



Midland
Computer
Club

BITS AND BYTES

November 2011

Newsletter of the Midland Computer Club

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

GENERAL CLUB MEETING 7:00 P.M.

4th Wednesday of the month at the
Midland Community Center
2001 George St., Midland, MI

This month's date:

November 16, 2011 (3rd Wednesday)

This month's topic:

Joe Lykowski—Tech gift ideas for Santa

What you missed!

Skype presented by Howard Lewis and Carol Picard. Presentation and discussion notes are available on the club website:
<http://mcc.apcug.org/clubhappenings.html>

Upcoming Activities:

December meeting—Club Holiday Party
(December 21st — 3rd Wednesday)

Program Coordinators

Howard Lewis lewis3ha@chartermi.net
Bill Tower stressed@tir.com

Please let Howard or Bill know of topics you would like covered at future meetings.

President Piper's Ponderings

Our emeritus leader has pointed out that the Club is about to celebrate its 30th birthday. None of our current members go back that far, although a few have 18 years under their belt.



I recall the 1977-1981 period as the 'wild west' of PCs. Commodore, which is the great-grandfather of our Club, was in the Midland high school with its PET model. I bought one for about \$300. Apple II hit the market in 1977. Radio Shack was a major player; I remember its users as being CBers. The Amiga was the choice of artists, particularly those interested in music. Texas Instruments also had a small, but workable model. IBM did not get into the business until 1981, so the ancestors of what we now use were powered by various DOS operating systems. Each of these brands had a major celebrity as their pitch man; Bill Shatner and Alan Alda come to mind. The Time Man of the Year was the PC in Dec, 1982.

Compatibility of software and hardware was a major problem in the early days of what eventually became known as the 'IBM compatible' brand. Costs were sky high, particularly with a large, hard drives. I spent \$5K for an IBM 286 in 1995 at Dow; I bought a Dell for myself that year for \$3,500; I had previously owned a Leading Edge for 2-3 years that cost ~\$2,500.

November is the time for nomination of Club officers to serve in 2012. Technically, we have one opening on our Board, and new blood is always welcome. Please contact me if you would like to play a bigger role in our Club. All of our Board members have agreed to serve another year, although I am trying to start a grass roots effort to recall the President.

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

2011 MCC OFFICERS

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

Board Meeting

Next board meeting will be
 7 p.m., January 10, 2012, at
 Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church,
 5501 Jefferson Ave., Midland MI

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

With Black Friday just around the corner, you might wish to check out these sites that have "leaked" the ads that will normally show up in your Thanksgiving Day paper. This way you can spend some time figuring out how you want to spend your special day shopping.

<http://bfads.net/>

<http://www.blackfriday.info/>

<http://www.theblackfriday.com/>

<http://www.blackfridayads.com/>

When we used to buy a new computer, many of us would first check out the tech specs of various computer before we bought it. This article explains why this doesn't matter much anymore (unless you want bragging rights!).

<http://tinyurl.com/3vfat4j>

When law enforcement wants information on who people are contacting, they get that information of the cell phone providers. Recently, *Wired Magazine* did an article on how long the cell phone companies retain information on calls and text messages based on a Department of Justice study.

<http://tinyurl.com/678awau>

Who knew cattle enjoyed being serenaded with jazz?

<http://tinyurl.com/3txhox6>

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
 1816 Bauss Ct
 Midland, MI 48642-4023

Attn: Membership Chairman

You may also pay for membership at a regular club meeting

Tips, Tricks & Techniques (submitted by Howard Lewis):

Exporting Your Firefox 7 Bookmarks

If you have an extensive list of bookmarks in Firefox, you might want to export them to a file for backup or transfer to another browser. To accomplish this:

Press *Ctrl+Shift+B*. The Bookmark **Library** will be displayed.

Press the *Import and Backup* button on the toolbar and select *Export Bookmarks to HTML*.

The **Export Bookmarks File** dialog box will open.

