Phoenix PC Users Group Inc. NEWS

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May 2008

Note: West Side meeting locations have changed !!

I'm Asked...

By Bill Funk, Phoenix PCUG Board Member

I have an old computer that I want to give away, but I'm worried about personal information that's on the hard drive. How do I get rid of that information?

That's a very good question. As more people are upgrading their computers, the old computers must go somewhere. Whether they are sold, given away, or simply thrown in the trash, it should be remembered that there's data on the hard drives. If that data contains personal information, it can be used for any number of nefarious purposes. So, what to do?

We should know that simply deleting a file doesn't actually take that file off the hard drive; it simply tells the operating system that the space taken up by that file is available to be used. There are any number of utilities that will undelete the file. Even formatting the drive isn't a secure way to get rid of the files, as there are utilities to unformat a drive.

There is a way to make that information unavailable, though: wiping. When you wipe a drive, you overwrite each part of the drive that holds data with characters)which characters doesn't matter; it can be zeros, or any letter or number). This differs greatly from deleting a file, or formatting a drive. When you delete a file, the operating system changes the first character of the filename in the directory to a character that tells the OS that it can use the sectors on the drive that contain the data of the deleted file for another file. It does not actually take that data off the drive; it's still there until overwritten. (This is why you are told that if you want to recover a file that you've accidentally deleted, you must stop using that drive immediately, lest the file is overwritten.) If the file has not been overwritten, there are utilities that can search the directory and the drive to identify that deleted file, and can recover it for you. Of course, this means that anyone who gets that drive can recover deleted files that haven't been overwritten. The same goes for drives that have been formatted; there are utilities that can unformat drives.

But wiping really does the job. Once a file is overwritten, it's very difficult to recover it. For all practical purposes, a wiped drive can only be recovered by Justice Department agencies with three letters. (And, if you're really worried that they will try to recover you information on a wiped drives, you have far greater problems than I will try to address here!)

There's a lot of speculation on just what form of wiping you need. Take my word for it: a single wipe will put your information beyond the abilities of the local police, much less the average curious person. And don't be overly impressed by claims that you need DoD 5220.22 M wiping capabilities. When the Government requires something (anything) to be done, they must define how it's to be done. All this means is that that's how it's to be done, and nothing more; it's severe overkill for the average person. It's not bad, just overkill. A one -pass wipe is sufficient, unless you're trying to hide your drug dealings or child porn.

So, where do you get these wiping utilities? Well, Google is your friend. A simple search for "wipe utilities" (sans quotation marks) will get you a LOT of suggestions. Myself, I use ERASER (http://www.heidi.ie/eraser/) for my wiping (I'm not endorsing Eraser; it's just what I use). It's free, very versatile, free, and does the job. Oh, and it's free, too. Eraser doesn't require you to wipe an entire drive; you can erase your empty parts of the drive, which will include all files you've deleted. I strongly recommend that you read the help file; as with all programs that will do a lot, eraser will do some serious damage if you use it incorrectly. (It should be obvious that a backup of your important files is

Phoenix PC Users Group

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Contact Information

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Notice:

Resignations were accepted at the last board meeting from Kathy Jacobs and John Curth.

The new officers are:

President: Tj!

Vice President: Hank Pearson

Secretary: Chuck Lewis

Treasurer: Joe Shipley

The May 2008 main meetings will be

West Side .... Tuesday, May 20

NEW Location !

CollegeAmerica, 6533 N Black Canyon Hwy, Phoenix, room 2

East Side .... Wednesday, May 21

University of Advancing Technologies
2625 W Baseline Rd, Tempe
(one block west of Fry's Electronics)

Fountain Hills ..... Thursday, May 22

Fountain Hills Library, 12901 N La Montana Drive,
Fountain Hills

The topics for the main meetings this month is:

West and Fountain Hills:

Social Media

East side meeting:

Social Security

Check our Website at www.phoenixpcug.org to verify subject matter and time for ALL meetings!

Inside this Issue...

Users Group News

May 2008 General Meeting Topics

West and Fountain Hills:

Social Media: It's not just for kids!

