Phoenix PC Users Group

NEWSLETTER

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Phoenix PC Users Group

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Steering Committee: Officers and Members who are present at the 6:00 P.M. West Side meeting.

MAIN MEETINGS

West Side…...Tuesday, March 17

CollegeAmerica, 6533 N Black Canyon Hwy, Phoenix

East Side .Wednesday, March 18

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

Fountain Hills …..Thurs, March19

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

Presentations this month:
West Side Gene Barlow's Yearly Visit
East Side and Fountain Hills
Lo Hardman's Setting Up and Using Wireless

Go to our Website at www.PhoenixPCUG.org to check for changes.

Inside this Issue...

JUST IN FROM OUR MEMBERS

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Gene Barlow will only be at the West Side General Meeting this month. We will hear about his latest updates, new products and insight into happenings in the computer world. Your attendance and support is greatly needed. He is one of our last commercial vendors. Lo Hardman, our Treasurer, will be presenting at the East and Fountain Hills meetings this month. He will be giving information on setting up and using wireless connections, as well as Q and A.

The Presentation for April is still open. It was suggested at the last Steering Committee Meeting that members select topics from one or more of the great computer publications on the Internet. The Internet also has some great Q and A sites that can provide lots of information. It would be great if you could work up a 'show and tell' on a topic of your choice. We will supply the equipment and assistance.

Our Merger Committee held their meeting. Our Merger Committee and the ASCIi Committee are to meet soon. After that, a merger recommendation will be presented to our group and the ASCIi group for consideration and possible approval.

A reminder, the South West User Conference X3 in San Diego is starting Aug. 11th this year. Email me for details.

If you have not paid your dues, please remit, thank you.

We are always looking for questions for our 'Members Ask' column. If you have a question that does not seem to get answered during meetings, email it to : **president@phoenixpcug.org**.

Dean Botchuck

FROM OUR EDITOR

March is our twenty-fifth anniversary. That is a long time for any group to stay together. Actually it has been longer than that because we had meetings before we were incorporated and have been around for most of the desktop computers history. See page four. Everyone coming to the West Side meeting will receive a mystery prize.

Each month I pick out at least one article for our members that are new to computers as well as several articles for our more experienced member's. This month you will find an entry level article on "File Management." There is also an article called "Sand Box." We have covered this program before but it is worth revisiting.

We also need articles written by some of our members, so bring up Word and start writing.

We are opening up the Newsletter for Ads and Business Cards to help defray the increased cost of printing. See page thirteen. Any member that sells or buys an ad gets an extra door prize ticket for each sale or purchase.

Bill Aulepp

SIG (SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS)
GENERAL INTEREST:
Chuck Lewis leads this SIG.
On hiatus until further notice.
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY:
Bill Funk leads this SIG
Meets: Wed Mar. 25th 6:00 PM.
At CollegeAmerica
DIGITAL VIDEO:
David Yamamoto leads this SIG.
Meets: After Photography Sig.

CALENDAR

March 2009

Tuesday, March 17 ……………………………………… West 6:00 PM
Gene Barlow's Yearly Visit ……………………… ..CollegeAmerica

Wednesday, March 18…………………………..… East 6:30 PM
Setting Up and Using Wireless ………………………………….UAT

Thursday, March 19 …………………….…….. Fountain Hills 6:30 PM
Setting Up and Using Wireless …………………………..Library

Wed, March 25 … …………………………….…..Photo SIG 6:00 PM
Shutters …………………………………………... CollegeAmerica

General Sig is on hiatus until further notice.

April 2009

Tuesday, April 14 ……………………………….…… West 6:00 PM
PRESENTATION TBD …………………………...CollegeAmerica

Wednesday, April 15 ……………………………..… East 6:30 PM
PRESENTATION TBD …………………………………...UAT

Thursday, April 16 ……………………….. Fountain Hills 6:30 PM
PRESENTATION TBD ………………………………..Library

Wednesday, April 22…………………………….. Photo SIG 6:00 PM
PRESENTATION TBD ………..…………………...CollegeAmerica

CHECK OUR WEBSITE
FOR PRESENTATION, ROOM AND TIME CHANGES
www.PhoenixPCUG.org

TID BITS FROM THE PAST

BACK TO the 80's

Our group incorporated March 6, 1984, under the name the Phoenix IBM PC User's Group.

Dues were higher, $50 a year for new members and $180 for corporate members

PCUG owned a color projector monitor. Members could rent it for $75 per day, non-members for $150.

The newsletter was just beginning to solicit advertisers, averaging 2 to 3 ads in each issue.

A Help Line was staffed by volunteers from 7 to 9 pm at one telephone number.

Monthly meetings in Mesa were canceled but meetings in Phoenix continued.

