TOGGLE

THE MICROCOMPUTER TURN (ON)

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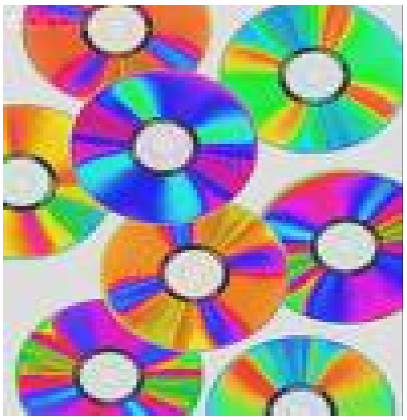

UPDATE

Communications

- In *What is this Thing Called MP3?* the author quotes one source as saying the MP3 ''*greatly reduce(s) the amount of data required to represent the audio recording and still sound like a faithful reproduction of the original uncompressed audio for most listeners. An MP3 file that is created using the setting of 128 kbits/s will result in a file that is about 11 times smaller than the CD file created from the original audio source.''* Seems to be worth a look.

- In *How to Erase All Personal Data From Your Old Iphone* the author tells you how to wipe all personal information from your IPhine before you give it away or sell it to someone else.

- *Clear Cloud's* author says: *''Clear Cloud,* ***http://clearclouddns.com/Setup/****, prevents you from being able to access known bad websites, sites that will download malicious files to your computer. Even better, ClearCloud prevents you from being able to access malicious websites that you may not even know your computer is trying to access - and it prevents potentially nasty programs from ''phoning home'' and secretly communicating between your computer and cybercriminals.''*

Operating System

- In *Video & Graphics for Windows 7* the author discusses the features of modern video displays and how you can adjust them for optimum viewing.

- In *You've Got Them Why Not Use Them?* the author notes that *''Windows has lots of useful features not included in the default settings which could have great benefits, but if one doesn't know the features are there, one can never enjoy these prospective benefits.''* He then shows you how to turn special features of your programs on or off.

Office Suite

- In *Microsoft vs. OpenOffice.org -- Office Suite Standoff* the author compares Microsoft's Office Suite with Sun Microsystems' OpenOffice comparable Office Suite.

General Interest

- In *Movie Making at Home for Fun (Not Really for Profit)* the authorsays: Movie making has become possible for anyone who has a digital camera, a reasonably capable computer, and lots and lots of time, with an emphasis on the time. ...Movie Maker and your digital camera make creating movies possible.'' Movie Maker comes with Microsoft operating systems.

- In *Free ''Cheat Sheets'' for Software and Hardware* the author discusses the value of having socalled Cheat Sheets or User Guides giving instructions on how to set up various calculations using spreadsheets.

- In *What is Hot & What is Not in Technology for 2011*the author the top five winners and top five losers for the year 2010. Take a look and see if you agree.

Hardware Notes & Tips

- In *Displays* the author takes a look at visual displays over the last century, and briefly discusses some of the developments over the years.

COMMUNICATIONS NOTES & TIPS

What is this Thing Called MP3?

by Mike Morris, Editor / President, Front Range PC Users Group (FRPCUG), Colorado
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Over the past few years, I have received numerous questions about the meaning of various terms, such as MP3, BlackBerry, etc. These questions have come from FRPCUG members, participants in the computer classes taught by FRPCUG and offered through the Fort Collins, CO Senior Center, and many others.

Those questions led to a Digital Gadgets presentation at a FRPCUG meeting with the presentation material posted on the FRPCUG web site, and to this article. Actually, to a series of articles, because it is not possible to include sufficient information in just one article.

In this article I examine one piece of computer jargon: MP3. I expect that almost everyone that has any interest in music knows that the term MP3 is closely related to music. The interesting fact about those three characters is that they are used to describe both hardware and software.

The software description applies to:

''. . . a patented digital audio encoding format . . . . It is a common audio format for consumer audio storage, as well as a de facto standard of digital audio compression for the transfer and playback of music on digital audio players.'' (***http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MP3***).

The primary advantage of the MP3 format (from the same Wikipedia article) is that it:

''. . . greatly reduce(s) the amount of data required to represent the audio recording and still sound like a faithful reproduction of the original uncompressed audio for most listeners. An MP3 file that is created using the setting of 128 kbits/s will result in a file that is about 11 times smaller than the CD file created from the original audio source.''

That data reduction is called ''lossy compression,'' which means exactly what it says . Using the MP3 format means that some audio information is lost when the music is encoded. And therein lays the primary disadvantage of the MP3 format--for some. A number of tests have been performed on MP3 music files, and that lost information is not discernable by a large majority of listeners. There are those, however, who claim that they can tell the difference between an MP3 music file and, for example, the same music on a CD (which is not compressed).

There is your trade-off:

- With MP3 you have smaller files, which give you the ability to store many more songs on your computer or other storage device. The price you pay is reduced audio quality (which you may not be able to hear).

- With uncompressed audio files, you get better sound quality, but files sizes are large. Depending on several factors, a one minute clip can take over 10 MB. Thats right; 10 MB for each minute of music (see reference at the end of this article).