Select the location to back up the bookmarks and give it a meaningful name.

Click *Save* and close the **Library** window.

Your bookmarks have now been exported to a HTML file which can then be imported back into Firefox or another browser.

Customizing Print Headers And Footers In Internet Explorer

When you print out a web page within Internet Explorer, the header contains the page title and page number of the total pages and the footer contains the web address URL and the date. However, you can customize this if desired. To customize your headers and footers in Internet Explorer:

Press *Alt+F* and then *U*. The **Page Setup** dialog box appears.

Under the **Headers and Footers** section of the dialog box, you will notice that there is three drop down menus each. These contain the information to be displayed in the header and footer at the left, center and right positions respectively.

For each of the drop down menus, select what you would like to see displayed at that location on the page. If you select *Custom*, another box will appear that will allow you to type whatever you would like to see displayed.

Click *OK* to save your changes.

Now when you print your web page, it will contain the information you want to see.

Setting up Windows 7 with a Classic Start Menu

When many people upgraded to Windows XP or Windows Vista from Windows 98, they liked the old classic Windows 98 menu with the fly-out menus. Microsoft provided a "Classic Start menu" option which could be used in those products. Windows 7 does not have that option available however there is a way that will give you back some of that look by showing item lists instead of links. To make this change:

Right-click the *Taskbar* and select *Properties*.

Select the *Start Menu* tab and press the *Customize* button.

In the **Customize Start Menu** dialog box, you will notice many of the items have three options:

Display as a link, **Display as a menu**, and **Don't display this item**. Configure those items as you wish to see them (link, menu, or not at all).

Click *OK*.

Now Windows will display links or menus as you selected.

Midland Police Department warns citizens about recent phone scam.

There have been recent reports to MPD that people have been receiving phone calls from an alleged family member asking for help. The family member, usually a grandson, calls and asks for money for some type of emergency. Some of the examples are, they are out of the county and need money so they can receive medical treatment, help with paying for their transportation to get home, or bail to get out of jail. Please do not wire or send any money to these scammers. Contact the alleged family member to confirm if they are in need of help.

If you have fallen victim to this scam, please contact 911 to file a report. If you have any questions, please contact Community Relations Ofc. Christopher Wenzell at 989-839-4648

ARTICLE INDEX

Upgrading Win XP to Win 7 - Page 4

By Larry Piper, President, Midland Computer Club, Midland MI

Tech Tip: How to Recover Data from a Dead Hard Drive - Page 5

By Bryan Lambert, Geeks.com

The Tip Corner - Page 6

By Bill Sheff, Novice SIG Coordinator, Lehigh Valley Computer Group, PA

Review: RoboForm—Program stores websites, login information - Page 8

By Jim Thornton, Member, Channel Islands PCUG, CA

Product Review: Mikogo 4 - Page 10

By David Green, Treasurer, Danbury Area Computer Society, CT

SuperTooth Buddy - Can it be too good? - Page 11

By Terry Currier, President, WINNERS (Windows Users Group), CA

Tracking the latest information on anything - Page 12

By John Weigle, Editor, Channel Islands PCUG, CA

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Upgrading Win XP to Win 7

By Larry Piper, President, Midland Computer Club, Midland MI

I hear you already. Oh no, not another XP upgrade article. Just buy a new PC and transfer over the programs and data from the old XP. Don't know how? Let the store do it for you. And besides, Microsoft (MS) doesn't support XP anymore, so you are just asking for trouble by continuing to run that old operating system (OS).

OK, your comments are valid—to a point. Lack of money to buy a new PC just might be an issue for you; ditto for paying a store \$100 to transfer data. As for the lack of MS support, this is not a real issue for those of us who have run XP for 10+ years. It is the transfer of programs that is the sticking point. But if you stay with me to the end of this article, I promise you a surprise and a positive outcome.

