When you get an email that asks you to be part of a plot to move large amounts of money offshore to your bank account by doing business with people you don't know from a foreign country thousand of miles away, shouldn't that arouse your suspicions?

Any text message that turns out to be an image should be suspect. The only purpose for turning text into images is to defeat spam filters. Be on your guard.

The bad guys are very creative and always seem to be one step ahead of everyone else. The FBI provides a service for citizens to receive the latest information about online scams. For more information on e-scams, please visit the FBI's New E-Scams and Warnings webpage at http://www.fbi.gov/cyberinvest/escams.htm. Visit the site at least once a month to be aware of new and exciting ways scammers have to separate you from your money.

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