There are other digital audio encoding formats available today, including several that are open source.
In fact, if you connect to <***http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_audio_codecs***>, you will find a comparison of 35 audio formats (including MP3). Some provide lossy compression, others encode music without compression. You may have heard of a few of them:

- AAC (used with Apple's iTunes)
- Ogg Vorbis
- Windows Media Audio

There are ''better'' formats available than MP3. ''Better'' in the sense that audio output quality is better even though the format uses compression. So why is MP3 the ''de facto standard''? I don't have a good answer for that question. Perhaps it was a question of availability. For an overview of digital audio players (including a variety of devices), connect to: <***a http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_audio_player***>

Whatever the reason, the MP3 format is the industry standard--at least for portable media players. Because the MP3 format is so widely used, the hardware (actually hardware and software) used to play MP3 formatted music is also identified as MP3 or perhaps as an MP3 device.

Therefore, when you say ''MP3,'' you are actually talking about a software program located on a hardware storage device of some sort that takes a digital file of music and converts it to something a human can understand (unless, of course, you are involved directly with the MP3 encoder).

There are probably hundreds of variations of portable media player devices available today . Virtually all of them will play the MP3 format. Many newer products will play several formats. Connect to (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_portable_media_players>) for a comparison of 34 media players (as of mid 2010). There are products available with a very wide range of features and in many different price ranges.

With all those choices, don't try to buy something before you do your homework. One web site that can help you sort through the choices is the CNET MP3 Player Finder at <***http:/***

/reviews.cnet.com/4247-6490_7-10.html>. You can search by price range, or by manufacturer, or among other options, by audio format.

An excellent reference that will help you understand digital audio is:

Digital Audio Essentials
Bruce Fries and Marty Fries
O'Reilly Media, Inc, 2005
ISBN 0-596-00856-2

Not only will this book help you understand digital audio and digital audio formats, but there is whole chapter that talks about recording music on CDs.

Spend a few minutes browsing through the web sites in this article. Find a copy of the Digital Audio book and browse through that. That will be time well spent because then you will be an informed consumer.

How to Erase All Personal Data From Your Old Iphone

Interested in selling or giving away your old iPhone, iPod touch, or iPad but need to know how to make sure you've erased all your personal information from the device first? Luckily Apple makes it easy to securely wipe all your data.

Although we highly suggest performing a full firmware restore and setting up your iPhone, iPod touch, or iPad as ''new'', if you're not near your computer you can still get the job done:

1. Tap the 'Settings' icon
2. Tap 'General'
3. Scroll down to the bottom and tap 'Reset'
4. Tap 'Erase All Content and Settings'

If you have a passcode setup, you'll have to verify your credentials before being asked one last time that you're positively sure you want to dispose of everything on your iPhone. The process can also take some time depending on how much music, video, apps, etc. you had stored on the iPhone, and Apple is writing over the data multiple times for security's sake.

Once it's done you're good to give away or sell your iPhone, iPod touch, or iPad without having to worry about anyone getting into something you may have left behind.

Source: ***http://www.tipb.com/2010/11/30/tip-clear-erase-userdata-iphone/***

Clear Cloud

by Terry Currier
WINNERS president

From GFI, the company that recently brought Sunbelt (VIPRE, Counterspy), ClearCloud is a free service that checks every website address your computer tries to access, whether you're browsing the internet, clicking a link in an email, or a program on your hard drive trying to communicate with servers for information or updates.

ClearCloud, ***http://clearclouddns.com/Setup/***, prevents you from being able to access known bad websites, sites that will download malicious files to your computer. Even better, ClearCloud prevents you from being able to access malicious websites that you may not even know your computer is trying to access - and it prevents potentially nasty programs from ''phoning home'' and secretly communicating between your computer and cybercriminals.

Many programs legitimately phone home to get software updates: Microsoft Windows and Adobe Reader are two common programs that will check for current updates. ClearCloud knows the websites accessed by over a million safe programs and provides free passage to these sites.

How does ClearCloud know which websites are malicious?

ClearCloud is part of the DNS network, and has access to every URL in the world. When you type the URL in your browser and click ''Go'' or ''Enter'' your browser sends the URL to ClearCloud. ClearCloud looks it up in a table, checks it against the list of bad websites, and if it passes, sends back the numeric IP address so your browser knows where to go to get the web page. All in milliseconds.

If ClearCloud discovers that it's a bad URL, it sends the IP address back to their webpage and informs you about the malicious site.

OPERATING SYSTEM NOTES & TIPS

Video & Graphics for Windows 7

by Vinny La Bash, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
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Engage anti-aliasing. Activate the anisotropic filters. Fire the vertical sync generators. Is that Han Solo shouting orders to Chewbacca in a heroic effort to fend off Darth Vader and his evil galactic empire? No, it's ''geek speak'' for language that was never meant to confuse us but often does, and anyone with a personal computer less than a few years old should know what these terms mean. Before we explain, let's talk about flat panel displays and something called ''native resolution.''

Flat panel monitors are far superior to CRT displays. With remarkable color reproduction, incredibly sharp pictures, and prices lower than a snake's hip pockets, one would be hard pressed to justify a CRT purchase. Even if you wanted a CRT, try finding one in stores these days.

Flat panel displays are designed for a fixed resolution which is commonly called the ''native resolution.'' For example, a flat panel with a native resolution of 1600 x 1200 pixels cannot display any other resolution without degrading image quality. If you force your flat panel to a different resolution, it has to scale the image by a process called interpolation which is the primary cause of lower quality images.

