The Cursor

Monthly Newsletter of the
Washington Area Computer User Group

Paul Howard declares victory over a dirty PC

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Presidential Bits
by Geof Goodrum
President WACUG, president(at)wacug.org

This is the final issue of ***The Cursor*** and my final column as President of WAC. And, after twenty-nine years, the May 19th meeting will be the last under the WAC banner. Beginning in June, WACUG and NCTCUG members will be members of the Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society (PATACS).

For more information about the WACUG/NCTCUG merger status, including the transition of memberships and composition of the initial PATACS Board of Directors, see Paul Howard's article in this issue. And, given this milestone in WAC's history, I dug into my e-mail and included a founding member's recollections on WAC's origins in this issue.

As Editor of ***The Cursor***, I am working with my NCTCUG counterpart, Blair Jones, to design a newsletter for PATACS. Blair has already delivered an issue for June under the PATACS name with the NCTCUG Journal newsletter layout, and I expect to make some layout changes in time for the July issue. As Blair and I alternate editorship, it may take a few issues to establish a final layout. Blair and I are also conferring on a new name for the newsletter, which should be settled in time for the July issue.

Guest presenters Cherie Lejuenne and Ralph Sklarew gave the April main presentation about Tablet computers. Ralph stated that tablets are the "gateway drug" for the Internet, and cited a projection that tablets, which are easier to use, will surpass PCs in two to three years. Tablets come in many sizes and weights with costs as low as $109, but while there are several operating system choices, it is "all about the apps." Cherie noted that there were more than fifty applications added online every day. She also ran through a demo of social media applications including Twitter, which she said was the easiest way to trend news in real time, and the "online pinboard" Pinterest.com. Cherie recommended the HootSuite app (http://hootsuite.com/) for Twitter management. Ralph noted that most tablets support external

Useful Bits & Pieces
by Lorrin R. Garson
Washington Area Computer User Group

Microsoft Security Bulletins

As most people know, Microsoft schedules releases (patches) for their software on the second Tuesday of each month, which is widely known as "Patch Tuesday." But did you know you can get information ahead of time to see what will be fixed? See Microsoft Security Bulletins (http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/security/bulletin). This Web site also makes available a wide variety of additional useful information.

- See http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/security/advisory for Microsoft Security Advisories.

- See http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/security/dd252948 for various types of Microsoft Security Notifications via e-mail, RSS feeds or the Web.

- See http://www.us-cert.gov/ and http://www.us-cert.gov/current/ for additional security information from US-Cert (United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team).

What's IPv6?

You are familiar with IPv4 or at least numbers like 255.255.16.10, which are known as "IP Addresses" and are used in directing Internet traffic. Note that these numbers consist of four sets of 3 digits ranging from zero to 255 each for a total of 32 bits, which gives a total of 4,294,967,296 (or 232) unique addresses. So what, you're thinking while stifling a yawn? Well, there are now so many devices communicating on the Internet we've run out of numbers. This is a serious problem! IPv6 ("Internet Protocol version 6") is the solution. IPv6 uses 128 bits rather than 32 bits, which allows for 340,280,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 (or 3.4028... x 1038) IP addresses. That should last for awhile. What will an IPv6 address look like? 255.254.253.252.251.250.249.248.247.246.245.244.243.242.241.240 is an example. The transition from IPv4 to IPv6 should be transparent but you will hear more about this in the months to come. For more information,

- See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IPv6.

- See http://www.verisigninc.com/en_US/why-verisign/innovation-initiatives/ipv6/index.xhtml?cmp=SEMG09:04.

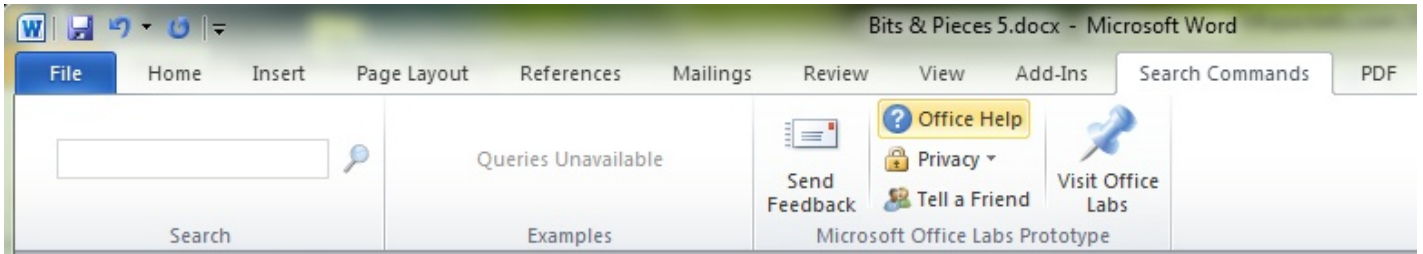## Locating Functions in Microsoft Office

The "Ribbon" has generally been well accepted in recent versions of Microsoft Office. However, you can sometimes spend a lot of time looking for a particular feature. Microsoft has made available "Search Commands" that can be very helpful in locating features that aren't obvious in the "Ribbon." See http://www.microsoft.com/download/en/details.aspx?id=28559 to download "Search Commands." After installing "Search Commands" you will see a "Search Commands" tab in the "Ribbon" for the 2007 and 2010 editions of Word, Excel and PowerPoint; see below.

Be aware that "Search Commands" is experimental and something might run amok. You can remove it using the normal uninstall procedure, i.e., Start → Control Panel → Programs and Features → [uninstall] Microsoft Office Labs Search Command. See http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/office-labs for more information about Microsoft Office Labs.