If you are a lite computer user who has a handful of programs like an office suite, an email client, a photo organizer/editor and a couple games, you likely have all the original program disks (diskettes?) and license IDs. You can afford to wipe your HD and have them reinstalled along with the Win 7 OS. But what if you have 50 programs installed or more like 150? Most are so old they would not install and work under Win 7, even if you could find the original CD. What about all those programs that you downloaded from the Internet—a common sales method today. Can you find the original download and ID? Do you really want to go through all the upgrades again that were installed on all these old programs?

But I hear you saying, 'you don't have to reformat the HD to install Win 7'. With Vista I agree. With XP it is different. MS originally said their upgrade path worked only from the previous OS, viz., Vista. Numerous pundits claimed you could get to Win 7 from XP (and even on a new computer) with the upgrade version, but a reformat was USUALLY involved. (Unsaid so far is the 'serious' cost of a Win 7 OS, and even the big difference in cost between the new OS software and the upgrade software). My latest understanding of the 'official' process is that MS has agreed that virtually any previous OS will qualify one to use the

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

upgrade software version. But to repeat my initial problem with any upgrade, a reformat and subsequent loss of programs will be involved.

So on with the show. Your old PC with XP MUST have at least 2 G of RAM for Win 7 to work. RAM is cheap so this may not be an issue. (My DELL PC has proprietary RAM, so the cost of RAM upgrade is more than the price of a new PC.) I acquired a 'Windows 7 Home Premium Family Pack' which allows the upgrading of 3 PCs for \$150. This special deal from MS seems to come and go every few months. I downloaded and ran the Windows Advisor to find out which software and which peripherals might not work with Win 7. Then I procrastinated. I reread all the how-to articles. I talked to a few experts about the reformat issue. Their answers seem to be 'depends.'

I identified one of my older PCs that I had the least to lose and hit the Upgrade choice. It was a no go. So then I chose the Custom choice, figuring it would reformat my system drive. But here is where the surprise occurred. I was presented with a choice of which HD to reformat: C: (my system drive that contained the Win XP OS) or D: (my slave drive that was nearly empty). So I chose D: and the upgrade took off. It took only 15-20 minutes, and it asked me to make a few, simple personal choices. But what would happen when I rebooted the PC? The C: still had my Win XP OS. Would my machine see only the old Win XP OS?

Darn if it didn't present me with a dual boot choice: Win 7 or 'an earlier OS'; the Win 7 was highlighted as the default choice. I was in hog heaven. I now had a new OS, but I retained the old programs and the Win XP OS. So the moral of the story is: You can have your cake and eat it.

Tech Tip: How to Recover Data from a Dead Hard Drive

By Bryan Lambert, Geeks.com, www.geeks.com

One of the most dreadful feelings that you can have is having a pc computer or laptop die that hasn't been backed up recently; especially if you have valuable pictures, music, videos, documents or other files on it.

In this Tech Tip we'll take a look at how to recover your valuable pictures from a dead computer.

Where to start

Computers are complex machines and when they work right, they are fun to use – but when something goes drastically wrong, it can feel as if your world crashed down around you. If your hard drive is still in working order, there is a very good chance that you'll be able to recover your pictures, music, videos and valuable documents (and other data) simply with another computer; a specialized cable, a screwdriver, and a little time.

To start off, your best bet is to get a specialized USB cable that can plug directly into your hard drive that you'll recover from the dead computer. There are several types, and I'd recommend getting one that can handle both PATA (IDE) and SATA hard drives (the two most common used in consumer computers) as well as 2.5" (laptop) and 3.5" (desktop) hard drives (Geeks.com sells several that run in the \$13-16 range). You can also use a hard drive dock or external drive cases as well - but personally I find the specialized USB cable to be the easiest and most flexible option.