East side meeting:

Social Security

Coming in June

All Meeting locations:

Backing up Your Computer

General Meetings start with Questions and Answers at 6:30 PM. This is followed by the general topic of the meeting. The meetings finish by 9:00 PM

CALENDAR
Check our website for room and time information and to check for last minute changes

May 2008

Tuesday, May 20 West Side (Social Media).......................... CollegeAmerica

Wednesday, May 21 East Side (Social Security) .... UAT

Thursday, May 22 Fountain Hills (Social Media)................................Library

Wednesday, May 28 (Photo SIG) .... CollegeAmerica

Wednesday, May 28 (Video SIG)... CollegeAmerica

June 2008

Wednesday, June 4 (Board Meeting) ....TBD

Thursday, June 12 (General Interest SIG)..Library

Tuesday, June 17 West (Backing up your Computer)....... CollegeAmerica

Wednesday, June 18 East (Backing up your Computer) .... UAT

Thursday, June 19 Fountain Hills (Backing up your Computer)...Library

Wednesday, June 25 (Photo SIG)... CollegeAmerica

Wednesday, June 25 (Video SIG)... CollegeAmerica

Encryption Myths 1

By Bruce Jacobs
Phoenix PCUG newsletter editor

I have been at a few meetings recently and heard statements made about protecting things by putting them in secret code on your computer. Many of these statements are just wrong and I have decided it is time to expose some myths to the sunlight and debunk some beliefs and urban legends

Myth #1 : The government and (perhaps criminals) can break any code.

This is just simply false. I will make a couple of reasonable assumptions here that will let me use a simple example to prove my point. The first is that the government does not have working mind readers. And the second is that the government is not allowed to coerce anyone who has the key to the code. (There are ways around this as well) I will now give you a piece of code that nobody anywhere could break: "I am sorry, Scott attacked me."

Any idea what this means? In order to be said to have broken this code you must be able to be **SURE** of what it means. I asked my wife what it meant and she of course knew. But no one else on the planet would be able to figure it out. Clearly, I can say things to my wife and she can say things to me that nobody would be able to understand. It is a silly example, perhaps, but it shows one basic way of protecting something with code. A more formal method of doing this is called a "one time pad" Unless the code breaker has access to the pad (Which in this case would mean living in our home). They would not know that the above message means that I did not get it done because I got tired and took a nap.

Myth #2: People can always lookup your passwords and/or decrypt them.

In the general case (for operating system passwords used to log into a computer) if done properly this is not possible in theory. The big issue here is that things must be set up properly.

Now you may think I am crazy here, but stay with me and you will understand. What the computer does when you enter a password is to take the letters/numbers you typed and do some math on them and compare that result to what the result from the first time you typed that password. Let me set up an oversimplified example.

Lets assign every letter in the alphabet a number "a" =1 , "b"=2 , "c"=3 etc. Lets also assign numbers to the upper case letters. "A" =100, "B"=101. Now we add up the values of the letters you typed. If your password was "aBc" your grand total would be 105. The total does not tell us what the password was. But every time I type "aBc" I get a total of 105. Anyone who tells you that it can be decrypted is wrong because there is no way on working backward from the 105 to be sure that I typed "aBc". I could also have typed "aAd" which also gives me a 105. See why it is not possible. The computer does not care if you type the same password as before (it does not save the old password!) it just needs a result of 105. If I type "aAd" I would be logged in.

Now this formula is poorly done. The real formulas are mathematically complex and designed so that any change produces what looks like a random result. Also, unlike my simple example it can be shown to be impossible to go backwards from the result. The code that does the calculations is available to public for many operating systems and if you can figure a way to go backward from the result, there is probably a Nobel Prize in your future.

Ok, so now you are probably wondering how people "crack" passwords. Generally they start with lists of common password choices. Run

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Myths continues from page 7

them through the program that creates the result and then they compare it with the known result and if a match is found, they state that they have found the password. These lists are quite large (1/2 million passwords or more). Most users will probably pick something from the top 10,000 passwords unless the computer keeps them from doing so.

There are a couple other common methods used to break passwords. One method is called social engineering. The bad guy calls the user and lies/bribes the user into giving them the password. On study found that the majority of people would give someone thier password in exchange for a piece of chocolate.

Another common method of "breaking" passwords is to somehow watch the user enter them. This can be as simple as looking over the sholder of the person. Or it can involve software on the computer that reports what you type to others. There are also other ways of getting your password from you.

It is possible , in some cases, to use what is called the "brute force" method to break passwords this is only possible if the password system allows short passwords, the attacker is able to get a copy of the "password" file, and is willing to use lots of computer time

Myth 3: Everything has "backdoors"

Originally, the compter industry was a very friendly and trustworthy place. Computers were kept in controlled environments to protect them from the elements. The number of people who could control them was limited. Also the money that could be stolen using computers was fairly limited. In order make fixes to problems easier, the people setting up/programming the computers would set things up so that they could get around the security measures in the computer. This kept them from having to wake

someone up at night to get access or similar problems. These tricks included user names and passwords that always worked or had undocumented authority.

Although there are probably a few of these tricks still in existence, the vast majority are gone. All major computer software companies use teams to write code. Also they have meetings where groups look over the code of the programs for mistakes. It is almost impossible to sneak a backdoor into a modern program.

Linux and many other open source products such as PGP (a very strong encryption program that the government tried to ban) have had thousands of people looking over the code.

Myth 4: If I know the method used to protect something, I can easily break the code.