Google's Self-Driving Car

Since 2010 Google has been developing systems for self-driving cars. Imagine driving to work or the mall while reading the morning newspaper (on your iPad, Nook or Kindle, of course). This capability isn't here yet, but the potential for self-driving vehicles is fascinating. Think disruptive technology... imagine all those trucks and taxies on the road with no drivers! Considering that in the U.K. laws were passed that horseless carriages had to be preceded by a man walking ahead with a red flag, governments will likely enact all kinds of similar legislation. Lawsuits, hackers—who needs a driver's license? See the blind man drive at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cdgQpa1pUUE.

End of Support for XP and Office 2003

If you still use Windows XP and/or Office 2003, don't panic, but you should plan ahead. Microsoft will stop supporting these products on April 8, 2014. Without support computers running this software will become increasingly insecure, vulnerable to all sorts of malware, hacking, etc. If you are still using XP or Office 2003 your hardware is probably 5+ years old, so it will be time to upgrade to new hardware and software. By the way, if you don't have Service Pack 3 for XP, you don't have support from Microsoft now. Support for XP SP2 ended on July 13, 2010. See http://windowsteamblog.com/windows/b/business/archive/2012/04/09/upgrade-today-two-year-countdown-to-end-of-support-for-windows-xp-and-office-2003.aspx.

Bluetooth wireless keyboards, and there are many productivity apps. On the other hand, Cherie had problems getting her Apple® iPad®2 to work with her four year old printer, and ended up buying an Apple AirPrinter™. Cherie said that she got a limited 3G wireless plan for e-mail on her iPad because of dropout problems with WiFi; Gabe Goldberg warned about bandwidth limits on wireless plans—"unlimited" cellular wireless plans are no longer unlimited and could easily be exceeded streaming movies or video, so these applications are better suited for a WiFi network connection.

Using a "Spring Cleaning" theme, Paul Howard invited everyone outside for a Learn 30 demo on cleaning dust and grime from PCs with a small vacuum cleaner, and using specially formulated cleaners for wiping LCD monitors (household glass cleaners may damage the surface). I demonstrated the CyberClean product (http://www.cyberclean.tv/), which is a putty-like compound that disinfects surfaces, encapsulates and removes dirt and particles when pressed onto keyboards, smartphones, and other devices. It is reusable and can be stored in its sealed container until it darkens with dirt. Still, I find that a paper towel dampened with rubbing (isopropyl) alcohol is more effective at removing the worst grime from old keyboards, but sometimes it is easier to replace inexpensive keyboards. I also highly recommend the use of microfiber cloths to wipe away surface dust—I found these at Staples for one dollar each.

Tom Gutnick will be our guest presenter for the May meeting on the topic of "What Makes the Web Work?" and Bill Walsh will host the Learn 30 tutorial about Microsoft PowerPoint Presenter View. More detail is in the meeting announcement below.

See you there!

What Makes the Web Work?
Presented by Tom Gutnick

The World Wide Web is a modern marvel, bringing infinite information, entertainment, interaction, communication, and shopping (along with much else), with the click of a mouse. But what makes it work? How does a Web browser (Firefox, Chrome, Internet Explorer, etc.) fetch information and communicate with the Web? What does a Web server actually do? This presentation will "lift the hood" on the information engine that we all use daily to help us use it better, faster, and safer.

Speaker: Tom Gutnick, the owner of Sunny Banana IT Consulting, has decades of experience in many areas of information technology, including information security, enterprise architecture, Web site design, and software development. His clients have ranged from Fortune 500 corporations to small businesses and nonprofit organizations. He has taught everything from junior high science as a Peace Corps volunteer to high-level computer seminars for corporate audiences. In addition to personal technology classes for Arlington Adult Education, he teaches information systems classes at Northern Virginia Community College. He built his first web site in 1994, before there were any classes or books on the subject.

Sunny Banana IT Consulting helps small businesses and individuals who are struggling with the complexities of technology and don't have their own IT departments. With in-depth knowledge and experience, Sunny Banana helps clients harness the right technology for their business, with patient and jargon-free consultation and training customized to their needs.

PowerPoint Presenter View
Learn 30 by Bill Walsh

Find out the secrets to this techniques for viewing timing information and detailed notes about your individual Microsoft PowerPoint slides, while your audience sees just key points and graphics.

Merger Status Report
by Paul Howard
Treasurer WACUG and NCTCUG, Director2(at)wacug.org

On May 2nd, changes to NCTCUG's governing documents, consolidating Constitution and Bylaws into a single Bylaws document was approved by a favorable vote of 33 to 1 opposed. Merger activities continue with board meetings, as we change NCTCUG's name to the Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society, and merge our partner organization, the Washington Area Computer User Group, into PATACS. We will have between 100 and 110 members in the merged organization—we've seen an uptick in membership in the predecessor groups over the past few months.
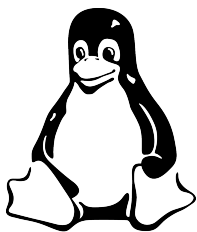
Our newsletter will be published 12 times per year, expanding from its current 8 issue schedule, and continuing as a 16 page magazine. The newsletter will be available as both a print and electronic (PDF file) publication. All members will receive a one month bonus membership extension, with those belonging to both WACUG and NCTCUG receiving two month extensions, as well as having their remaining membership months in each group added together to arrive at a new expiration date. An additional membership adjustment will apply to WACUG members who paid a newsletter print premium fee.

Our meeting schedules will continue as today with 1st and 4th Wednesday evening meetings in Arlington (subject to Carlin Hall availability) and 3rd Saturday afternoon meetings in Fairfax. A new website, PATACS.ORG, is under construction, and will be introduced soon. We have filings to make with the Virginia State Corporation Commission, and US Internal Revenue Service. Insurance coverage will need to be revised. PATACS will adopt a standard set of policies and practices for handling membership issues and our financial operations.