What we're saying here is don't try to change the native resolution of your flat panel monitor, and make sure that your video drivers are up-to-date. Let's now turn to the main topic, getting the best pictures and videos your graphics chips can provide.

Anti-Aliasing: Anti-aliasing is a technique that minimizes visual distortions in curved and diagonal shapes. The amount of distortion varies with the size of the pixels on a display. When anti-aliasing is turned on it reduces the number of stair-stepped jumps from one column of pixels to the next. Most people know this effect as the ''jaggies.'' The advantage of this technique is that images tend to look more realistic. The downside is that your system will take a performance hit. It's almost always worth the hit to have anti-aliasing turned on. Some systems will only allow you to turn anti-aliasing on or off. More advanced systems will let you adjust the degree of anti-aliasing. If your system is powerful enough and your graphics controls allow you to adjust the degree of anti-aliasing, crank it up to the max.

Anisotropic Filtering (AF): If anisotropic filtering is turned off, your graphics and video may look as if they are being viewed by someone in need of a cataract operation. The more distant the object, the more blurry it looks. Without getting into technical details, anisotropic filtering makes hair look like hair, fur look like fur, and textured surfaces look the way they do in real life. With anisotropic filtering turned on, these objects are not only recognizable, but crisp and well defined like abs on a body builder. That's the good news. The better news is that your system suffers very little in terms of performance. Turn it on and keep it on.

Vertical Synchronization (V-Sync): V-Sync prevents a condition called ''screen tearing,'' where information from two successive video frames is shown as a single image. It shows up most often when the video image moves horizontally such as a camera pan in a move or a side scrolling video game. V-sync works by stopping the video card from putting another image in the display memory until after the monitor has finished its current refresh cycle. For V-sync to work properly it's important that your display refresh rate be set to manufacturer's specifications. The downside to V-sync is that it subjects your system to a performance hit, but unless you're dealing with high end video applications or 3-D games, this should not be a problem for most systems.

Shadow Quality: Shadow quality is a relatively recent addition to graphics capabilities. It's used mainly in games to make shadows appear realistic to create atmosphere and draw players into the scene. Few things can destroy a mood faster than a distorted shadow in a role playing game. It's tough to take the game seriously when shadows look cartoonish, or downright wrong.

For the best images, max out your lighting and shadow effects. Scenes come alive and make the game very realistic. It may not always be a good thing when you're competing in a multi-player match. Turn it off in those situations or your opponents may have better frame rates than you.

Texture Quality: You wouldn't buy a brand new car and scrape off the paint. It will still be a smooth ride, but the car looks like scrap metal. With texture quality set low or turned off completely, surfaces can lose their detail and appear featureless. Texture detail doesn't cause your graphics circuitry to hyperventilate so you gain a lot by turning it on. As long as your graphics memory is at least 512MB, you won't see any noticeable performance degradation by bringing it up to full strength.

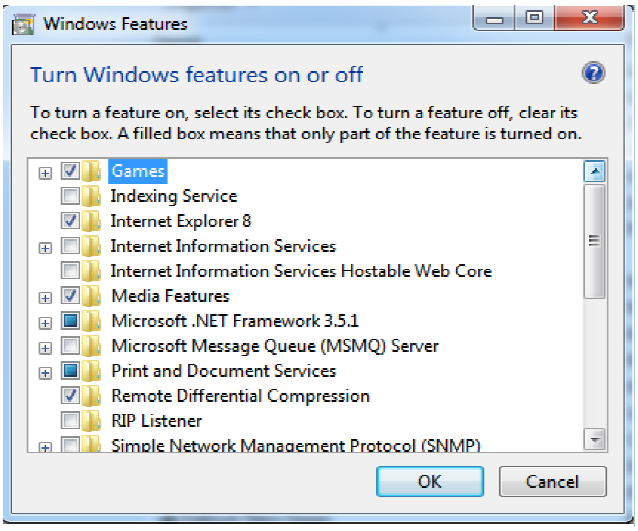
Understanding these features will allow you to configure your system for outstanding visuals. As long as you have the latest drivers for your video components and enough video RAM, there is no reason why you shouldn't reward yourself with the best images your system can produce.

You've got them. Why Not Use Them?

Vinnie LaBash

People configure their desktops in different ways for an all encompassing assortment of reasons. Most use the Windows defaults which are quite reasonable, but operate from a false assumption that ''factory specifications'' are enough. Windows has lots of useful features not included in the default settings which could have great benefits, but if one doesn't know the features are there, one can never enjoy these prospective benefits.

Let's start by opening the Control Panel and clicking on Programs. In the Programs and Features section click the Turn Windows Features on or off. A dialog box appears which will enable you to turn features on or off. (See illustration).



There's probably much more here than you want, so let's examine several features that you are more likely to use rather than the ones which require professional technical knowledge to be useful.

The Indexing Service got a bad reputation in Vista because it was annoyingly slow. There is no doubt that Vista was a resource hog so any service or utility that had additional requirements tended to bog down the system even further. Microsoft resolved the problem in Windows 7 by turning the Indexing Service off by default. That's too bad because the utility can actually be very helpful in locating files and other content through flexible inquiries. Try it, you just may like it.