This is harder to explain and involves much more complex mathematics than I fully understand. I will explain a bit of it as I understand it to give you glimmer of what is going on. The mathematical formulas are standardized, tested and published. What is not is a key that is generated (hopefully at random) The key and what you want to protect are plugged into the formula and the result comes out. Any change in the key produced an entirely different result. I order to break the key. You must guess the key, put it and the coded result into the formula and see if what comes out make sense. If it does not make sense, try the next key. Sounds easy for a computer right? After all the computer can check a key in less than second.

Well there is a catch, I get to decide how long the key is. A one bit key give me two keys to check. A two bit key gives me 4 to check. An eight bit key means I might have to check 256 keys. Each bit **DOUBLES** the number of keys to be checked. The numbers get staggering very quickly. A 128

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Moving on to Vista

By Neil Stahfest, Librarian,
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It's easy to lose track of time when you're playing computer games or cruising the Internet. As our computers have improved we tend to use higher screen resolutions to see more detail and, unfortunately, that can cause eye strain. The solution is not to reduce screen resolution but to increase the size of the text.

Windows Vista offers an easy way to do this. Click on "Start", then "Control Panel" and then type "adjust font size" in the search box in the upper right corner. A menu choice "Personalization" will appear and right under it you will see "Adjust font size (DPI)". Click on it and a window called "DPI scaling" will appear. You'll see three choices: "Default scale (96 DPI), Larger scale (120 DPI), and a button that says "Customize".

The first two choices are pretty clear. In the third choice, if you click "Customize DPI", the "Custom DPI Setting" window will open. Just follow the instruction to increase or decrease the DPI setting to find the setting that works best for you.

One question new Vista users ask me is "What happened to the search command?". People who have used Windows XP and previous versions of Windows are used to clicking on the "Start" button and then clicking on the "Search" label on the right side of the menu.

Search is still available but Microsoft apparently thought it was more intuitive for us to click on the "Windows" key plus the "F" key (think "Windows find" to remember this). Look at the upper right corner of the window that opens for the "Search Box" and enter the word or phrase that you are looking for. Notice in the line below you have a number of options to limit your search to "All", "E-mail", "Document", "Picture", "Music", and "Other". There is also an "Advanced" selection that allows you to select a range of file dates, locations, names and authors. To close the Search Window you have to click on the red "X" in the top right corner.

You might also notice that when you Click on "Computer" (used to be "My Computer") there a search box appears in the top right corner of the window. This feature is universal and appears whenever you open any folder window. It also appears when you click on the "Start" button (the "search line" appears in the menu directly above the Start button).

While I'm on the subject of the "Windows" key, the combination of "Windows key plus the "L" key locks your keyboard. Everything you are working on becomes hidden by the login screen and you need to enter your password to continue to use your computer. This feature may be convenient even if you're not trying to hide your work from anyone. My son's cat seems to be fascinated by computer screens and anything blinking or moving on the screen. She frequently jumps up on the desk next to an unattended computer and walks across the keyboard to touch the screen with a paw or her nose. It's cute but sometimes I return to find a program has been suspended or the computer placed in "sleep" mode. For me, "Windows Lock" is protection from pets.

Do you use the Vista Sidebar? Some people love it, some don't. There have been complaints of people using the Notes Gadget to store web addresses and they've lost them. Other people have set up their home city in the Weather Gadget only to discover that the program reverts back to Redmond Washington. Gadgets are individual programs that store their own

The Art of Keeping Cool
Part 1: Computer Fans

By Jerry Goldstein, Vice President & Newsletter Editor, The PC Users Group of Connecticut
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With the cold weather you may not be thinking of the need to cool down. No matter how cold it gets outside your personal computer still needs to be cooled. Computers generate a great deal of heat and need a means of dissipating it. Heat reduces the life of your computer parts. Block your computer vents and your motherboard will fry leaving you with lots of nothing. Inadequately cooled computers suffer crashes and freeze-ups as the parts overheat.

You can check your computer's temperature during startup by going to Setup when your computer starts. Unless you do it through a reboot after you have been on the computer for a while you will not get a true reading. There is software available to monitor your CPU's temperature. Constant temperature monitoring is probably not needed unless you are overclocking (running your CPU faster than it is set for at the factory) your computer or packed in way too much gear.

To combat the heat computer users have a wide selection of choices, some that work better than others. This article will introduce you to a variety of means of keeping your computer cool.

As computers get faster and smaller the parts are getting hotter and hotter. The smaller the

computer case gets the less space that heat has to go. For a while computer cases were getting bigger. About eight years ago I had a nice full size tower that had plenty of room for lots of gear and open space for the heat to dissipate. I still had extra fans running on that computer but the computer ran cool to start with because it had space for the heat to go.