AUTOMENU was the featured disk in 1985, praised as the solution to the problem of learning all DOS commands

Workshops were held weekly. Registration ranged from $15 to $35 and members were urged to bring their own computers.

The group became the Phoenix PC User's Group in 1986 (unofficially) when IBM was dropped from the name.

It is our intention to continue this column as a "history" of your user group. Fifteen years is a fair amount of time to "be in business" and the new comers to our group will gain an appreciation of who we are and how we got here by learning more about the group. As the history unfolds over the next few months, it will become clear that the group was built on volunteerism and dedication to the user group motto "Users helping users to understand computers". We are looking for PCUG tidbits

from the past! We know many of you have interesting stories to tell send them in or call a Board member. It is interesting to note that that our records indicate that among the "oldest" members (time in the group) are the following:

Bill Alton #2
Francis Nakayama #39
Grey Staples #53
Robert Wood #104
Mary Fox #140
John Holmes# 153
AlSpeers#165

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The article above appeared in our March 1999 Newsletter. It brought back memories of the start of our group in the early 1980s.

To get a more accurate picture on how it all started I called Bill Alton one of the founders. Bill recounted the following. He reminded me that in the early 80s, User Groups were not new but were mainly about Apple Computers.

Bill said we decided to investigate if there was an interest in founding a group specializing in the Dos operating system. A meeting was called at the Valley Bank building on the roof. Talk about interest! There were more than 2000 attendees. With that kind of interest the Phoenix IBM PC Users Group was started with hundreds of members to send it off.
After several years of successful ad hoc meetings in 1986 IBM was dropped from

MEMBERS ASK

Question: Delete unused programs.

Answer: First, be sure you delete the intended program! My preference is to use the uninstall function in the start menu. Click on the start button and click on the program in the startup menu you wish to delete. Often there will be an uninstall option in a pull down list. Click on it and follow the instructions. If uninstall is not one of the options in the list, use the Windows uninstall utility below.

XP, from the start button, click on 'control panel'. Double click on the 'Add/Remove programs' icon and in a few seconds a list of all your installed programs appear. Click on the program you wish to delete then click on the Change/Remove button. Follow the screen prompts.

Vista, from the start button, click on 'control panel'. Double click on the 'Programs and Features' icon and a list of installed programs appear. You now have two choices. One, click on the name of the unused program then click on the Change/Remove option at the top of the window. Second, double click on the unused program name. A permission window may appear, click continue. Follow the prompts.

In either case, you will be asked to reboot in order for the uninstall to be applied. You may want to, from the start button, go to Accessories > System Tools > and run Disk Cleanup. I have found that sometimes the actual folders containing the ap

plication files are not removed. If you are brave, you may want to search in 'Program Files' for the unused folders. Be sure you do not delete a folder that is active!! You may not like it!!

Remember, the views expressed in this column are mine and may not be the views of the Group. But, if you care to risk it, email your questions to

president@phoenixpcug.org.

Dean Botchuck

MEMBERS ASK
is a Monthly Feature.
It's your chance to
Participate in your
Newsletter.
So email your
questions to Dean
at:

president@phoenixpcug.org

FILE MANAGEMENT

File Management – Part One
by Ron Hirsch, Contributing Editor, Boca
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What exactly do I mean when I say file management? And, I can hear you saying "Who needs to fool around with that stuff. I have too many real things to concern myself with. My computer takes care of all those things anyway, doesn't it?" Well, the answer is yes and no. If you went into a restaurant to dine, would you rather select your own choices from the menu, or just have the waiter bring you what he feels like bringing? Very few of you will answer with the latter. But, most people don't bother to establish/customize their file preferences on the computer. It's easier to just take what the computer has been set to do. And, they don't have to learn anything (they think) if they just accept all the defaults.

Please note that I'm making the assumption that you know how to use a mouse, and right or left click on things. And, when I say "scroll down" or drag, you know what to do. If you haven't reached this point yet, I think it's time to take a very basic beginner's course before proceeding.

The simplest way to understand the way your computer stores things is to consider the following. Suppose you saw a line of text as follows -

USA\Florida\Boca Raton\123 Broadway\2nd floor\room 24\gray file cabinet\top drawer\3rd folder\2nd document.

I'm sure that everyone would understand exactly where to look for the document in question. **The line above is actually a descriptive *path* to get you there.** Well, computer hard drives store things in a very similar way. A path to get to a document in your computer might be -

c:\My Documents\Letters\Personal\Aunt Emma's Birthday.doc

This path states that the filename is "Aunt Emma's Birthday.doc", and it is in a folder named "Personal". That folder is a subfolder of "Letters", which is a subfolder of "My Documents", which is a folder on the hard drive C. To define paths in computer language a "\" is used to separate the various elements of the path. Note that this information is not case sensitive. That is, upper or lower case makes no difference. Just having learned this already puts you well on the road to understanding file management.