Internet Information Services (IIS) and Internet Information Services Hostable Web Core: You will not be held accountable if you don't know what these tools do or if you choose to ignore them. IIS is mostly regarded as a major component of a server while the Hostable Web Core performs fewer functions and needs fewer resources. If you write web based applications or wish to experiment hosting a web site on your desktop, these tools may be essential.

Microsoft Message Queue Server: This utility has been around for years and most application developers have come to ignore it because it's not new. If you send and receive messages on a regular basis with people who are in remote locations on the planet, and have ''iffy'' connections, you now have a tool to build a message queue, store a message within it, and send it when the connection to the recipient is up and running. You can also create a similar structure for receiving messages. Using this tool effectively requires basic programming skills.

Simple Network Management Protocol (SNMP): Everyone who uses a computer on a regular basis should be concerned about unauthorized access to personal information or attempts to trick people into revealing information which should remain private. If you have a home network, wireless or not, SNMP gives you better control over devices on the network. You can configure hardware, troubleshoot more effectively, and in many cases even track down attempts to crack into your network. This tool requires a working knowledge of how a network operates.

Telnet Client: This is a great diagnostic tool if your email client is acting strangely and normal diagnostics can not resolve the problem. Turn it on when you need it, and turn it off when you're not using it as there are security issues with it.

These tools are not for everyone, especially those with little computing experience, but your level of knowledge shouldn't remain at the novice stage. Challenge yourself and you won't be like the guy who thinks he has twenty years of experience when in reality all he has is one year of experience twenty times.

OFFICE SUITES

Microsoft vs. OpenOffice.org -- Office Suite Standoff

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An office suite is a software product that includes a group of programs which perform typical office functions; that is, creating and working with documents, spreadsheets, presentations, and databases. Some suites include specialized programs like email or calendars. There are many office suites available, such as Corel's WordPerfect Office, Lotus Symphony Suite by IBM, and ThinkFree3. Among the best known suites are Microsoft Office and OpenOffice.org.

My original intention this month was just to compare features and compatibility between Microsoft Office and

OpenOffice.org. I installed OpenOffice.org on my computer and have been testing it against my familiar MS Office for several months. In researching the history of the two suites, however, I stumbled across a story that I felt needed to be part of this article. Let's start with that.

History Microsoft introduced its Office suite in 1992 with Office 3.0. It included Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Mail (later to become Outlook). Since that time, the suite has expanded to MS Office 2007, which comes in eight versions that include from 3 to 13 programs and runs on both Windows and Mac platforms. MS Office 2010, its newest suite, has reduced the versions to three, including 4 - 7 programs. Because it is a commercial product with a profit goal, MS Office is expensive, although non-profits can get substantial discounts through websites like TechSoup, and businesses can get deals on volume licensing. Office 2007 and 2010 are full-featured suites with frequent updates and great customer support and security.

OpenOffice.org has a different kind of history. The origins of OpenOffice.org (OOo) began in Germany in the mid-1980's with a suite called Star Office, created by the Star Division Company. It ran on several platforms, including Windows 98 and NT, Solaris, Java!, and Linux. In 1998, Star Office version 5.0 was offered free to users. The next year Sun Microsystems purchased Star Division, mainly to get free software for its thousands of employees and to compete with Microsoft.

In 2000 Sun first offered the source code for Star Office 5.2 free over the Internet. In October, the new OpenOffice.org website went online both as a free downloadable office suite product and a collaborative project. Anyone could participate in improving the suite by submitting ideas or code. OpenOffice.org immediately became popular; the open philosophy was embraced by software developers around the world. By 2005, the free suite had reached 20 million downloads and over 150,000 registered members. It was a David and Goliath situation: big corporation versus the little guys.

All this time Sun had also continued to market its commercial office suite, Star Office, for a nominal cost to businesses, but free to educators. In January 2010, the large company Oracle bought Sun Microsystems and acquired the OpenOffice.org brand. Before that year was over, Oracle had stopped making Star Office free to educators and had introduced a new commercial product, Oracle Open Office (standard version for $49.95 for 5 users or and enterprise version for $90.00 for 25 users). Oracle is planning to offer its own office suite soon, an online product called Cloud Office, using Java FX and open document format, but not based on OOo code. It will be competing against the new rash of ''cloud'' office suites, such as Google Docs and Microsoft's Web Docs on SkyDrive.

As 2010 ends, the OpenOffice.org website remains intact; the suite is still a free download. But some Sun developers and many OpenOffice.org contributors are unhappy about changes that Oracle has made and worried that the company will soon remove ''free'' and ''collaborative'' from the OpenOffice.org vocabulary. Late in 2010 a new organization, this group formed the Document Foundation (TDF), to keep the open philosophy alive. They are working on a new office suite, LibreOffice, which is now offered for free download in beta. Its final version, based on the OOo code, is scheduled to come out in early 2011 with sponsorship from Novell, Red Hat, and IBM. How all of this drama will impact OpenOffice.org as a product is unclear. But the little guys are again making a stand against another Goliath.

Feature Comparison MS Office clearly beats OpenOffice.org in features and formatting options, especially those introduced with Office 2007, such as themes, Quick Parts, picture styles, Word Art, macros, and content controls. Office 2007 offers encryption, more templates and an extensive Help system. It also has the new ribbon interface, whereas OpenOffice.org uses menus like MS Office 2003.