In the last few years the over-the-counter computer started to be made with smaller cases which meant parts are being crammed closer together. That also meant there was less room for the excess heat to move away from the equipment. Adding fans are becoming more of a necessity as more is crammed into less space.

The standard computer comes with at least four small fans built onto the case walls and the CPU. These fans are self-contained units that either blow cold air into the computer or hot air out. You will find these fans spread throughout your computer with their location depending on the manufacturer's design. There is also a fan made to blow cool air directly onto an add-on video card, a notorious heat monger for gamers. The fan uses one or two expansion slots and sits over the video card forcing cool air onto the card. When adding fans think about placing some fans to bring in the cool air while having other fans suck out the heat. Good airflow will keep things cool and lengthen the life of your computer.

For gamers, who always want the latest and greatest equipment, (meaning heat generating stuff), there's nothing like a huge fan built right into the top of the computer. These fans are

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larger than standard computer fans, usually as large as the case is wide. They sit on the top of the computer sucking the heat up and out as it rises through the computer. Way cool.

Of course a fan cooled computer will do you no good if you pack your computer into too tight a space or a closed environment. Be sure to keep a few inches for air to circulate in and out of the computer fan vents and don't put your computer in a closed cabinet. There is a reason computer desks come with an open back cabinet to put your desktop into. Air circulation is also the reason why internal computer cables are no longer flat. They found the flat cables blocked air flow. The round sata cables now in use cut back on air flow restriction. Sata cables are also made thinner to further increase airflow. Check how your cables run and maybe move them to the side to increase airflow. Air circulation equals good. Closed-in, tightly packed computer equals bad.

One drawback to fans is that they run off your computer's power supply. The more fans you put in your computer the shorter the life of your power supply. Power supplies are a lot cheaper to replace than a motherboard, CPU, hard drive, or video card. In fact, you should always invest in a couple more good fans to aid in cooling your computer. The manufacturers are looking to save costs so they are never generous enough with those fans. You'll always save money in the long run with longer lasting parts kept cool by those extra fans. That is if you remember to install them. Those extra fans won't help while they sit on the shelf waiting to be put in.

Fans also have a bigger drawback: noise. When you start up your computer that noise you hear is the fans starting up and running. The more fans you use the more noise you get. Its worth

spending a bit more to get a better quality quieter fan. Check the computer magazines or on-line for reviews. Using one large fan that moves more air than two small ones will also save you noise. The law of diminishing return comes into play with fans. At some point adding another fan will not help anymore as the enclosed space can only move so much air.

The lower you keep your computer parts temperature the longer they will last. Taking the time to strategically place computer fans will save you time and money shopping to replace those overheated blown parts. Keep cool year round.

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bit key (a commonly used length) would require more computers than there are sand grains on earth to guess in a average of less than a thousand years. We can make more possible keys than atoms in the known universe without breaking a sweat.

Unbreakable encryption is important to international banking, communication and many other parts of modern life. If it could be broken easily it would be done every day.

I hope I have made it clear that breaking encryption by brute force is not reasonable for properly designed systems when you do not have the key.

I will discuss how it has sometimes been done wrong in future articles   ψ

Vista Service Pack 1: What You Need to Know

By Sandy Berger, CompuKISS
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Microsoft recently released Service Pack 1 (SP1) for Windows Vista. A Service Pack is a rollup of updates, fixes and enhancements. Many techie advisors like to wait to install a new operating system until the first Service Pack is released because it means that the operating system has matured and gotten all the original bugs out.

Microsoft says that this Service Pack includes all updates that have been released since the debut of Vista in February 2007, plus additional improve-ments and better compatibility with some hardware and software. Two things that may be especially useful for Vista users is a purported speed improvement and native support for 802.11n, the latest wireless standard.

While you can surf over to the Microsoft website and download the Service Pack right now, you may not want to. Part of the reason for waiting is that some drivers, especially audio drivers are currently adversely affected by SP1. While this problem can usually be easily rectified by reinstalling the problem driver or changing default settings, most average users will not want to encounter these problems.

Microsoft realizes that there are some problems with the Service Pack and it is making some moves to make sure that this Service Pack is well received rather than a poke in the eye for Vista, which has already received quite a bit of bad publicity.

These moves include the fact that Microsoft won't begin the automatic rollout of the Service Pack via Windows Update until next month. Microsoft has also added some detection code to its update service that will block you from deployment of SP1 if your computer's drivers will be adversely affected. You will only be offered the update if your system can handle it.

So the best policy for most users is to just sit back, relax, and wait until the Microsoft Update offers you the SP1 download as part of their update process. If you have been doing automatic updates through Microsoft, you already have most of the important security updates, so there should be no rush to install Service Pack 1. However, some future software may require SP1, so you will want to install it at some point in time.

