



BITS AND BYTES

The Newsletter of the Midland Computer Club

January 2009

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: January 28th

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: Howard Lewis will present this month's program: "Social Engineering" and Online Banking.

PROGRAM COORDINATORS
Contact : Co-Chairpersons
Larry Piper larryP56@chartermi.net
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The President's Corner



I'm sorry to say that Robert Hughes passed away on Monday, January 12, 2009 at age 69. Robert was a longtime member of the club and served on the club board for many years, first as vice president and during the last few years, when his health prohibited him from being so active, he served in an at-large position. Robert seemed to always have a smile on his face and a joke on his tongue. He will surely be missed in the club. We extend our sympathies to his wife, Dee.

- 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!

In **December**, we had our normal boisterous holiday pizza party with many delicious dishes provided by those in attendance. A program on technical terms followed the program where Howard Lewis tried to help define several of the more common terms that we encounter at the club meetings and in the technical press. He also provided several web sites where you can go to find the definition of most of the terms in use today.

Upcoming Activities

January will again have Howard Lewis doing a two-part presentation on "Social Engineering" and "Online Banking." The two topics are related in that we frequently encounter things on the Internet that are trying to steal our personal information. And what is more personal than your online banking info? Hopefully this presentation will help

you in fighting off the predators lurking out there.

In **February** Joe Lykowski will demonstrate how to perform remote support. How many of you have a great-aunt who lives on the other side of the country (or state) and is struggling with her computer? Joe will demonstrate how you can provide her with the help necessary from the comfort of your own home. This support is provided by something called "remote access" and can be accomplished through several different methods.



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

<http://tinyurl.com/24pfba> I know it isn't Christmas any more, but you've got to watch this video on "Bailey the Unknown Reindeer!"

<http://tinyurl.com/4k2hmv> Here's a study that shows why it is a good thing to back up your computer hard disk on a regular basis. According to a study by Carnegie Mellon University, hard drives fail 15 times more frequently than was hard drive vendors estimate.

<http://tinyurl.com/6hh62o> Here is a hole in the earth's crust in Uzbekistan that has been burning for 35 years. The locals call it "The Door to Hell."

<http://www.charmingwall.com/> This is an interesting website design. Click on each of the headings and watch.

<http://southernbarbecue.com/> If you like barbecue, try some southern type recipes.

Board Meeting

The next board meeting will be 7 p.m., February 10, 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 AutoFormat to Format a Table (Microsoft Word 2007)

After you have created a table in Microsoft Word 2007 and entered the data, you realize how plain it looks. If you want to dress up your table, there are many ways to do so. You can do virtually anything in a table that you can do with text in a document: change the fonts, align the data in the cells and import graphics into a cell. You can also change the borders between the rows and columns and even shade rows, columns or individual cells as desired. Fortunately, Word offers help in changing the borders and cell shading, if you wish, through the use of **Table Styles**.

The fastest way to get a good-looking table is to let Word do the work for you. To accomplish this:

1. Select your table.
2. Click on the *Design* tab (if it is not already selected).
3. Look through the **Table Styles** section until you find a table layout that you like and click on that style.

Word will now apply that style to the table.

Windows Explorer's Hidden Menu Bar (Windows Vista)

When using Windows Vista's Windows Explorer, the menu bar has been hidden from view. This allows for more screen space to view actual file contents. To actually view the menu bar, just press the *ALT* key and the bar will temporarily appear to allow you to access the various commands. If you would like to view the menu bar all the time, follow these steps:

1. Open **Windows Explorer**.
2. Click the *Organize* menu.
3. Click the *Folder and Search Options* object.
4. Next select the *View* tab in the **Folder Options** dialog box.
5. In the list of options available, click on *Always show menus*.
6. Click *OK*.

This will permanently display the menu bar in all Windows Explorer windows.

Vista's Hidden Checkboxes

Most users can select multiple files by holding down the *CTRL* key while clicking on each individual file in Windows Explorer. If the files are consecutive files, you can use the *Shift* key to select a range of them by clicking on the first file, scrolling to the last file and holding down the *Shift* key while clicking on the last one.