OpenOffice.org includes the common programs found in an office suite plus some interesting features such as font effects, backgrounds, and sounds. It is a solid office suite, especially for home and small business. Its advantages over Microsoft Office are cost (It is free with an unlimited number of installations.), its ability to work with Linux and many other operating systems besides Windows, and its open philosophy. OOo runs a bit slower than MS Office, but takes up less disc space. Because it is a collaborative, it issues fewer updates and has fewer support options, but it also is less frequently attacked by malware. Even if you have never used an office suite, you can download this efficient little suite at www.OpenOffice.org and use it without much instruction.

Compatibility As a Microsoft Office user, I was interested in how easy it would be to save files between the two suites since I have hundreds of Word documents and Excel spreadsheets. When I created a feature-filled Word 2007 document (.docx) and saved it as an OpenOffice.org file (.odt), it did save, but there were changes in margins and line spacing, and I lost all the Word 2007 features. When I created a document in OpenOffice.org (.odt), it would not save as a Word 2007 document (docx). I had to save it as a Word 2003 document (.doc), and then open it with Word 2007 in compatibility mode.

I concluded that it's best to choose one office suite and stick with it. In short, if you are a current MS Office 2007 or 2010 user, you will probably be happier staying where you are. If you are new to office suites, by all means give OpenOffice.org a try.

GENERAL INTEREST

Movie Making at Home for Fun (Not Really for Profit)

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Movie making has become possible for anyone who has a digital camera, a reasonably capable computer, and lots and lots of time, with an emphasis on the time. I'm not talking about full feature length movies that could be shown in your local movie theater, but rather movies that document an occasion or activity, using pictures, videos and music.

Just look at YouTube to see how many movies (videos) are available for all sorts of reasons like entertainment, education, and ''how to (accomplish something)''. YouTube makes finding and watching movies possible. Movie Maker and your digital camera make creating movies possible. I am using Movie Maker as an example because everyone who has the Windows Operating System, from XP on to Windows 7, has a version available to them, at no extra cost.

Many other applications can accomplish the same task. Some have many more features and some are more sophisticated, but usually at a price, starting around $60. Among these applications are Corel Video Studio Pro, Adobe Presentation Elements, Photodex Proshow Gold, Pinnacle Studio, Sony Vegas Movie Studio, and CyberLink Power Director. There are even some free applications available for download, like Video Spin, Avid FreeDV, and Wax, none of which I have tried.

Movie Maker and most of the other applications mentioned above provide all the basic tools for assembling and organizing your pictures, videos and music into a movie. The movie can be composed of pictures only, videos only, pictures and videos, or more typically pictures, videos and music together. The formats of the pictures, videos and music must be those that Movie Maker accepts. (There are some small differences between versions for XP, Vista, and Windows 7.) Pictures must be .jpg, .bmp, or gif. Videos must be .avi or .wmv (Windows 7 will also accept .mov). Music must be .mp3, .wav, or .wma.

The pictures and videos are usually put into a time sequence, or timeline, and then the music is added as one or multiple audio tracks. (Movie Maker supports only one audio track, which can be used for music or voice-over. You may be able to play some tricks to implement two tracks, but if you need more than one audio track you would be better off using one of the other applications that easily support multiple audio tracks.) The audio track can then be added to the picture and video timeline. Music or voice-over can be intermixed as components of the total audio track. Integrating voice-overs and music, while timing the voice-over with the picture sequence can sometimes become a real challenge, but it is usually worth the effort.

Here are some basic steps for producing a movie with Movie Maker. Gather all the pictures and videos you need for the movie. Bring along more than you think you might need because it is very easy to eliminate pictures and videos if you have too many for your desired audience. Actually, it is good to have the desired audience and a target time in mind before you start to create the movie.

Not everyone might want to see 65 minutes of your California Vacation, though some close friends might make an effort to stay awake. Brevity is sometimes the best policy, but that is up to you, the director. So, for some movies you might target only 10 or 15 minutes, while some others maybe 30 or 40 minutes, where you know your audience wants to savor every last detail. Given that you have a target time in mind and you have more than enough pictures and videos to fill that time, (and probably a little more), and some music identified to go along with the pictures, fire up Movie Maker. Different versions of Music Maker will look different because of the Operating System that it is built for, but all will provide the basic movie making functionality.

All Movie Maker home screens will provide a set of tools or tasks, a collection area where you can add pictures, videos, and music, a preview area, and a timeline. There are many ways you can approach the general task of making a movie. You, as director, can certainly approach this in any way that makes the most sense to you.

After creating a few movies, I have settled on the following sequence of events. The first activity to accomplish is to add all your pictures to the collection area. It is probably best if you have copied all the pictures, videos, and music into one folder for use with Movie Maker, making things easy to find.

Next is to move the pictures on to the timeline. If your pictures are in the proper sequence for your movie, you are done with the pictures, but that is not typically the case, so drag-and-drop the pictures around the timeline so that the sequence tells the story that you want told.

Once the pictures are in the proper sequence, go back to your source folder and get the videos. Place the videos in the sequence of pictures so that they support the story being told by the picture sequence. I have found that short videos, maybe around 15 seconds have a good impact, but sometimes a very long video is necessary.