Although some technology reviewers are singing praises for the Vista Service Pack, it is not completely without problems. A small amount of third party software is adversely affected by this Service Pack. It should be noted, that this is not unusual for a Service Pack, since it often makes changes to the core operating system. The list of software that has incompatibility or reduced functionality with SR1 is mostly obscure or old software, Yet, when it comes time to install this Service Pack, you might want to check the Microsoft list of incompatible software at http://support.microsoft.com/kb/935796 .

As with any important update, you will want to properly prepare your computer before you start the installation. First, backup any important files. If you don't already have a backup system in

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Google Releases Updated Version of "Google Earth"

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director;
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It has been nearly two years since I first (and last) discussed Google Earth in this column. In the ensuing time since the last review, Google has been busy updating and improving the product, adding new features, and improving the graphics. For those who may not be aware, Google Earth is a program that allows the immense Google database of terrestrial and satellite images of the earth, along with amazing images of space, to be utilized and manipulated on the computer.

What is new and improved in the recently released Google Earth 4.3 (beta) is demonstrated in an interactive video tour online at earth.google.com/tour.html. One of the new features in version 4.3 include what Google calls "Photo-realistic Buildings", where hundreds of buildings in many of the world's major cities are shown in three dimensions (3D). If a building that is displayed "turns purple" when cursoring over it, clicking anywhere on the building will open up a smaller window giving details of the building, and the moniker of the person who created or updated the digital image. The images displayed can be manipulated to zoom in or around them from any angle, effectively creating a dynamic 360 degree panoramic view. These 3D views are not just of cities and buildings, but there are also spectacular images of natural beauties such as mountains, rivers, waterfalls, and canyons. Another new feature on this version is what Google calls "Swoop Navigation" where the user can virtually "Fly seamlessly through the landscape with new navigation controls. Swoop from outer space to street level and leap from one building top to another. Use the look joystick to view buildings as if you were standing right in front of them."

Another aspect of the new version is the "Light and Shadow" feature where many of the images can be shown in selected or sequential times of the day, such as displaying a mountain top from sunrise to sunset. On the top of the screen is an optional slider which can be moved with the mouse to display the simulated or realistic image at any chosen time. In some of the more scenic images it appears to show the path of the sun across the sky with the corresponding light and shadows. The new and improved "Street View" that has been previously available online with Google Maps (maps.google.com) is now integrated into Google earth. Google has a fleet of vehicles

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which cruise major cities taking high resolution 360 degree digital photos as they drive down the streets. With "Street View" the user can virtually visit a city and virtually walk or drive the streets using the mouse instead of a vehicle. Views are literally from the street level showing cars, people, store fronts, intersections, and any other features visible from street level. Using the mouse, the user can cruise the streets just as if he was navigating the city for real. While not yet available for every city, a camera icon, when displayed on a map, will zoom in to a 360 degree panoramic image from street level. Many street level images contain additional camera icons which allow the user to travel seamlessly up a selected street, and the mouse can be used to turn in any direction.

The popular features that were in earlier versions of Google Earth have been retained. One that I periodically use is the "Directions" feature, which does not just give traditional driving directions and maps, but also animates the drive by clicking on the play button at the bottom of the driving directions listing. When animated, a detailed sequential zoomed-in satellite image is displayed, with the directions overlaid on the image. For example, when I requested driving directions from the Examiner offices on Willow Street in Beaumont, to the Bush Airport (IAH) in Houston, the seamless animation in Google Earth showed the street images including real pictures of the highway showing which lane to be in, detailed images of each turn or exit, and high resolution images of the airport. The images are actual photographs, not computer generated images. By seeing the route in exquisite detail prior to a journey may help ease the anxieties of the drive.

Once at a destination, it may be helpful to find nearby "points of interest", such as restaurants.

By simply entering the word "restaurants" in the "What?" box, and the current address in the "Where?" box, restaurants will be displayed on the Google map. By clicking on the icon displayed for each restaurant, details will be displayed for the selected restaurant in a window overlay. Typical information displayed included the name, address, phone, a hyperlink (if any) to the restaurant website, any reviews that may be available and driving directions "to" and "from" the restaurant.

Google Earth does not just provide maps and images of terrestrial and earthly locations, but also includes celestial maps and images. Clicking on the Saturn-looking icon on the top of the screen will open a "Search the Sky" search box. By entering a celestial body or location, such as "Mars", Google Earth will display a sky map with an image of the heavenly body, and also display the current geometric coordinates for those using sophisticated telescopes.

The basic version of Google Earth 4.3 (beta) is a free download from earth.google.com. For those desiring more features, Google offers Google Earth Plus for $20, which adds support for a variety of GPS devices (verified support for Magellan and Garmin GPS devices, but can not upload to those devices), improved network performance, and improved high resolution printing. For professional and commercial use Google offers the Pro version for $400.