Officers of PATACS will be: Jim Rhodes, President; Ron Schmidt, 1st VP; Mel Mikosinski, 2nd VP; Bill Walsh, Secretary; Paul Howard, Treasurer. Directors: Jorn Dakin; Sy Fishbein; Walt Fraser; Roger Fujii; Gabe Goldberg; Mel Goldfarb; Geof Goodrum; Neal Grotenstein; Bob Rott; Nick Wenri.

Linux and Open Source News
by Geof Goodrum
linux@wacug.org

Featured Linux Software of the Month: May 2012

The software described below can be downloaded at the links provided or copied onto a USB flash drive at the WAC meeting. However, please check the online package management tool included with your GNU/Linux distribution first, as installation is often just a click away.

LinkChecker – v7.8. http://linkchecker.sourceforge.net/. Free GNU General Public License source code and Debian package by Bastian Kleineidam. With LinkChecker, you can check HTML documents and Web sites for broken links. It features recursion, robots.txt exclusion protocol support, HTTP proxy support, i18n support, multithreading, regular expression filtering rules for links, and user/password checking for authorized pages. Output can be colored or normal text, HTML, SQL, CSV, or a sitemap graph in DOT, GML, or XML format. Supported link types are HTTP/1.1 and 1.0, HTTPS, FTP, mailto:, news:, nntp:, Telnet, and local files.
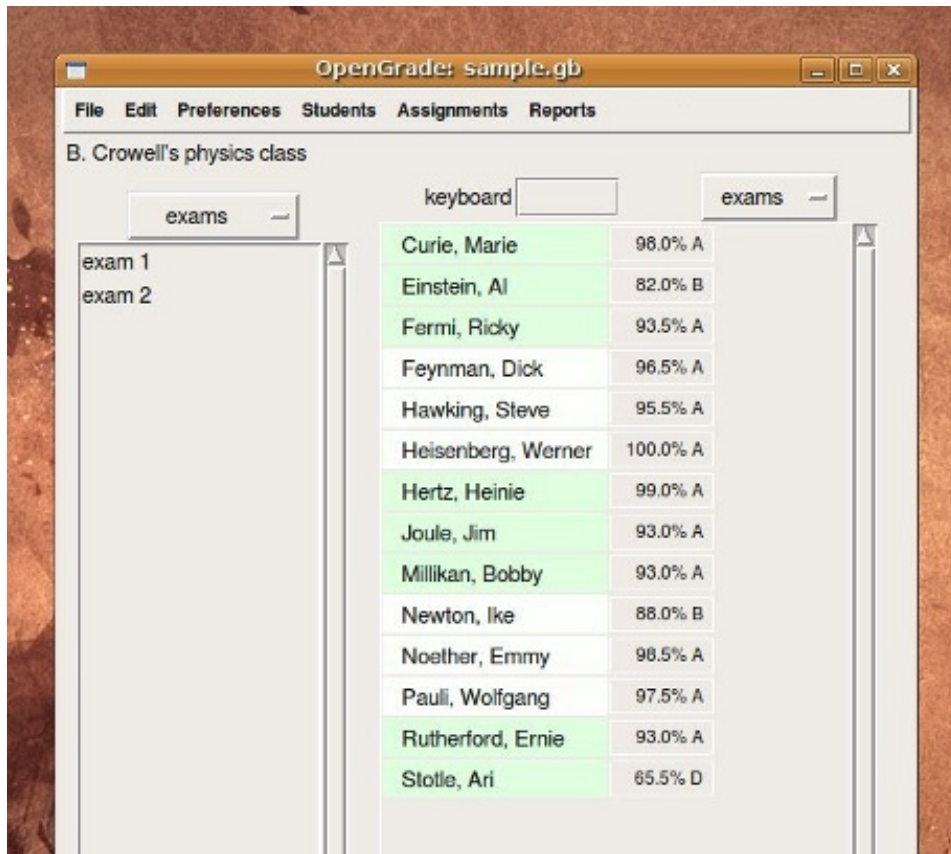
OpenGrade – v3.1.15. http://www.lightandmatter.com/ogr/ogr.html. Free GNU General Public License Perl code by Benjamin Crowell. OpenGrade is open-source software for teachers to keep track of grades. It runs on Linux, as well as FreeBSD, Microsoft Windows and MacOS X. Features include: online grade reports; weighted grading or straight points; drop and reinstate students without losing grades; extra credit, grades that don't count, and dropping N lowest grades; digital watermarks to detect tampering; marking periods; attendance; export to spreadsheet and other formats; reconcile inconsistent versions of a file; auto-save and automatic backups; undo; scripting.

PowerTOP – v2.0. https://01.org/powertop/. Free GNU General Public License source code and executable by the Intel Open Source Technology Center. PowerTOP is tool that detects which Linux programs and kernel tunables are resulting in the largest power consumption and use of battery time. By fixing (or closing) these applications or processes, you can immediately see the power savings in the tool. You'll also see the estimated time left for battery power if you are running a laptop.

Stendhal – v1.0. http://stendhalgame.org/. Free GNU General Public License Java executable and source code by The Arianne Project. Stendhal is a fun friendly and free multiplayer online adventure game. Start playing, get hooked... Get the source code, and add your own ideas.

Top: OpenGrade   Bottom: A multiplayer wedding in Stendhal

Stendhal has a huge and rich world. You can explore cities, forest, mountains, mines, plains, caves and dungeons. You could meet over 250 NPCs; many will give you tasks and quests for valuable experience, shiny gold, but mainly a warm fuzzy feeling. If you just want to fight that helps too - the cities could get overrun by monsters without you!

Your character will develop and grow and with each new level up, become stronger and better. With the money you acquire you can buy new items and improve your armor and weapons, trade with friends, or look for what other players are giving away in the 'community chest'.

Stendhal runs on Windows, Mac and Linux, written using Java 1.5 and the Java2D environment.