Once the videos have been sprinkled around the movie, it is time to see if you are approaching your target time. I know this is a hard thing to do, but if you are above your time by a

lot (maybe 10% or more), it is time to pare back some of the pictures or videos, (or change your target time).

Once you have the sequence of pictures and videos that tell the story, it is time to add effects and transitions. Effects are animations that can be added to pictures (and videos, although sometimes effects on top of videos are distracting, but that is a judgment call to be made by you, the director). Effects basically add motion to still pictures, almost like turning a picture into a short video. These effects are sometimes called ''Ken Burns Effects'', named after the person who made them popular.

Transitions are the way one picture morphs into the next, maybe a page turn, or a wipe, or a dissolve. Transitions can be added to both pictures and videos. Use the fancy transitions sparingly; they can be very distracting if over used. Every once in a while, preview the movie or at least sections of it to guarantee that the transitions and effects are adding to the story, rather than adding distractions; again, it's your call.

Now it's time for the music. Add the music to the collection and then add it to the timeline to go along with the sequence of pictures and videos. The music should help tell the story and add to the overall multimedia experience. Try not to use music that distracts from the story being told by the pictures and videos. Music should probably go from beginning to end, so you may need a few music selections, depending on the length of the music selections and the length of the movie. Typically, music selections are about 3 to 4 minutes long, so for a 15 minute movie, you might need from 4 to 6 selections for the complete movie. (Voice-overs can be any length you so desire.)

Now that you see the process and some of the details, if you feel that you don't have enough control over the process or would like some other features, you might make a note to look into one of the more capable movie creating applications when you get a chance.

The last thing in creating the movie is to add a title, although many directors might do this first, and a credits frame at the end. The title introduces the movie, and the credits give credit to whomever you feel should be mentioned or thanked, like the cameramen, participants, and a mention of the music if it is copy-righted music.

The really last thing is to Publish your movie. Publish it to a .wmv file and review it. If it is not just perfect, make the appropriate changes and re-publish it to a .wmv file. Once it is just what you want, and you have Vista or Windows 7, publish it to DVD, which will create a DVD that will play on any living room DVD player. When that is finished, invite the audience, pop the popcorn, distribute the drinks and lean back and enjoy the applause.

Free ''Cheat Sheets'' for Software and Hardware

By Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:
http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/14-great-cheat-sheets-posters-to-make-you-a-software-wizard/
http://www.customguide.com/computer-training/quick-references
http://learn.customguide.com/index.php? module=QR& action=Index
(free registration required)
http://www.makeuseof.com/pages/
http://www.makeuseof.com/pages/downloads
http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/7-essential-cheat-sheets

Recently, I was asked to teach an eight hour non-credit class on Excel to the employees of a local company. I know by experience that handouts are a popular adjunct for any class, so I had to find some useful handouts for this Excel class; so called ''cheat sheets'' are as good as any other handout, so I proceeded to print a set of Excel cheat sheets for Excel versions 2003, 2007, and 2010. The information on those cheat sheets alone was more than adequate for a one-day class, and could have also been used for a longer class.

In this context, a ''cheat sheet'' is not a device used by a college student in an act of academic dishonesty, but a digital or printed copy of instructions for a software product that clearly explains and shows how to use the features and functions of that product. In addition to the various versions of Microsoft Office, free cheat sheets are available for many other PC, MAC, LINUX, and other computer related software and hardware products. While most of the free cheat sheets are for software products, some cheat sheets, called by their publisher ''Make Use of Guides'' (***www.makeuseof.com/pages***) are for hardware and services. Some of the nearly three dozen available include: How To Easily Build Your Own Cheap Computer, The Awesome Automation Guide for Mac Users, The (Very) Unofficial Facebook Privacy Guide, The Office Worker's 101 Guide to a USB Thumb Drive, The Windows 7 Guide: From Newbies To Pros, The Ultimate Guide To Gmail, Your Guide To Create Professional Documents on Word, The Internet Music Guide For The Audiophile, The Essential Guide To Digital Photography, A Newbie's Getting Started Guide to Linux, The Mac Manual, The Underground iPhone Guide, The Big Book Of iTunes, and about 25 other such titles.

One of the best sources of free software cheat sheets is Custom Guide's ''Quick References'', available online at www.customguide.com/computer-training/quick-references

On this Quick Reference page are free PDF format cheat sheets for Office 2010, Excel 2010, Outlook 2010, PowerPoint 2010, and Word 2010. With free registration, the user can also access the full collection of Custom Guide's Quick Refer-

ences, including the 2007 and 2003 versions of the Office products, as well as Microsoft's OneNote, Project (2007 and 2003), Publisher, SharePoint, and Visio. There are also Quick References for Windows 7, Vista, and XP. Apple users may also find these Quick Reference Guides useful, as there are guides for Appleworks, MAC OS, Microsoft Entourage, and the Apple versions of Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Some of the guides for Adobe products are available for both the PC and MAC versions, and include Acrobat, Dreamweaver, Fireworks, Flash, and Photoshop.