Next, remove the hard drive from the dead computer. On desktops it is usually held in with four Philips screwdrivers and on laptops it is usually under an access panel on the bottom of the computer. Remove any cables and caddies that the drive may have – all you need is the bare drive. Then plug in the USB cable into the hard drive (and a power cable if it is a desktop drive – also provided with the USB cable kit) and then plug the other end of the USB cable into a working computer. The computer will then set up the

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

drive as an external storage device and voilà! you'll now have access to the files on that drive (provided that the drive is not encrypted or using some type of security feature).

Where to look

OK, so the drive is now plugged into your computer and seen as an external drive, now what? You have several options. **One option is to simply look for the files on the drive from the dead computer that you plugged into the USB port and copy them onto the working computer. This is my preferred method personally.** I like to "brute force" my way through the drive with Windows Explorer (or a similar file browsing tool) and manually copy/paste the data from one computer to the other. Another option is to follow a Windows dialog box (that usually pops up when you plug in an external drive) and have it help you copy your data from one computer to the other. If you are manually choosing to "brute force it" personal data is usually stored by default in the computers operating systems "home directory" for users.

Common Locations

for home directories (*where <root> takes the place of the drive letter*):

1. **Microsoft Windows 95-Me** *<root>\My Documents*
2. **Microsoft Windows 2000/XP/2003** *<root>\Documents and Settings\<>username>*
3. **Microsoft Windows Vista / Windows 7** *<root>\Users\<>username>*

Other "What ifs"

What if the files on the drives are erased? If they are, you can use a free recovery program such as Piriform's Recuva to look for and (hopefully) restore the files. This simple, easy-to-use tool is terrific for recovering pictures from a camera's memory card that have accidentally been erased as well!

What if the hard drive is the reason that the computer died (actual hardware failure)? If the hard drive is the part that caused the computer failure, then you may be out of luck. Yes, there are specialty recovery services that will pull apart the drive's data platters and attempt to recover data (and they are usually successful - such services were used, for example, to recover data from the hard drives that were used on computers from the space shuttle Columbia after it broke apart in 2003) but such services are usually very expensive.

A word to the wise

Backup, backup, backup! Whether using one of the Internet based cloud services or a separate external hard drive – if you make it a habit of backing up regularly, chances are good that you'll keep the loss of such a failure to a minimum if a computer fails. Of course one of the benefits of using cloud-based backup services is that you can have access to your pictures anywhere you have Internet access.

Summing it up

A computer that dies can be a loss – but don't lose hope that your valuable pictures (and other stuff) are gone forever. With a little work, you can retrieve your data off the hard drives from a dead computer!

The Tip Corner

By Bill Sheff, Novice SIG Coordinator, Lehigh Valley Computer Group, PA
September 2011 issue, The LVCG Journal, www.lvcg.org, [nsheff \(at\) aol.com](mailto:nsheff@att.net)

Firefox Search Engine

Firefox has an add-on called CyberSearch which is similar to Google Chrome. If you have Firefox try it out. It works like the Google Chrome Bar and makes surfing a lot easier. How to download it:

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Step 1- Download and install Firefox if you don't have it (<http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/personal.html>).

Step 2- Download and install the CyberSearch add-on. Go: <https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/7931>. Click the green button that says "add to Firefox" to download the add-on.

Next, restart Firefox (close and reopen). CyberSearch is now installed, and you now have Google search capabilities.

Super boost the "Awesome Bar" with quick search results that appear while you type! This is another addition to the Firefox arsenal.

Ballooning

If you have too many programs open at the same time and you are not sure of which icon is for which program, just hover over an item and a balloon should come up telling you what the program is. Oh! You already knew that. :o)

Switching

An easy way to switch between open programs is to hit ALT+TAB. A small box will pop up with icons for all the currently open programs (even settings windows that don't display on the tool bar - like display properties for instance). Hold down ALT, then simply hit TAB until the window you're looking for is highlighted.

Notice that as you tab, the title bar information is displayed below the icons. To go backwards hold down the ALT & SHIFT key while hitting TAB.