The first technique can be somewhat tricky if you want to select a lot of files. However, Windows Vista has

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an undocumented feature which simplifies this process - the use of checkboxes. By using the checkboxes, you can simply click the checkbox next to each file you want to select.

To enable this feature:

1. Open **Windows Explorer** (or **Computer**).
2. Click on the *Organize* menu.
3. Chose *Folder and Search Options* and click on the *View* tab.
4. Now scroll down until you see *Use check boxes to select items* and click on it.
5. Click *OK*.

Now, whenever your mouse hovers over a file, a checkbox will appear in the left column. You can then select multiple files and perform whatever task you wish to perform on that group of files.

Music Tagging with ID3

by Mike Moore, Editor, Bowling Green Computer Users Group, KY

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MP3 is a compressed music format that can be used to fit a track of music that would normally occupy hundreds of megabytes on a Compact Disc into four or five megabytes. While some of the data is lost in this compression, it is data that cannot normally be heard in the rendering of the music file. In compressing music files this way, we can fit more music onto our music appliances, such as iPods and other MP3 players.

While the process of compressing music files is interesting for techies, it is not something we normally have to concern ourselves with, because often the music files are already in MP3 format when we acquire them. Double-click on the MP3 file and PRESTO, the song plays.

What is interesting and really required of digital music collectors is that we must keep our music organized. Since there are obviously many ways in which one can name a file of music, this is really not a very good way to keep a library organized, unless you have complete control over how a song is named.

Think of a given song. There are some obvious metrics on which the song could be organized. For starters, we have the name of the piece, the recording artist and label, the name of the band or orchestra, the genre of music, and so forth. There are dozens of less obvious metrics, such as the length of the song, when it was recorded - even who borrowed it from you and when!

These little pieces of information about a given track are known as "meta-data" or "meta-information." This set of information is literally, data about data, because the music file itself is a kind of digital data.

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The music industry has adopted a standard, known as ID3 that provides for meta-information to be included with an MP3 file. You might think of ID3 as the *wrapper* that an MP3 file comes surrounded in.

To view and edit this information, Windows supports ID3 by allowing you to right-click on an MP3 file and see & change all of the metainformation. You can also see a limited set of the metadata about a song by simply hovering your mouse over a music file. Here I have right-clicked on a piano piece called *Impromptu in B Flat*, written by Franz Schubert. Remember when you right-click to get a context menu, it's a *single* right-click, not a double click.

Build a 'Green' PC on a Budget

By Rob Limbaugh, President, Danbury Area Computer Society, CT
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intro.jpg

We're constantly bombarded by the subject of energy conservation-'green' this and 'green' that. I think that much of our problem is our 'disposable society'. On top of that it seems that most people tend to be 'green' only if it fits into their budget and lifestyle. It is a little difficult to rationalize spending \$25,000 on a solar array for a house that will take a decade to 'pay for itself'.

But, if you happen to be looking for another computer and you're willing to spend some spare time and effort, you can rescue good parts from a premature demise and save money at the same time. How? Read on!

Timing Is Everything

Around here we have 'transfer stations' to which local residents take their refuse and recyclables if they don't have curbside pickup or another service. The transfer station is somewhat of a presorting point before everything goes to a larger dump site.

What amazes me is that people seem to be willing to pay a few bucks to throw away things that could be recycled or disposed of for no cost-just a bit more effort. No matter. That works out well for me-I can shop! I need more computer equipment like I need another hole in my head. What I always seem to lack are good motherboards to match up with the spare DVD drive here and spare hard drive there. On a recent trip to the dump I hit pay dirt! Someone had dropped off a bunch of computer equipment and I got there early enough in the day to have relatively fresh dibs!

Weeding Out Junk

Knowing that 'garbage' tends to be at dumps, I look for specific traits when considering a rescue of any would-be junk. Last thing I want to do is throw it away when I get home and you can't exactly test things at a

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poweron.jpg

Wrapping It Up

Sure this isn't a screaming-fast brand new machine, but it has much potential and is still quite useful. Someday, the parts will wind up being recycled through the transfer station for good-but not today. For now, it has a new life. This board has integrated video, audio, and four SATA ports. It has IDE, USB, PCI Express, and legacy connections. It is also very quiet. This is not bad find at all! I will probably use this as the start of my network storage system.