Kernel Source – v3.3.6. http://www.kernel.org/. Free GNU General Public License source code for all platforms by the Linux community.

Adding Disk Space to Windows 7

by Dick Maybach
March 2012 issue, BUG Bytes, Brookdale Computer Users' Group, NJ
www.bcug.com
n2nd (at) charter.net

When buying a new PC, it's usually wise to equip it with the largest possible hard disk.

Despite this, it's not uncommon to find that eventually it becomes uncomfortably full, leaving you with four options:

1. save all your user data on an external disk, replace the system disk with a larger one, install Windows and all your applications from scratch, and restore your user data from the external disk,

2. make an image of the current disk on an external drive, replace the current hard disk, and restore the image to it,

3. add a hard disk and move some data folders to it, or

4. enable dynamic disk management, which makes multiple disks appear as one, thus increasing the available space.

If your Windows 7 installation is corrupted by file system errors or malware, you must use option 1. If your system is working well, use option 2 (using the Windows 7 Backup and Restore tool), which is substantially easier and faster than 1. If your current system is working well, option 3 looks attractive, but there are significant issues, which I discuss below. I don't have the resources to test option 4, and I've learned from sad experience not to write about things I haven't done. If you are interested in dynamic disk management, see a good book, such as Window 7 In Depth by Cowart and Knittel. However, this approach appears to be complex enough to make it useful only in a professionally-staffed computer center. I don't recommend it for home users.

Option 3, add a second hard disk and move some of the data folders from our home folder to it, looks attractive. Here, some data will reside on a different drive, call it D:, and unfortunately, some programs, for example iTunes, cannot access data on it. You can edit iTunes' preferences to declare that, iTunes Media, the folder that holds its music, resides on D:, but iTunes apparently doesn't look outside your home folder. There are probably other applications with similar flaws.
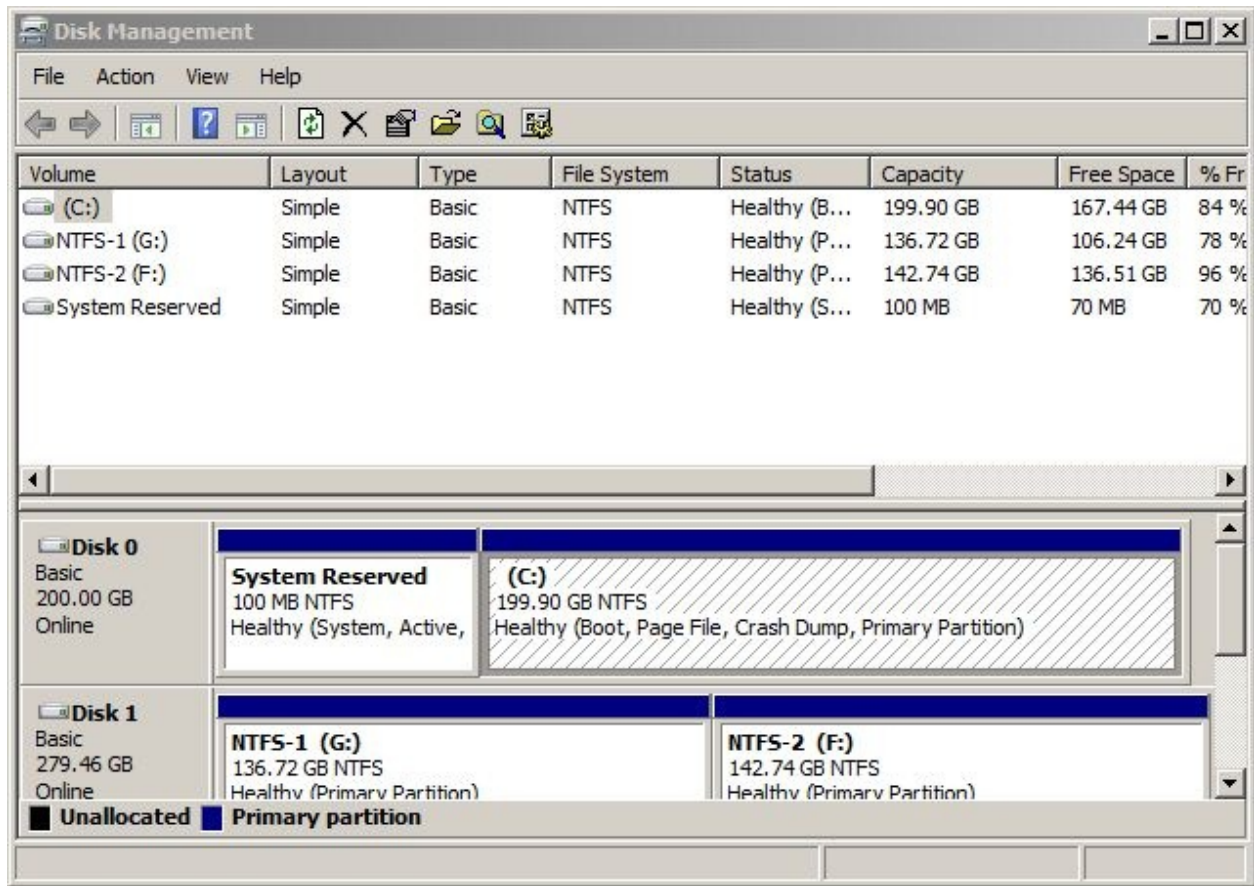
A procedure called grafting appears to offer a solution. It maps all the files on an auxiliary disk into a folder in your home folder, and any files you later add to that folder are stored on the grafted disk. The basic procedure is as follows:

• copy all the files in the selected folder to the auxiliary disk;

• delete the selected folder on the main disk;

• and graft the auxiliary disk to a folder on main disk.