Color Calibration in Windows 7

Okay, we are not graphic artists – well maybe some of us are – but sometimes we do work with print media or color-sensitive documents. So it might be worth a few moments to calibrate your monitor what you need on the screen, and since every monitor is a little different it's always a good idea to calibrate! Here is how:

Click Start and in the search box, type "dccw.exe" without quotes. This will bring up the Color Calibration wizard. You'll need to be prepared to use the buttons on your monitor to properly adjust stuff like brightness and contrast, but the end result in consistency in colors and shade which will benefit anyone who wants what he sees is what is printed.

Using PowerPoint to Create a Crawler Line of Text

You can use the Crawl In animation to create a ticker-like effect on your slides. This is good for having information continuously scrolling before you actually start your presentation. What info? Well, for example, your name or materials to be required, whatever. First, you create the text box with the text you need to crawl across the screen. Remember, crawls are usually a single line of text. Next you need to position the text box completely off and to the left of the slide. If you leave even a part of the text box on the slide you do not get a complete crawl to finish. It just disappears and then starts over.

For the animation in versions prior to 2007 go to Slide Show menu, Custom Animation choice. In the newer versions click the Animations tab of the Ribbon, click the Custom Animations button.

With the pane displayed select the text box then click the Add Effect button, Entrance category, More Effects choice. When the Add Entrance Effects dialog box opens choose Crawl In and click OK.

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

With that done we need to make adjustments to the settings. Click the down arrow to the right of the animation listing in the Custom Animation pane. Choose Timing from the list. When the Crawl In dialog box opens On Click? Choose With Previous? this starts the animation as soon as the slide starts.

Don't set the delay until you test it out. Some believe that about 20 seconds works well, it's readable but not overly slow.

To permit the crawl to go more than once you need to set a Repeat value. Choosing End of Slide lets the crawl continue as long as necessary. Moving over to the Effect tab of this dialog box, you'll want to change the direction to "From Right". Click OK.

Previewing your work should reveal a beautiful crawling line of text. However you may have to adjust the gap in text between run throughs. What you have to do is to create a duplicate of the text box after all the animations were set. If you only want the one statement then leave the text box as an exact duplicate, if not then change out the text for your second statement. I found that this works best when the text is about the same length.

For the new text box go back to the effect's timing options and set a delay time of 10 seconds (assuming that you have a 20 second animation).

Lastly, you need to line the text boxes up vertically, so that it looks like one continuous line of text. If you want them to crawl through at different locations then move them accordingly. That should do it.

Editing a Document Within the Print Preview Window

If you print preview a MS Word document and suddenly see a mistake, what do you do?

Close the Print Preview window, taking you back to the document where you fix the mistake and go back to the Print Preview window to double check the "look" yet again? That's what I used to do.

Is there a better way? That's why I am here. You can edit in the Print Preview window. While still in Print Preview click on the Magnifier button on the toolbar, (in Word 2007 Uncheck the Magnifier checkbox on the Ribbon). If you want a closer view of the text, be sure to zoom in prior to using the Magnifier button.

The mouse pointer in the document changes to an editing cursor instead of the magnifying glass.

Click into the document wherever you need to edit and make your changes. When you're done editing, turn on the magnifying by clicking the Magnifier button. This will return you to the usual document navigation in Print Preview.

Review: RoboForm—Program stores websites, login information

By Jim Thornton, Member, Channel Islands PCUG, CA

August 2011 issue, The Outer Edge, www.cipcug.org, Jasthorn (at) gmail.com

RoboForm is one of my favorite software programs as it helps me very quickly log into secured websites. My listings of these websites include airlines, email, financial, medical, stores, travel, etc., and I currently have more than 50 of these secured websites listed.