File management includes things such as establishing certain folders which will be the storage areas for your documents, and other files. You direct where files will be stored in various of your programs by saving your files in folders you establish or define. This makes things easier when you want to do backups also. Many programs allow you to specify what those folders are. So, when you go to save a file, that folder comes up as the default. A common cry from beginners is "I saved the file, but I don't know where it is."

Within a folder you can have sub-folders. For example, if you had a folder c:\letters, you could put in subfolders for business, personal, club, etc.. This way, you have an organized filing system. If you have a file drawer that you use for filing things, most people will have separate folders or hangers for different categories. Throwing everything in the same area make it much more difficult to find things, just as putting all your different socks into the same drawer, unpaired, and mixed up, makes life tougher also.

Most people are intimidated by their computers. Remember, it's only a machine, and you should be the boss, not the computer. The more you understand, the more in control you will feel. But, that doesn't just happen. Like all things in this world, you must make it happen.

FILE MANAGEMENT

Continued from page 6)

Reading these articles, and doing the practice can help you along the road to that end.

Once you become reasonably proficient in the subjects to be presented, you will be prepared to move files around, copy them to a floppy or ZIP disk to back them up, or delete them. The exercise below should help you in this area.

Please note that the protocols used here are applicable not only to PC's, but also to Mac's. These protocols are very logical once you understand them. The term "Windows" will be used throughout the article. This means that all versions of Windows, 95, 98, ME, or Windows 2000 will follow the same procedures

EXERCISE NUMBER 1

Open up Notepad - if you don't know where it is, click on the **START BUTTON** on the bottom left of your screen **START>PROGRAMS>ACCESSORIES**. Double click on Notepad, and the standard Windows text editor will open. Notepad is simply a small program in which you can generate and edit text documents. It offers almost nothing in the way of formatting, but is a bare bones text editor, as opposed to WordPerfect or Word which are capable of elaborate activities.

Type "This is a test." in the Notepad window.

Save the document by clicking on FILE>SAVE. A window will open. At the top of the window is an area with the notation "Save in". It will probably show your C: drive. If not, use the scroll arrow to select the c: drive. Once you have done this and double-clicked on it, there should be a listing below of all the folders on the C: drive. Scroll to the one named "My Documents", and

double click on it. (My Documents folder is a standard folder that Windows installs.) The focus is now on that folder. Next, go down to the bottom of that window and in the field at the bottom, select "all files(*.*)" just to see what else is in that folder. There is a field with "File name" alongside of it. In that field, type testfile.txt. Then click on the save button. You have now saved that file in the "My Documents" directory. Now, exit Notepad.

Open Windows Explorer. If you don't know how to do this, it's time you learned. Click on **START>PROGRAMS>EXPLORER**. Or, click on the Windows key and the "e" key on your keyboard at the same time. Navigate around to display the list of folders on the C: drive. If that's not what showing, find C: on the left and double click on it. This should bring up the list of all the folders on the C: drive. Find the My Documents folder, and double click on it. There should be at least one file there, the one we just saved called **"testfile.txt"**.

Before continuing, I suggest that you configure Explorer to show all file extensions. This makes working with Explorer easier. At the top of the Explorer Window, click on **VIEW>OPTIONS**, and then uncheck the line which reads "Hide file extensions for the types that are registered."

This is the end of part 1 of Learning Basic Windows skills. Next month, the second part of this will cover moving and copying files, along with setting up new folders. If you find this material useful, you may want to download this article in PDF format, from our web site www.brcs.org. This allows readers to keep the material either as a PDF file, and/or print it out, and place it in a looseleaf notebook for future reference

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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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JUICE YOUR BROADBAND SPEED

Juice Your Broadband Speed
Written by Vinny La Bash, a member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., FL
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People prefer broadband internet connections because of the obvious speed advantages over dial-up and satellite links. Then why is it that broadband never seems to be fast enough? Are you getting the speed promised by your ISP? Broadband can cost $100 a month or more, but does the provider really provide the advertised speed? Is the connection reliable or does the modem need a reboot several times a day? Fortunately, there are ways to achieve high, reliable throughput without having to have an engineering degree. Here are some suggestions to get every bit per second possible from your modem without any technical hiccups or interruptions in service.

Start with your computer and TV equipment. A common source of line noise can be traced to improper grounding of anything that plugs into household electrical circuits. This can seriously degrade performance of cable equipment. Every electrical device, especially those in the same room as the cable modem, should be plugged into properly grounded outlets. The best connections are with polarized plugs oriented in the correct direction, and please don't use any three prong to two prong adapters. Get up-to-date gear. Electric outlet testers are cheap. Buy one and use it to test for excess voltage on your ca-

ble wiring. Any problem could indicate a serious safety hazard. Engage a licensed electrician to fix it.