Google Earth is a fascinating utility, and will run on Windows 2000 or XP (Vista is not mentioned), and requires a minimum of 400MB hard drive space, and a video card capable of 1024x768 resolution with a 16bit color depth. An internet connection of at least 128Kb/sec is required. I suggest that readers of this column at least

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Coming this Month

"The Future of Social Security, Medicare Updates and Online Services"

Whether you are young or old, male or female, single or with a family-this presentation is for and about you. That is because Social Security programs affect everybody. This is an opportunity to see and hear a presentation delivered by the Social Security Administration and ask questions about your benefits. The Arizona Public Affairs Representative for SSA will offer information about "The Future of Social Security, Medicare Updates and Online Services" and how to obtain information about your benefits.

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preference files on your hard drive. Anytime you close a "gadget", you lose all the data that you typed into it; addresses, locations, etc. So... either find a better place to store your information or don't click on a gadget's "X" button unless you really want to cease using the gadget.

Windows Vista has been out for a year now and there are rumors that Microsoft will release the long-awaited Service Pack 1 for downloading in March. If they do, I'm sure we'll see enough changes in Vista for another newsletter article. (Editors note: SP1 for Vista is now available, See article on page 11)

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Or did you expect to get a copy electronically and still received a paper copy?

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- Write a letter to the Editor
- Solve World Hunger!

New Editor Needed for Newsletter

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              No experience needed

Come September I will have been editing and
publishing the Phoenix User Group News for
two years.  As I am no longer able to at-
tend meetings and do not have time to prop-
erly produce the newsletter, much less time
to  write  articles,  I  have  decided  it  is
time to pass on the torch in September.

It  is  not  really  that  difficult,  it  just
takes time.

I am willing to give the new editor lots of
training  and  other  help.    Please  contact
the board or myself if you have any ques-
tions

Bruce Jacobs     jacobsbd@cox.net
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Asked continues from page 2

 a good thing if you're going to use a wiping utility!)

Sometimes, I'll give away a hard drive that no longer fits my needs; usually it's an older, smaller, slow drive. I wipe these drives as a matter of course. And, about once a month, I wipe the drives in my system, just because I'm paranoid.

If you're the least bit paranoid, too, get yourself a wiping utility, learn how to use it, then apply it as needed.   ψ

Editors note: If you have a computer to wipe that does not successfully run Windows you might try downloading DBAN. A free tool which allows your computer to boot off of a CD or floppy and just wipes the whole machine.

SP1 continues from page 11

place, click on the Start button and type in backup to start the Vista backup utility. Remember that the safest place to backup is to an external drive rather than to the internal hard drive.

Then, check your hard disk for errors. Double-click on the Computer icon on your desktop, right-click

on the main hard drive icon, which is usually C: Select Properties, then, on the Tools tab, click Check Hard Disk for Errors. You may also want to check with your computer manufacturer or hardware vendor to see if you need any updated drivers for Service Pack 1.

Last, but not least, give yourself plenty of time for the update. It can take several hours. Luckily, in an effort to make this go smoothly for everyone, Microsoft is offering free support for the installation of Vista Service Pack 1. As far as I know, this is unprecedented. And it is very welcome. Email, chat support, and even phone support is free for problems related to the compatibility and installation of Service Pack 1 until March 18, 2009.

You can find these free support options and information at the Microsoft Vista Service Pack 1 Website. Be sure to save this address, just in case you need it. Although this free support is available to everyone, it is not being highly publicized. http://tinyurl.com/2q4xrk

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Earth continues from page 13

download the free version of Google Earth and simply play with it. Click on the icons at the top of the page, and check and uncheck some of the boxes on the left margin, and experiment with it; do not worry, you can not hurt anything by experimenting with it. Google Earth is one of my favorite "fun" programs.

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The Official Policy of the Phoenix PC Users Group is that we do not condone software piracy in any form.