Almost all of the Custom Guide's Quick References are of a similar design and format as downloadable PDF files. The guides are in full color, and typically two pages in length. They all display the opening screen of the product with all of the features labeled with a clear and concise explanation of each item. If there is a ribbon or menu bar in the software, the guide labels each function on the image of the item, and presents a summary of the functions in a table adjacent to the image. Most of the products covered by the guides also have a selection of ''keyboard shortcuts'' displayed that can be used to increase the speed and efficiency of the user by using these shortcuts rather than clicking on menu items. Commonly done tasks like copying something can be accomplished by utilizing the common Windows shortcut CTRL-C, and then pasting the item with CTRL-V; this is much quicker then clicking on the menu and then scrolling to COPY, and repeating the menu process and clicking on PASTE. In many Office products (including competitors to Microsoft Office), formatting can also be done with intuitive shortcuts, such as CTRL-B for bold, CTRL-U for underline, CTRL-I for italics, and several other similar shortcuts; these shortcuts are among the dozens displayed in the Quick Reference guides. The guides also include information (as appropriate) for formatting, graphics, editing, styles, animations, special effects, tables, and other functions of the software. There is a lot of very useful information crammed into these two-page guides, and they would be ideal for all users of these products, regardless of experience level. These are precisely the handouts that I use in my non-credit software classes.

The ''MakeUseOf Guides'' available free from www.makeuseof.com/pages are also downloadable in PDF format. While these guides are free, a one-time registration is necessary to download them. In addition to the ''MakeUseOf Guides'', there are also dozens of other free guides available for download (free registration required) at www.makeuseof.com/pages/downloads. Some guides that I have used to learn shortcuts include guides for Firefox, Gmail, Linux, and Internet Explorer. MAC users may find useful the shortcut guides for OS X, and the MAC versions of Firefox. Since its release, I have been using Windows 7 as my primary home computer, and have found ''The Ultimate Windows 7 Guide: From Newbies To Pros'' a very helpful document. This free 50 page guide (PDF) to Windows 7 is written in an easy to read and understand format, and contains useful information and tips for Windows 7 users of all levels. I have used ''The Essential Guide To Digital Photography'' to help me with my digital camera, and since it seems that almost everyone today has a digital camera, this guide may be invaluable. I know a lot of people who use Google's Gmail service as their email provider, and the ''The Ultimate Guide To Gmail'' is 35 pages full of Gmail hints, tips, and ideas. ''The Incredible Free Manual For Every Mac User'' is a 69 page ebook (PDF) with a treasure trove of information for MAC users. In all, there are 32 such ebooks available.

With all of this free information available for computer users, there should be several titles that would be of interest to just about everyone. I use some of these ''cheat sheets'' in the classes that I teach, and recommend them as needed to my students and coworkers. You too may find them very useful.

What is Hot & What is Not in Technology for 2011

by Sharon Housley

Top 5 winners predicted for 2011

1. Virtual Cloud - Services that allow you to have your desktop in the cloud will become common place in 2011.

2. Mobile Apps - Mobile applications are still and will continue to thrive as people find new uses for their cell phones.

3. Virtual Technology - Working from home or on the road is growing, all virtual technology businesses will continue to prosper and thrive.

4. Connectivity - Cell signals and Internet connectivity will reach remote areas, as staying connected regardless of location becomes more important.

5. Scalability - If it doesn't scale, it will lose luster. Scalability is hot, and a must for all technology in today's society.

Top 5 losers for 2011

1. Privacy - Privacy is back on the list, recent news that mobile application providers collect data about not only the location and habits of their users has created more paranoia about personal information in cyberspace.

2. Social Noise - Social media channels like Twitter are drowning in spam, and the quality of the channel has degraded with the rise of the chatter.

3. Transparency - Unfortunately the woven fibers of the web, make it very easy for savvy individuals to hide or obfuscate their identity. While transparency is preached rarely is it practiced.

4. Regulation - We are not getting any closer to any type of Internet standards or regulations. The Internet still remains the wild west and while pressure can be applied, there is still no centralized body for governing the Internet.

5. Land Lines - Land lines will become a thing of the past, as home phone numbers are replaced by phone numbers for individuals.

Last year's predictions how did we do?

Readers can assess my ability to predict based on last year's collection of technology predictions at:

2010 - http://www.small-business-software.net/whats-hot-whats-not-2010.htm

2009 - http://www.small-business-software.net/whats-hot-whats-not-2009.htm

Sharon Housley manages marketing for FeedForAll http://www.feedforall.com software for creating, editing, publishing RSS feeds and podcasts. In addition Sharon manages marketing for RecordForAll http://www.recordforall.com audio recording and editing software.

HARDWARE NOTES & TIPS

Displays

by Wil Wakely, Seniors Computer Group,
August 2010, Bits and Bytes, www.SCGsd.org
wilw(at)adnc.com

The chronology of visual displays has always been an interest of mine. Of course, the various art media have been static visual displays from pre-historic times, but dynamic moving displays have only been around for less than a century.

Non-electronic mechanical signs with flipping letters and numbers are still in use, but the advent of electronics has changed the display world. We have all seen the ''news'' lights traveling around the Flatiron building in NYC, and the flashing lights on theatre marquees. They are accomplished with regular incandescent light bulbs although recently, LEDs, or Light Emitting Diodes, have replaced the bulbs, having lower power and longer life.