Now if only I could get my hands on some DVD-RW drives that don't work...

Windows 7 is coming soon

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS

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If you ask 100 people their impressions of the Microsoft Vista operating system, 95 of them will tell you that Vista is no good, even if they have never seen or used it.

It is obvious that public opinion of Vista is in the mud. Microsoft made some major blunders when they introduced Vista. There were not enough drivers ready, so many printers, scanners, and other peripherals were incompatible. There was no noticeable speed increase over Windows XP. Vista requires much additional memory and more hardware, so it was often impossible to upgrade current Windows XP computers. Also, Microsoft did not woo the press as they did when they introduced Windows XP, so Vista got a lot of awful publicity. Vista is not a bad operating system, but Vista has gotten a bad name. Microsoft has lost the battle and they know it. So they are working on a new Windows operating system.

Microsoft hopes to make a clean break with previous Windows operating systems with this new version of Windows. They are especially distancing the new operating system from the "wicked" Vista operating system. This is obvious in the name they have chosen for the new OS. They are not using year names like Windows 2000. They are not using what they refer to as inspirational names, like XP or Vista. Instead, they will go back to their original numerical naming convention. There was a Windows 1, Windows 2, and Windows 3. Now there is to be a new operating system called "Windows 7".

If you have been following the versions of Windows as they have been introduced, you will find it difficult to comprehend that this next version is actually the seventh version of Windows, but Microsoft says that it is, so that is that. It's Windows 7.

More important than the name, however, is the fact that Microsoft cannot afford another misstep. They must make this operating system faster and better than Vista. Microsoft has already showed off Win-

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dows 7 at some developer's conferences and has made some announcements and promises. Windows 7 will be built on the Vista base, so peripherals that work with Vista, which now includes most printers, scanners, and other devices, will also work with Windows 7.

Windows 7 will have a smaller storage footprint and will use less memory. This will allow it to run on the new small Netbooks that are now running Windows XP or Unix because Windows Vista cannot run on their small solid state drives.

Windows 7 will boot up and shut down faster. It will have improved battery life on laptops. It is also promised to have an easier-to-use interface and to be easier to network in a home environment. Although Microsoft is officially targeting January 2010 for the launch of Windows 7, logic indicates that they will have Windows 7 ready for next year's holiday selling season.

This holiday season you'll find some great prices on computers running Microsoft Vista. If all goes well, when the holiday season rolls around in 2009, the stores will be filled with computers running the next version of Windows, Windows 7. Microsoft has made mistakes before, but I think they will do everything they possibly can to make Windows 7 a winner. So if you are looking to buy a new PC, this year will be a good time to buy, but, if you can wait, next year may be even better.

Review - magicJack

by Constance Brown, President, Canton Alliance Massillon Users Group, Ohio
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Do any of you recall the poem by Rosemary and Stephen Vincent Benet stating that no place on earth is more than 60 hours away? The authors were awed by the idea that distance was no longer measured in months but in hours. What would they think now that people have circled the world in space-ships and repaired orbiting space stations? On the other hand, my friends who boarded the plane last month found that it can take 60 hours and more to arrive at a destination in our own hemisphere -- if it happens to be Bolivia!

What does travel have to do with computers? Most trips begin with a call to a travel agent or visiting a travel web site to check prices and availability of flights. Then a flight is booked and paid online either by the purchaser or an agent. An e-ticket is sent to the traveler who then checks in via a computer terminal at the airport. Computerized controls are used to guide the plane.

Computers, computers everywhere. Great when they work. Annoying when they don't! They are here to stay and will be performing more and more of our communications. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could travel internationally and communicate with folk back home without paying those ridiculous international calling fees! How about staying in touch with friends who do not live in the USA? Guess what! You CAN!!