This indeed works on Windows 7, and after I did it, iTunes was able to find its files on the auxiliary disk, but operations were so flaky (see below) that I wouldn't do this on a PC that I actually used.

If you would like to experiment (not on the PC you use for TurboTax please), here is the procedure. Log into an account with administrator privileges, and open the Disk Management tool. (The easiest way is
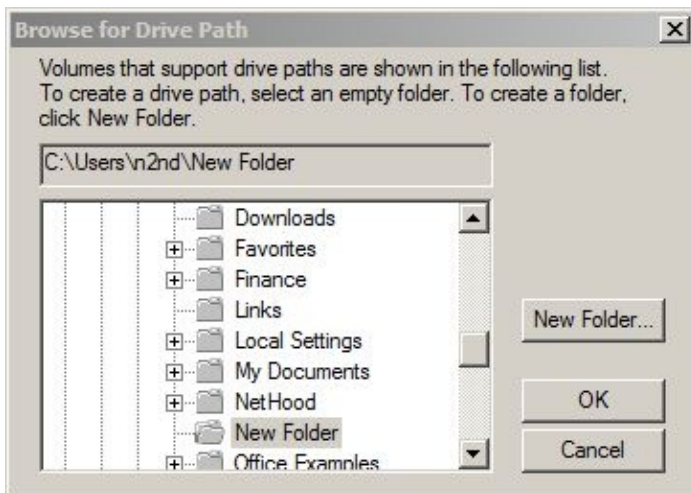
to tap the Windows key or click on Start, type "disk manage" and select Create and format hard disk partitions.) The screenshot above shows the result.

In this example, I graft NTFS-2 (F:) onto a folder in my home folder. Right-click on NTFS-2 (F:) and select Change Drive Letter and Paths ... . Click the Add ... button, select Browse ... , navigate to the folder where the original folder appeared (in my case C:\users\n2nd), click the New Folder button. The result is shown below.

Click the OK button and the Browse for Drive Paths window will close, then click OK in the Add Drive Letter or Path window, and close the Disk Management window. The disk NTFS-2 (F:) is now grafted on the folder C:\Users\n2nd\New Folder. If you had to log in as a different user to obtain administrator privileges, log out and then log back into your home account, in my case n2nd.

This seems straightforward, but there are several traps. The Disk Manager is quirky and not well documented. I needed several attempts to make the above procedure work, which isn't good for a tool that modifies your folder structure. Since you can graft an entire disk only to a single folder, if there are several large folders, you must partition the auxiliary disk and graft a separate partition to each folder. This is unfortunate, because you can't graft your entire home directory, as it contains system files that are always in use. Most disturbing is that when I finished and tried to make a full backup, including a system image, the procedure failed. Even if it had succeeded, I'm not sure I could have restored my system. Would the software try to put

everything on the original (now too small) C: disk, or would it be smart enough to restore to both C: and F: and graft F: to a folder? This isn't something about which you want to be surprised when you have to restore your files.

My conclusion after all this is that Windows 7 is designed to operate from a single disk, as are some of its applications. In this respect, it's made a step backward from XP, where you could locate your My Documents folder on any disk, and even iTunes could find its files there. You can add additional disks to a Windows 7 system, but accessing files on them will be somewhat less convenient than if everything resided in your home folder. As a result, if you run out of disk space on a Windows 7 PC, the best course is to replace the disk with a larger one and port your system to it.

Endnotes: A Look Back
by Bonnie Rorabaugh

[Ed. With the merger of WACUG and NCTCUG into the Potomac Area Technology and Computer Society (PATACS) this month, I thought it was appropriate to look back at WAC's 29-year history. In 2004, I received the following recollections from Founding Member Bonnie Rorabaugh.]

In April 1983 at the Patrick Henry Library in Vienna, and during a meeting of the old C.A.P.E. group (Capital Area Pet Enthusiasts—the people who bought component parts through a Canadian firm and built their early PET computers), the Coordinator, Bob Carpen, stood in front of the group and said, "Well folks, last Fall we were able to absorb the VIC-20 owners, but since the Commodore-64 hit the States a few months ago, there are just too many of you 64ers for this group and for this meeting location." (There was standing room only at that point.) "You'll just have to spin off into a sub-group and meet on another Saturday."

So it was that Ron Baldwin and Bonnie Rorabaugh (RB and BR—how about that?) volunteered to organize this so-called sub-group. We gathered names and addresses (compiled a list of 32) that

afternoon from those present, and then Ron and I held many sessions planning the organization of a computer club, formal vs informal, rules, etc., etc., —all those important (or not so important) details in setting up a group of computer users; then composing an initial letter which was subsequently mailed out to those original 32. The first meeting was held the third Saturday in May 1983 at the Patrick Henry Library, but more than 32 showed up—word of mouth you know.

I wrote the the first newsletter (2 pages) that went out in June to over 50 people. Our initial "fee" was $1.00 to cover printing and postage. Bonnie was using an electric typewriter and a commercial print shop at this point. Even used the typewriter to compile the "database"—fun and games—typing names, addresses, etc., and then cutting them apart to alphabetize the names and addresses—then retyping the roster in alphabetical order. A repeat every time another name was added—yikes! Even though I had bought my C-64 in June, I didn't get a printer till Fall.