The early computer and instrument lights were NIXI tubes that displayed numbers and letters with glowing hot wires in a vacuum tube. Soon, small CRT (cathode ray tube) displays in green and orange phosphors became available. The size of these grew to 19" and 21" in green, orange and white. Early B/W TVs used the same technology. The first color displays required more complex CRTs and the sizes increased to 25" and 27" in very heavy, bulky glass tubes. There were still some smaller flat panel displays for instruments that still required a vacuum for orange neon and green or blue fluorescent viewing. Automobile dashboard and clock radios still use this type of display.

The invention of LCDs (liquid crystal displays) removed the need for a vacuum and allowed a flat screen TV display which we now view in monster sizes. Most computer monitors, cell phones and TVs use this technology. Another popular TV display is plasma which uses colored phosphors excited by a high voltage discharge. This system requires lots of power, is heavy and runs hot.

Texas Instruments invented a color projection system that uses micro-mirrors on a silicon chip that flip up and down to reflect and project lasers onto a viewing screen. No vacuum required.

E-book readers like the Kindle, use yet another technology called E-Ink. Black powder is attracted to a glass faceplate with a small static charge. These use much less energy than LCDs, however color versions are not yet available.

Our local electronics company in San Diego, Qualcomm, has developed yet another color video display that uses interference colors. These colors are generated by thin films with different thicknesses which reflect different colors. Common examples of this effect are butterfly wings, peacock feathers and oil-on-water. Since it is reflective, it works best in full sunlight where other displays wash out. It also requires only one-sixth the power of the E-Ink display. If this technology proves successful, it could revolutionize the entire display world. Do a Google search on Mirasol to see impressive demos of this product.

What's next? Perhaps, direct projection upon the retina of our eyeballs and 3D holograms. Stay tuned.

Help Lines

HARDWARE HELP	Advisor No.
Reformat Hard Disk, FDISK	2, 4, 5
Install Hard Drive, CD-ROM/RW	2, 4, 5
Install Video Card	7
Partitioning Hard Drives	2
Internet/Intranet	6, 7
Audio Cards	4
MPs Files, WMA Files, WAV Files	3, 4
Burning CD's	3, 5
Homesite	7
Net Objects	7

SOFTWARE HELP	Advisor No.
Win 95/98/ME/2K/NT/XP	2, 3, 4, 7
Win 7	4, 7
Microsoft Word	2, 7
Microsoft Excel	4
Microsoft PowerPoint	4
WordPerfect	1, 7
Norton/Symantec AntiVirus	2, 3, 6, 7
Norton System Works	2, 7
CompuPic / CompuPic Pro	3, 7
Winzip, WinRAR	6
Ccleaner	3, 4
Outlook, Outlook Express	2
Internet Explorer	2, 7
RegSeeker	3, 5
Instant Messaging	2
Installing Software after Reformatting	5
Deleting Files; Wiping	6

ADVISORS

Name	Phone	Hours
[1] Fred Shelton	(253) 752-0120	Variable
[2] Bob Henkel	(253) 537-6732	8A-8P any day
[3] Tom Stepanek	(253) 922-7939	7-9P Mon-Fri
[4] Carl Tenning	(206) 824-3843	6-9P Mon-Fri
[5] Oclad Wesley	(253) 212-0352	6-9P
[6] Bob Thomson	(253) 752-5582	Variable
[7] Ray Mills	(360) 692-7568	6-9P Mon-Sat

Tacoma Open Group for Microcomputers (TOG)
New Member Application/Existing Member Change of Address Form

For **Tacoma Open Group** annual membership, send form (if needed) & **$25** to Bob Henkel., 10613 25th Avenue E., Tacoma, WA 98445.
Make checks payable to TOG

Please print or type. Date:_____ Sponsored by:_____

Member's Name:_____

Address:_____

City:_____ State:_____ Zipcode:_____ Plus Four_____ Country:_____

Home Phone: (____)_____ Work phone: (____)_____ E-Mail Address_____

TACOMA MEETING

When: **Mon 14 Mar 2010 -7:00 PM**
Where: SE Tacoma Community Centre
1614 99th Street E.
Tacoma, Washington

From I-5 take Exit 127 (Hwy 512) to Portland Ave., north on Portland to 99th, left over tracks. Building is on south side.

Future Dates: 2nd Monday of Month

TOG BOARD MEMBERS

TOG Web Site: http://www.toggle.org

Deadline: 15th of this month to appear in next months' issue, if room

Corporate Sponsors:

Raymond Mills & Associates
www.rm-a.com

How To get To The Meeting

For those readers still unfamiliar with how to find our meeting place we have reproduced the map showing its relationship in Tacoma to Portland Ave S. and the 512 Freeway. The 512 Freeway can be entered from I-5 in Tacoma on the west or from Hwy 167 in Puyallup on the east. Proceed to Portland off-ramp and turn north to 99th Street. Some folks in the middle of Tacoma may prefer to take Portland southbound to 99th. At 99th turn west over the tracks and there you are!

TOGGLE

Tacoma OPEN Group for Micros
1808 Lenore Drive
Tacoma, WA 98406-1920

Change Service Requested

PROGRAMS

This Month's Meeting

This will be a regular monthly meeting. Meeting discussions are always interesting and the ever-popular Q&A (Question & Answer) period is sure to pique your interest, come up to your expectations and tickle your fancy. Come and share your own experiences, problems and discoveries.

The TOGGLE Webmaster will demonstrate editing a website and show how the webmaster analyzes viewer reports.