Several of us in CAMUG have phone service using VOIP (voice over Internet Protocol). Last week I ordered something immediately after hearing about it. I have been eagerly awaiting the opportunity to test it and now I can hardly wait to share it. Perhaps some of you have seen the ads for the magicJack. What is it? Well, let me quote from PC Magazine online: "So simple it's almost perfect, the magicJack is the best home voice-over-IP gadget I've seen to date. Excellent call quality, a workable

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set of calling features, and an amazing price make this little box the VoIP wonder to beat.”



Yes, in two minutes a little USB device about 2 inches by 1 inch by 5/8 inches that I plugged into the powered hub that I run through my USB port was giving me the capability of placing my calls via the Internet. I called Canada and Colorado, spending about 1/12 hours on the phone.

It worked well except when I looked up information on the internet at the same time.

I talked to customer service and they said I can connect to the powered hub that runs directly to my router. I will have to restart the modem, most likely. That means that I don't have to have the computer turned on to make calls, just like my current VoIP service. This is great.

What do I like about the magicJack?

- The price. The gadget is \$40, and that includes one year of service! The renewal service price is \$20! Not \$200. Just \$20. In fact, we paid \$60 for five years!
- The price. Calls are free to US & Canada and reasonable to other parts of the world. Bolivia ranges from 12-14 cents. Guatemala was a little less. I didn't check farther.
- The price. Register your magicJack with a US phone number and travel anywhere in the world. Place calls back to the US or Canada and the call is free! Purchase a magicJack and register it with a number in the USA, send it to your friends elsewhere in the world, and they can call to any place in the US or Canada for free -- almost. Remember, you receive one year of service with the device.
- Convenience. You can use the magicJack with any computer, not just the one you registered.
- Convenience. The magicJack is so small that it will travel extremely easily.
- Convenience. You can use the magicJack to place calls over Wi-Fi, cable, or DSL. Even light high speed is fine as it requires only 80 kbps of bandwidth.
- Services. You get all of them: voicemail delivered to you via email and also available by calling your number and entering your pass code, conference calling, 3-way calling, caller ID, do not disturb - have I forgotten anything?

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- Quality. The quality compares with other VoIP services. The calls pass over a private network.
- Customer Service. Customer service was good, but busy. The online chat took a little time as the service person moved between customers. But it was good. He didn't have time to tell me about the Outlook add-on, so I am still waiting to discover what that is. Customer service apparently is improving, based on evaluations I read.

The US News and World Report had an interesting article online dated September 27 about the magicJack. Here is a part of it.

"The colorful and wealthy Borislow, who also raises, races, and wagers on racehorses, has launched magicJack fast out of the gate. The startup has sold more than 400,000 devices just six months after its official unveiling. It's selling about 7,000 a day, the company says, adding twice as many net new accounts over the period as Vonage, an Internet phoning pioneer. MagicJack's appeal is not only the price, which falls to just \$20 for a second year of calls, but sound quality that's consistently good. And it's flat simple to install and use."

Who is the inventor behind the magicJack? Dan Borislow. Here is information about him taken directly from the magicJack web site.

- Dan Borislow is the founder of YMAX Communications Corporation, a modern phone company with the largest competitive local exchange carrier (CLEC) network in the U.S, and inventor of the magicJack™.
- Borislow has been in the telecommunications industry for over twenty years and is recognized in the industry for pioneering the development of breakthrough technologies. He previously held the position of CEO and founder of publicly-held Tel-Save, Inc. At Tel-Save, Borislow revolutionized low-cost long-distance for more than four million America Online (AOL) customers. While with Tel-Save, he saved customers over 40% on their phone bills and also received the prestigious J.D. Power and Associates Award for Customer Satisfaction. After a brief attempt at retirement, Borislow returned to the telecom industry and invented the magicJack. By eliminating the expense of local and long distance phone charges - and saving the average customer around \$1000 a year - magicJack is positioned to be the fastest growing telecom company in the world; Borislow likes to call it .Telecom Revolution Part II..
- Borislow received his Bachelor of Arts degree and honorary doctorate degrees from Widener University. He is an avid soccer player, dedicated deep sea fisherman, enjoys watching sports and has a Thoroughbred Horse Breeding Business...