By September we topped 100 members and fortunately Dick Jackson became a member that month, had a database program on his C-64, so he took over handling that chore—which thankfully included printing the mailing labels—another fun and games exercise—trying to type labels error free! I continued on as the newsletter editor and secretary. By January 1984 we had 325 on the roster. That's when we decided to set dues at $10.00 as the newsletter had increased to 8 pages and we were in the red! That is also when quite a few decided not to remain members—went down to about 200 members. At that same time we became a full-fledged computer user group with a constitution and bylaws. That's also when C.A.P.E. with its dwindling membership of Pet owners, turned into a sub-group of WAC-64. Ironic, eh what!
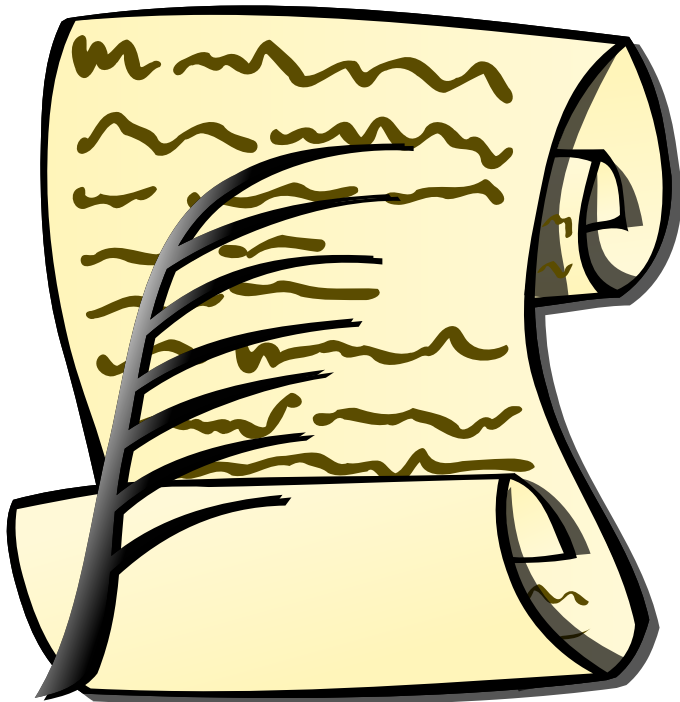
By the way, the newsletter's first name was "The Commodore Outpost"—sort of a tongue-in-cheek joke—you would have had to have been there to catch that implication. Later when we decided we needed a different name (Commodore was really making it's presence known here in the States), it was my husband, Bill, who suggested renaming the

newsletter "The Commodore Cursor"—again a play on words. At the board and also the S.I.G. meetings held in our house, Bill would overhear many of us complaining about the lack of support and/or the indifference shown by CBM (Commodore Business Machines) so we agreed that was a perfect name—it said it all. (Commodore got dropped from the masthead a few years later for obvious reasons.)

Enough of my trip down memory lane. Hope I didn't bore you, but instead maybe gave you a few chuckles over how WAC got started with two people and an electric typewriter. But I must add that organization has always been my middle name and Ron Baldwin's position in the Army (he was an LTC, Signal Corps) included organizational skills, so we really were well equipped to take on the responsibility.

Micro Center® In Store Clinics
by Neal Grotenstein
Vendor Liaison, Washington Area Computer User Group

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Micro Center stores host free events called "In Store Clinics." The clinics cover a wide range of topics. All Micro Center store locations follow the same schedule of topics.

A link for store locations is at the top center of the home page, www.microcenter.com. For those in the Washington, D.C. area, the only store in Virginia is in the Pan Am Plaza at 3089 Nutley Street, Fairfax, VA 22031, phone (703) 204-8400, and the only store in Maryland is in the Federal Plaza at 1776 E. Jefferson #203, Rockville, MD 20852, phone (301) 692-2130.

Micro Center Clinics are held on most weekends, except during holidays. The same topic is usually presented on both Saturday and Sunday. Topics may change and clinics may be cancelled without notice. Please verify the schedule with the store before leaving and register online for e-mail updates (http://www.microcenter.com/instore_clinic/sign_up.html).

Signing up in advance reserves a seat, recommended as space is limited. This can only be done at a store, either at the Tech Support or Customer Support area.

May/June 2012 Schedule

Start Time is 2pm local unless otherwise stated.

May 26 & May 27: Digital Cameras

June 2 & June 3: Wireless Networking

June 9 & June 10: Networking with Windows 7

June 16 & June 17: Smart Phones, Tablet, and eReaders

June 23 & June 24: Home Security Basics

Notes from previous clinics are available online at http://www.microcenter.com/understand_tech/index.html.

The Cursor

The WACUG Board of Directors and Volunteers

The Cursor is the official publication of the Washington Area Computer User Group (WACUG), a Virginia membership corporation. WACUG is a tax exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are gratefully received and tax deductible.

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The Editor prepares *The Cursor* with Scribus v1.4 and LibreOffice Writer v3.4 software. The typefaces are Heuristica for the banner and footers, and Gentium for heading and body text. The authors provide photographs and screen images. Public domain clip art are from openclipart.org and www.wpclipart.com.

E-mail article submission and reprint requests to cursor(at)wacug.org

PATACS Membership Application

Dues are collected on an annual basis and include PATAC's monthly newsletter print edition by US Mail and PDF download edition by Internet.

Annual Dues: $25.00

Make checks payable to "WAC." Please do not send cash by mail. Remit payment in person at the PATACS Membership table on meeting day, or by mail to:

PATACS Membership
4628 Valerie CT
Annandale, VA 22003-3940

E-mail membership questions and address changes to membership(at)patacs.org

Thank you for joining PATACS!

Name:

E-mail:

Phone No.:

Street:

City:

State: Zip Code:

Windows	MacOS	Linux/Unix
Word Processing	Spreadsheet	Database
Photography	Video	Graphics
Genealogy	Finance	Music
Programming	Publishing	Hardware
Other:		

GIMP 2.8—Freeware Alternative to Photoshop
by Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:
http://www.gimp.org
http://www.gimp.org/about/introduction.html
http://www.gimp.org/tutorials
http://registry.gimp.org/node
http://www.makeuseof.com/pages/gimp-shortcuts-pdf
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GIMP
http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/5-websites-learn-gimp-photo-editor-online
http://www.makeuseof.com/tags/gimp

There are many excellent and free image editors available that are fully capable of easily performing most simple image editing tasks. My personal favorite simple image editor is the free IrfanView (irfanview.com), which is totally capable of the common imaging editing tasks such as cropping, removing red-eye, and performing color corrections and related enhancements. Sometimes it is useful to be able to do much more than simple photo editing, such as producing creative enhancements and other artistic effects. The granddaddy of high end sophisticated image editing and enhancement software is Adobe's popular Photoshop, which just introduced a new version, Photoshop CS6, which is now available (Amazon) for $699. The previous version, the two year old Photoshop CS5, is available "marked down" to about $550. Many of us would like much of the power of Photoshop without the expense, and that is where GIMP comes in.