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

The program is very easy to use. For example, first open Internet Explorer, and then click on one of its little toolbars titled RoboForm and a list of several choices appear titled Logins, Identities, and Soft Notes. While I mentioned Internet Explorer, RoboForm also works equally as well with Firefox, Safari, Chrome, and many more browsers. Next, I click on Logins and then click again on the listed secured website that I want to enter. Next, RoboForm automatically redirects Internet Explorer to the website that I selected and when the login website appears, RoboForm automatically fills in my name and password, and I'm immediately logged into the secured website with unrestricted abilities.

Once you have the program installed, when you go to a new secured website and fill in your user name and password and click on Enter, RoboForm will automatically add the information. Including the website address, to your list of Logins.

If you need a new password, RoboForm will generate a highly secure password. On the Login list in RoboForm, the secured websites are listed alphabetically and you can easily rename any listing.

Other RoboForm features include SafeNotes, which securely stores other information of your choice. For example, some banks will frequently ask you for your wife's favorite color, your first dog's name, etc., to ensure that you are the secured party attempting to access your bank account, etc. You can securely store this information in SafeNotes.

RoboForm's options under Logins include Edit, New, and Print List. Under Identities are Edit, New, and Fill Empty Fields Only. SafeNotes includes Edit, New, Print to New, and Print Last. Numerous other choices include Fill Forms, Save Forms, Fields — Reset, Sat, and Clear, Profiles — Default, New, Date, Name, Refresh Fields, Explorer, Tools — Edit Identify, Edit Password, Edit SafeNotes, Search Fields, Taskbar Icon, Generate Password, and Sign RoboForm data, and Options — Help.

I've used RoboForm for numerous years in Windows XP, Windows Me, Windows 2000, Windows Vista, and now Windows 7. RoboForm's website is www.roboform.com, and there are three versions of RoboForm available: Desktop, Everywhere, and 2Go.

Desktop provides high security and restricts the access to RoboForm from only one computer.

Everywhere allows you to access RoboForm from numerous computers.

2Go works using a portable USB drive, so that you can take your RoboForm information and use it on many computers while traveling on business or on vacation.

RoboForm runs in numerous versions of Internet Explorer, including versions 6, 7, 8, and 9 but only on 32-bit versions and not the 64-bit versions. There is a free version of RoboForm that is limited to only 10 logins. For more than 10 logins, the Everywhere version is available for \$20 per year, and the Desktop version is \$30. The current version, which is version 6.10.2.0, was introduced earlier this year.

When you install RoboForm for the first time, you will be asked to create a master password, which protects all of your secured data in your Logins, Identities, and SafeNotes. This prevents anyone else who has access to your computer from seeing or copying this information. If you prefer, you can eliminate this protection and allow anyone to access all of your important information.

Product Review: Mikogo 4

By David Green, Treasurer, Danbury Area Computer Society, CT
August 2011 issue, DACS.doc, www.dacs.org, [dgreen \(at\) dacs.org](mailto:dgreen@dac.org)

For about a year now, I have been using Mikogo to provide screen sharing to support my monthly virtual SIG meetings. Some of you may remember that we had started using Dimdim, but had some stability problems. Mikogo 3 has proven to be rock-solid, is full featured, and is free for both private and commercial use, supporting up to 10 participants. (The paid version supports 25 participants.)

Recently I acquired a new notebook running Windows 7 64-bit, installed Mikogo 3, and ran into a conflict with the assistive technology program that I need to use - a full-blown machine lockup. I went to their website and found that the release 4 beta was available. I tried it and it resolved the conflict with my assistive utility. It even fixed the 'flicker' problem I had with version 3 when running on my XP desktop. So I upgraded to version 4 all around.

There are some enhancements in 4, as well as a change in installation. Previously the host of the conference needed to install the mikogo-host.exe and start a session. Participants would then go to the Mikogo web site and 'join a session' by providing a session number and then accepting a small download. This has changed. Participants now have a choice of downloading and installing either mikogo-host.exe (which lets them initiate sessions or become presenter for a session initiated by someone else, or download mikogo-client.exe which lets them participate as a viewer only.