Review - Roxio Creator 2009

By John Roy, President, TPCUG (The PC Users Group of CT), CT
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Roxio, a division and brand of Sonic Solutions, continues as the premiere must have CD/DVD burning suite. This product is a collection of key applications bundled into an attractive launching interface. Key applications provided are CD/DVD burning tools, Audio, Photo, and Video tools, and more. The Roxio suite provides support applications necessary to effectively use your computer just like Microsoft Office suite provides key office software.

When I reviewed Easy Media Creator Version 10 earlier this year I was impressed with how clean the interface was for the multitude of applications within the suite. The latest version further simplifies the application selection process with the use of pleasing colors and descriptive icons. It also provides a direct link to online tutorials and other information. The only distraction from the clean interface is the "Learn More" window that connects to the Roxio website to promote the sale of additional products. The application interface Home Page presents the core tasks for most users. The tasks include burning and labeling discs, ripping audio, copy and converting DVD video and backing up files. Selecting one of the primary applications will quickly open the application and you are ready to start. There was some initial confusion of how to return to the previous page because the new page did not have a cancel button. If you closed the page with the standard "x" selection it would close the whole product. After a short examination I realized that the left set of icons were still available to select and return to home or another application. Although further review disclosed inconsistencies in returning to the home page depending upon which application you opened. So some applications you must close using the "x" and others if you use the "x" you will close everything down and have to reopen the whole product. This area needs better consistency.

When you select an application group using the left icons (Data-copy, Video- Movies, Music-Audio, Photo, and Online) a clean screen opens up with sub grouping to further home in on your desired application. The Data-Copy screen provides three groupings of Create, Copy, and Backup. Each grouping contains subtasks to further refine your application selection. There are nine defined tasks associated with Data-Copy. The long time favorite Roxio Creator Classic is now disguised as "Burn Data Disc - Advanced" but it still opens the original application and still reflects the original name. It appears that this popular tool is still the same with a different entry skin. The application was always sound so the fact that it is still there in its original attire is not a problem other than the interface name.

The Video-Movies group, Music-Audio group, and Photo group all contain four subgroups (Import, Edit, Create, Enjoy) with eleven to sixteen subtasks each. The names are very generic which in my opinion keeps concepts familiar. Executing a generic name launches a familiar Roxio application.

In addition to the icon selections there are three pull down windows, File, Tools, and Help. The file and help selections are pretty standard. The Tools pull down provides a couple of ease of access clicks like ejecting and closing the drive tray, getting disc information and some alternate ways to jump to a few selected applications. There is an extensive Options choice to configure user defaults.

The latest Roxio Creator 2009 version does provide some new tools like the ability to capture High Definition (HD) video and burn it onto standard DVDs. There is now an Audiobook Creator that makes it easy to convert and enjoy books on iTunes, iPod, iPhone or other portable players. There is an audio beatmatching tool to produce studio like fades and mixes. I found the new SyncIt desktop gadget tool cool but short on instructions. It converts and sends digital media directly to your portable device. Since I don't own a portable device I couldn't appreciate its value. You can now share photos and slideshows on line including uploading directly to YouTube.

I tested this version of Roxio on my new Vista 64bit system with an AMD Quad-Core processor and 5 GB of memory. I didn't experience any installation problems but it was disconcerting that some applica-

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tions did not load crisp and fast as expected even though my system is clean and devoid of startup programs.

Okay, what is the bottom line on this latest version? If you don't already own a Roxio suite then I highly recommend you give serious consideration to purchasing this since it will serve as a primary computer application suite. If you presently own Easy Media Creator version 9 or 10 and it meets your immediate requirements then you can afford to wait if the new features and enhancements are not important to you.

Don't forget to check on the web
for upcoming computer trade shows
within a few hours of home:

<http://www.gibraltarttrade.com/Shows/shComp.html>

Fivestarshows.com

*See YOU at the next computer club meeting,
Wednesday, January 28th!*