In early May, 2012, a stable version 2.8 of GIMP was released. According to Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GIMP), "GIMP (GNU Image Manipulation Program) is a free and open source software image retouching and editing tool and is freely available in versions tailored for most popular operating systems including Microsoft Windows, Apple Mac OS X, and Linux." According to the GIMP website (www.gimp.org), "(GIMP) is a freely distributed program for such tasks as photo retouching, image composition and image authoring. It has many capabilities. It can be used as a simple paint program, an expert quality photo retouching program, an online batch processing system, a mass production image renderer, an image format converter, etc. GIMP is expandable and extensible. It is designed to be augmented with plug-ins and extensions to do just about anything. The advanced scripting interface allows everything from the simplest task to the most complex image manipulation procedures to be easily scripted." For those interested in making animations, such as animated GIF files, GIMP has that ability when used with one of the many free plug-ins that can expand its capabilities. GIMP is available for free for most operating systems including GNU/Linux, Mac OS X, Microsoft Windows, FreeBSD, Solaris, and AmigaOS 4, with documentation and desktops in 52 languages.

Since GIMP is considered as an advanced photo and imaging program, it is not as intuitive and user friendly as the more basic programs, such as IrfanView, but with a little practice and following some of the online tutorials (www.gimp.org/tutorials), it is not difficult to master many of the features of GIMP. Not being graphically gifted, I decided to try GIMP and downloaded the new GIMP 2.8 for Windows which was a large 72.7mb download. There are also several hundred GIMP plug-ins, all of which are free, that can add additional features and enhancements to GIMP; these plug-ins are available at registry.gimp.org/node.

After I downloaded the GIMP installer for Windows (requires XP SP3 or higher), I installed the program, which other than selecting a language, had no other configuration items to select. There were no add-on toolbars, search engines, or other "revenue enhancements" offered during the install process; it was a clean install, free of any forms of advertising. After the install, which took about a minute, I opened the program which opened three windows; two of the windows are referred to as "Docks" and included a Toolbox, and a Brushes & Layers dock, with the third window being the program window. In total, there are about two dozen "docks" which provide hundreds of image editing and creation tools. On the menu bar of the main program is a

standard menu arrangement with 11 common menus such as File, Edit, Select, and View. Each of the menus offers a relevant selection of choices, which offer hundreds more image options.

As an experiment for my first use of GIMP 2.8, I opened a recent JPG image of my youngest granddaughter. The first item that I noticed was that the window has a grid displaying the image size in pixels. Just to get some experience in manipulating images in GIMP, I selected the Colors choice on the menu, and changed the hue, saturation, color balance, posterize, and other options. I then selected Colors - Auto - Color Enhance and in a few seconds the image was modified with richer colors. I selected Tools - Text and was able to select fonts and size, and was able to add text to the image. I tried several of the special effects under the Filters - Artistic menu, including Cartoon and was able to modify the image. One function that I was able to master was Red Eye Removal, found under the Filters - Enhance - Red Eye Removal menu. I selected the location of the eyes, which had a moderate case of red-eye, and GIMP changed the colors of the pupil such that the red-eye disappeared from the image. I am well aware that I am artistically challenged, but I found that GIMP has dramatically greater functionality than I have artistic ability.

Since GIMP offers much more than just photo and image editing, I decided to attempt to create my own artistic creation; I clicked on File - Create - Patterns and selected a camouflage pattern. While the colors in the patterns could be individually selected, I tried my hand at some other creations and patterns, including "Land" which created a topographical map-like pattern, and a variety of other interesting patterns. I tried File - New - Template and created CD labels, web banners of various sizes, and images in standard screen sizes and paper sizes.

GIMP is a very powerful and comprehensive image creation and editing utility, requiring that the user has creative abilities in order to use any but the most basic functions. I found the tutorials to be a tremendous help in learning how to use GIMP, as well as some of the other GIMP free tutorials and

lessons available from "Make Use Of" at www.makeuseof.com/tag/5-websites-learn-gimp-photo-editor-online and www.makeuseof.com/tags/gimp. A free "cheat sheet" with the basic GIMP commands and shortcuts can be downloaded from www.makeuseof.com/pages/gimp-shortcuts-pdf.

For those who would like to try a free sophisticated image editor and creator that can also make web banners and animated GIFs, GIMP would be an excellent choice.

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Facebook's Privacy Policy

by Constance Brown
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March 2012 issue, The Memory Map
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Did you know that Facebook's privacy policy is more than 1,300 words longer than the United States Constitution without the amendments? That Facebook had 400 million registered users in May of 2010, half of whom login daily?[1] That Facebook has 800 million users as of February 2012?[2] That people spend more than 500 billion minutes there each month? How private are your communications on Facebook?

It used to be that you set up your privacy policy when you joined Facebook and could revise it from time to time. Now Facebook "has revised its privacy policy to require users to opt out if they wish to keep information private, making most of that information public by default. Some personal data is now being shared with third-party Web sites."

If you want to protect your privacy on Facebook, you have to engage a lot of buttons and select many controls. The new privacy policy itself is 45,000 words long.[1] To enjoy privacy you will need to press 50 buttons and make 170 selections. Not exactly easy and certainly time consuming. You will have to make sure to select to show information only "to me" or "to friends." You will not want to share with "friends of friends."