The host version is under 5.3MB in size; I suggest using it and being done with it. It runs 'as is', just creating a configuration file in the same folder where it keeps your preferences.

The host only runs when you request it, it is not a resident service. A user must launch it; it does not provide un-attended remote access as is the case with say Remote Desktop or LogMeIn.

Mikogo 4 supports a 'white board' whereby the presenter or a participant may highlight, box etc. areas of the presenter's screen. This is handy for drawing attention to a portion of the screen such as when asking a question. It supports file transfer.

Anyone running the host version may become the presenter, and remote control may be given to a participant. The entire desktop may be shared, or only a specified application's window. There is a session recording feature that I have not yet tried.

There is a free audio conferencing capability, but the call-in number could be a toll call, so we use the free Skype group calling function instead. Skype to Skype calls are free, and group call supports up to 15 participants.

Problems: I have only run into one problem so far. Some participants have had a problem joining a Mikogo 4 session when they are using the on-the-fly download of version 3. According to the blog this is an intermittent problem. The easy fix is to use version 4 on all machines. Mikogo lists itself as being "cross platform" as it supports Windows and Mac. The Linux community has pointed out that lack of native Linux support means that 'cross platform' is overstated. It is unknown as to whether there will be a native Linux release, but the site says that Mikogo will run within WINE, the Windows environment that runs within Linux.

Discontinued feature: Version 3 had a feature where a presenter could permanently 'reserve' a 9-digit session ID and submit it to the participants well in advance. The problem was that people were using "simple" IDs such as 123-456-789 or 111222-333 and then complaining when "strangers" joined their

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

session. This mechanism has been discontinued. A presenter may truly reserve a session ID by scheduling a session - but it has a finite lifespan. Mikogo will not assign a scheduled ID to an ad-hoc session.

If you have need for screen sharing or provide remote support, whether for a SIG or to support family or clients, give Mikogo 4 a look. The beta version has now expired, and there is a link on the home page for the Mikogo 4 download at www.mikogo.com.

SuperTooth Buddy - Can it be too good?

By Terry Currier, President, WINNERS (Windows Users Group), CA
January 2011 Issue, the Notepad, www.windowsusers.org, [winnersug\(at\)aol.com](mailto:winnersug(at)aol.com)



The SuperTooth Buddy is a hands free Bluetooth speakerphone (bar) for your car. On the back is a strong round magnet, and it comes with a metal clip you put over your sun visor. You simply “attach” the unit to the metal clip. Pairing it to my phone was very easy. It can be paired with two mobile phones simultaneously, if both want to use it at the same time it will default to the last one paired. In fact it will remember and pair up to eight phones.

While driving you are facing the microphone so it picks up your speaking very well. In testing it my wife said I sounded very clear. The microphone is designed to absorb noise and vibrations to enhance outgoing voice quality. It has full duplex audio with echo canceling and a double noise canceller. The speaker produced good sound with plenty of volume. If your phone supports it you can also use call waiting, and voice dialing.

Voice Dialing

I tested it with a Samsung phone. It uses Bluetooth version 2.1; they say it is compatible with all Bluetooth phones, including the iPhone, Blackberry and Smart Phones (Android O.S., Windows Mobile).

You may be tempted to turn it off when not in use, but the SuperTooth Buddy has a standby charge of 40 days (1,000 hours.) Talk time is up to 20 hours. It was easy to just leave it on all the time and have it automatically reconnect with my cell phone when I got into the car. Note: it did take a couple of minutes for the reconnect, it was not instant. When the charge is low it gives a steady red light behind the multi-

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

function button. With the adapter they supply you plug it into the cigarette lighter socket and it will charge in three hours. It can also be charged from a PC via USB Cable.