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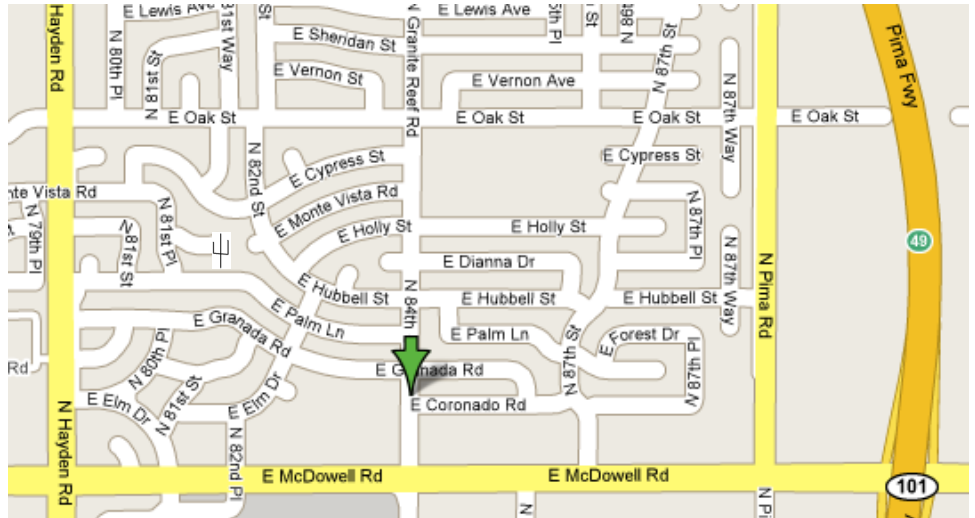
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There is a way you can support your user group. Smart Computing Magazine will give a gift subscription to the Phoenix PC Users Group to be used as a door prize, raffle, etc., for each five subscriptions received from our group. Subscriptions can be applied for with the subscription coupon below or by phone as long as you use our group's unique source code number (8305) when beginning the subscription.

For each paid subscription using the source code 8305, our user group will be credited one credit. Results are calculated each quarter, and credits will accumulate until the group reaches five paid subscriptions, at which time they will contact the PPCUG.

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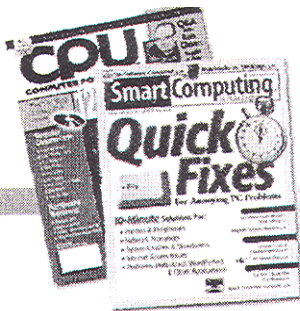
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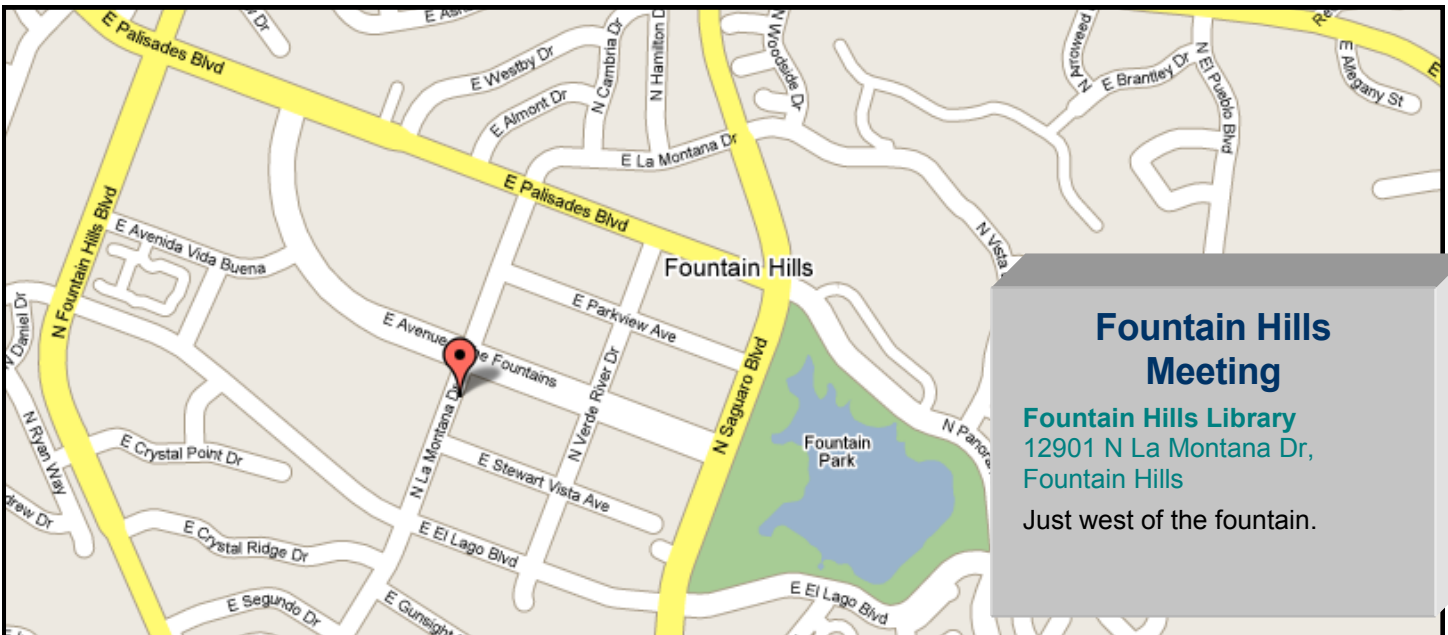Signature

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West Side Meeting

College America Room 2

6533 N Black Canyon Hwy
Phoenix

Turn right (east) on McLellan Blvd.