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Under the Account Settings option, in the Facebook Ads tab, two options are automatically turned on to share some information with advertising networks and friends. Anyone who wants to keep this information private must uncheck the boxes in that tab.

Facebook has also added a feature, called community pages, which automatically links personal data, like hometown or university, to topic pages for that town or university. The only way to disappear from those topic pages is to delete personal data from Facebook.

Facebook does not sell user's information. They provide targeted advertisement.[2]

From Richard Allan, Facebook policy director:

Q. Do you ever think of selling any user information that's held in facebook? [sic]

A. No... Facebook has a business model. We looked at it and there are three ways you can run a service like ours.

You could charge people subscriptions. And we decided early on, we didn't want to do that and we never will. That we're not going to charge people to subscribe to the service.

The second way would be to sell data. And we looked at that and said that's not a very good business model because nobody will trust you.

So the third way is to show people advertising. So they can use the service freely, but they get ads on the page. And that's what we do. Those ads are targeted according to your age, interest, where you live... but the advertiser doesn't get the data. They get to show the ad to you.

Richard Allan is a former Liberal Democrat MP, a UK political party with a position of cultural liberalism and civil liberty. Now he works for Facebook, which is at the center of a contentious debate on what role sites of its ilk play in free expression and free speech.

[1]May 2010 New York Times

[2]Britcoinmedia

Do Not Track Plus by Abine.com

Reviewed by Larry Mobbs

President, Computer Operators of Marysville and Port Huron, MI
March 2012 issue, COMP Communicator
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A new program offered free from Abine software allows you to block websites you visit from tracking where you browse. Many sites, and Facebook.com is one of the worst, want to track every site you visit so they can match up your preferences to the items they want to display on you wall for advertisers.

In the software industry there is a movement to have the browsers include a plugin that prevents this action but as of yet it is not ordered and may never be. Browser publishers may take this on from their own volition but they will be pressured by advertisers not to.

One must remember that many sites depend on you or others visiting the links they place on their pages in order to pay for the website.

When you run Abine it puts a small icon in your browser and it displays a number with each site you visit, telling you how many attempts are made to track your visit and what type of tracking company is making the effort. They also keep a running grand total of how many blocks they have made. In the first few days of my use on one machine they blocked 1600 attempts.

Installation following the quick download is painless and there is virtually no setup. While writing this article I loaded Firefox, downloaded the software and ran it as a plugin.

This is required for each browser you use. After restarting Firefox I visited cnn.com and Donottrack Plus reported blocking 13 attempts to track my browsing on their site.

It looked like this (see right).

The program came highly recommended by Cnet.com, which is where I read about it. It can be downloaded from Abine.com.

Tablet or Laptop, a Popular Question...and More App Reviews

by Gregory West
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Unless you are a "hard core" computer gamer, you can now officially say goodbye to the laptop.

The day of computer frustration is coming to an end. The answer to pulling your hair out as you are trying to figure out why the laptop is so hard to use is called: "touch pads."

Recently, I was on a technology cruise out of Miami, where 400 plus geeks rode the seas and clicked on computers in various seminars. Wait, that's not correct. It wasn't computers these everyday people were using. No, it was touch screen devices. Mostly iPads I must admit. This too is strange as the group was 99.9% Windows users. The average age in the 400 plus crowd was, shall I say, more than 50+. Most of them said they cannot believe the difference and ease when they switched from a laptop or desktop to a tablet.

Most people on the tech cruise, who recently bought a tablet and still owned a laptop/desktop computer, said that they "hardly ever use their computer anymore." The hot topic on the ship was the app. People were constantly sharing newfound apps for their tablets.

So what makes these tablets so popular? Price, ease of use, two click downloads for software, portability, and low price is enticing laptop/desktop are just a few of the factors enticing people to switch. Here are some tips when shopping for a tablet:

Test drive several. Ask friends who own them what they suggest. Do online searches for reviews.

Decide what exactly you are going to use it for then decide on the size. I wouldn't worry too much about the hard drive size as most of what we do on computer is heading to the cloud and soon you won't need software programs for your devices.

Make sure the tablet of choice has a USB slot for thumb drives, cameras, and other such devices. ITworld.com suggests "Decide on the operating system. The three main choices these days are iOS, Android and Blackberry Tablet OS. Do a bit of research on all three and pick the one that will work the best for you."

One final word...Most people will tell you once they bought tablets their other computers became lonely. Just ask anyone who owns a tablet and they'll tell you they "hardly use" their computers anymore because the tablet is "so much easier to use and less hassle".

Forester.com researchers predict "Tablets will cannibalize netbooks and outsell them starting in 2012. In 2015, 23% of all PCs sold to consumers in the US will be tablets."

Happy hunting.

App Reviews..."AppZilla 2" won the App of the Year award.

I broke down and bought an app for my iPhone, AppZilla 2. Ninety-nine cents is a fair price to pay for an app that houses 120 apps with just one click. Apple reports this app "surpasses 2,000,000 downloads!" AppZilla 2 works on the iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. Sorry Android users!

With 120 apps in one app it will take some time to test drive them all. Some are kinda corny but still fun. As a Google user of Docs, mail and much more, I like the way this app has corralled all the Google products for ease of use. They call this the "utility" app and rightfully so as there are levels, app for flashlight mode on your phone, path finder so you never get lost, night vision, password keeper, parking meter reminder with alarm, police scanner for many cities, and many more I haven't tried but sure will. I give this app a 10+.

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Visit the free website for 50+ learning computers: http://alternatecloud.com

Free Basic Computer Help Workshops first Monday of every month 9:30 to noon: Grace United Church - Sarnia, Ontario - 519-542-1203