I really did like the SuperTooth Buddy for its clarity,

So why did I ask can it be too good? Well the strength of the connection is actually too strong. It says it will connect up to 30 feet away from the unit, and it's true. I can have the car parked on my driveway walk in, and in the back of the house hear the phone and read the message on the phone saying Bluetooth was disconnected. That would not be so bad, but I can actually walk to the front of the house and have my cell phone reconnect to the unit on the driveway. And of course the microphone and sound functions are transferred to the SuperTooth Buddy – in the car. I have parked the car and in a straight line get about 50 feet away before it finally disconnects.

www.hypercel.com/Z004088E

Company Website: www.supertoath.net

Dial2Do www.dial2do.com

While not exclusive to SuperTooth Buddy a new service was listed on their website since I started this review. Dial2Do allows the subscriber to create reminders, send texts, listen to and send email, and access favorite 3rd party services - all while keeping your hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road. They say it will work with any phone, but have extra features on Smartphones.

When you subscribe to the service you are given a number to call. When you call a voice will ask you what you want to do. Some of the other things you can do is check your calendar, Toodledo task list, post to your blog on WordPress, weather, news, and yes you can even use Twitter. You can try a free 30-day trial of their basic service – create and listen to reminders, voice to text transcription, and Smartphone applications. The Basic will cost you \$2.49/month or \$24.99/year. With the pro version you can do all the other neat things at a cost of \$5.99/month or \$59.99/year.

Tracking the latest information on anything

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If you want to keep track of the latest news and Web postings on specific subjects, give Google Alerts a try.

I've been using the feature for some time to track three subjects I'm interested in: UFOs, Annette Funicello and Sally Field. I've been interested in UFOs since the early 1950s, a fan of Annette since the Mickey Mouse Club Days and a fan of Field since her first TV appearance as Gidget. So now you know three of my not-very-secret "secrets."

Google explains its alerts this way at <http://www.google.com/alerts>: "Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your choice of query or topic."

"Enter the topic you wish to monitor, then click preview to see the type of results you'll receive. Some handy uses of Google Alerts include:

- monitoring a developing news story
- keeping current on a competitor or industry

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

- getting the latest on a celebrity or event
- keeping tabs on your favorite sports teams.”

When you create an alert you'll be asked to choose the topic for it, the type of information you want (everything, news, blogs, videos, discussions); how often you want alerts (as-it-happens, once a day, once a week); volume (only the best results, all results); and your email address so you can get the alerts. The default choices are everything, once a day and only the best results. Consider starting with the defaults and then tweaking them if the results you get aren't what you expected.

You might also have to tweak your selected topic. My search for Annette is “Annette Funicello” (in the quotes). That limits results to items with her full name. On the other hand, my Sally Field search is just that (no quotes around the name), so I get everything with Sally and Field, which results in a few unexpected results. My UFO search results in news about unidentified flying objects, my intent, and the musical group UFO.

I haven't set up searches for computer-related items because I get several electronic newsletters that keep me informed about most of the technical subjects I'm interested in, but it's easy to establish queries for any subject you're interested in. For instance, you could use “Linux, Ubuntu,” Microsoft, “Steve Jobs,” “Bill Gates.”

Or you could try your own name or the name of your business if you wanted to know what people are saying about you or your business.

And if you're a sports fan, you might want to track everything said about your favorite team(s). You'd need to set up a separate alert for each team name.

The site lets you set up an alert and then shows sample results for it. Just for kicks, I tried my first and last name (in quotes) and got references to my Facebook page, an obituary for a John Weigle of Augusta, Ga. (I still get spam about real estate deals in Augusta), and the Weigle Music Ministries, which I had never heard of.

A search for CIPCUG showed only the CIPCUG Web site.

Not surprisingly, a search for “Los Angeles Dodgers” resulted in more hits than any of my other test searches. Topics that get lots of news coverage, such as the Dodgers, are obviously going to have more results than people or topics that are seldom in the news.

All the results have live links to whatever the alert finds.

The alerts tool isn't for everyone, but it's useful if you have any interests you want to track regularly.