Immediately turn right (south) into parking lot..
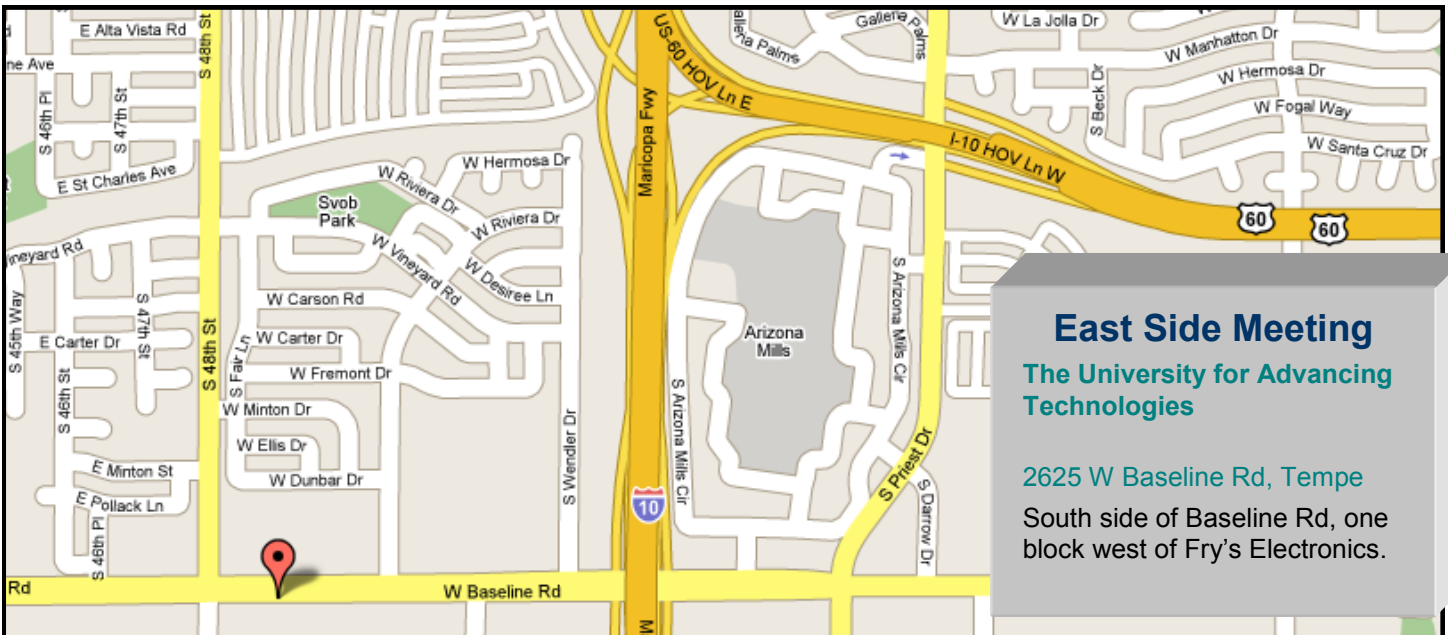
East Side Meeting

The University for Advancing Technologies

2625 W Baseline Rd, Tempe

South side of Baseline Rd, one block west of Fry's Electronics.

Fountain Hills Meeting

Fountain Hills Library
12901 N La Montana Dr,
Fountain Hills

Just west of the fountain.

Newsletter Editor Needed

Our Editor is retiring!

Well, not exactly, but he won't be available to produce our award-winning Newsletter anymore. So we need a replacement. Would you like to assist the Group? Spend a few hours a month putting together the articles, ads, etc. that make up the newsletter? We have a volunteer for the printing and mailing side of the project - we just need a person who can create something to print and mail!

As part of the Association of Personal Computer Users' Groups (APCUG), we get articles every month from other Users' Groups around the nation. Sometimes our own members write articles, too. So the Editor's job is to select articles, lay them out in the available space around our calendar, meeting info, etc., and get it to the printer! It's as easy as that! And our current Editor

(Bruce Jacobs) will be around to help you through the first couple of issues if you need him. So you wouldn't be just tossed into the job without a net!   If schedules can be worked out he will even walk you completely through the first month.

It would be fun, it would be a learning experience, it would look good on your resume, and you'd be providing a valuable service to the Phoenix PC Users' Group. What more could you possibly want?

We can probably provide software and other resources as needed if that is your concern.

The September newsletter will be produced as a joint project with the new editor so do not delay!

The line forms here => Editor@PhoenixPCUG.org.

Proposed Bylaws

The bylaws committee and the board of directors of the Phoenix PC Users Group have completed the proposed bylaws, available at phoenixpcug.org/bylaws. You are encouraged to review the bylaws before the meetings this month, and address any comments to bod@phoenixpcug.org. We will discuss the bylaws in the meetings in April and May, and vote on them in June.