Almost anything manufactured today in the consumer electronics world is light years ahead of its predecessors manufactured only two or three years ago. Cable modems are no exception, so if yours is more than three years old get a new one from your provider. Most providers will make a free exchange, but some will require an extension of your contract. You want to do this because the latest modems conform to the DOCSIS 2.0 standard. This offers higher upload and download capabilities and supports other advanced broadband applications, including online gaming and peer-to-peer computing.

Ask your ISP if they automatically update firmware for the modem. If they don't, have them supply the website address of your modem's manufacturer so you can download the most recent firmware. Check the website about twice a year for new updates.

Next, go to a test site such as PC Pitstop, and check your upload and download speeds to see if they match the terms of your service contract. If they don't, give your ISP a call and have them reset the modem's settings. While you're at it, have them check the signal-to-noise ratio. Too much noise can cause interference, and your modem will then have to resend information cutting down on your throughput.

It's possible that your cable wiring may contain too many splices or simply be too long. That can be fixed by a visit from your ISP technician. Have the technician check the line quality leading to your house. If the signal is good and you're having problems, the house wiring may be the culprit.

BROADBAND SPEED

WEB TOUR

(Continued from page 9)

The definitive answer for cable modems is to create a split directly after the junction box and then run a new cable directly to your modem. The other side of the split will take care of your television sets which aren't nearly as sensitive to line noise.

After you've done everything from a hardware and firmware standpoint, and your cable connection is as clean as possible, you're ready to fine tune the system for best performance. Vista users don't have to do much of anything to optimize the operating system since Vista does TCP stack tuning dynamically. Any internet performance adjustments can be made through the browser. Firefox users may want to try Firetune or Fasterfox. They are both free utilities and allow adjustment to cache memory, capacity and other settings such as pipelining.

If you do a lot of downloading, you can save time by installing a download manager like Flashget. This widely used utility claims the highest number of users on the inter-   net. It uses MHT (Multi-server H y -   per-threading Transportation) technique. It's very easy to use and comes with exceptional document management features. Best of all, it's free.

After all this work, it would be a tragedy if you didn't keep in mind that sometimes the simplest solutions are the best ones. Most cable modems and routers have reset features. Many a mysterious internet ailment has been corrected simply by resetting the equipment. Turn off the computer and the modem. A Un-plug the modem for a few minutes and then power everything back on. You may be pleasantly surprised.

Useful programs & websites:

If you are on a budget, or not, these are excellent programs that will help you with many functions, not originally on your PC. These are all free for personal use.

 Use www.downloads.com or www.majorgeeks.com for retrieval.

(Example - Google [siteadvisor site: mcafee.com] searches withing mcafee.com web site)

SiteAdvisor from McAfee.com, for IE & Firefox. Warns users of bad, fair, or good web sites. Absolutely a must for every user.

Belarc.com - does an "audit" of your PC's hardware, software, installation key codes (for example MS Office & Windows XP / Vista). Save & print these out as.you add / remove programs, devices, etc. Even finds your motherboard's mfr & serial number, very helpful when you call tech support.

SyncBack - easily configured, does auto backup, synchronizing one directory to another or bi-directional (be careful in how you choose over write options). Configs can backup by date & time, even several per day, week, etc. Not a mirror full drive backup, only directories.

Camstudio - records video, screen shots, audio. If you have trouble or want to document what happens on your PC, this is excellent. The avi files can be sent to tech support to show what happened, or used for training purposes.

Atomic Clock - time sync, helpful if you PC is drifting in time, before you replace your clock battery

Audacity - powerful audio recorder, editor, amplifier, noise reduction. Great for re-

SANDBOX COMPUTING

Sandbox Computing
Written by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., a Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., FL
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This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups; all other uses require the permission of the author (see e-mail address above).

I spend a lot of my time surfing the web looking for research material; computer tech sources, genealogy data, vocal music and other information. This means that I am downloading many web pages, clicking on many links and generally opening up my computer to all types of malware. I always have to be aware that there are many traps on web pages that are just waiting for the unwary surfer. It used to be that having an up-to-date virus checker, a working firewall and parasite scanners, you could adequately protect your computer. That changed to some degree when the "drive by" downloads appeared. Now with the constant appearance of "holes" in the Windows operating system (XP & Vista) and the various web browsers, it is less obvious that you can protect your computer from unwanted visitors. Microsoft recently (October 22, 2008) released an out-of-cycle patch (patch 958644) for Windows for what has been described as a very serious opening that could be exploited regardless of the browser you are using. There have also been recent articles on "clickjacking". In this situation "buttons" or links are floated behind the link you think you are clicking. The only option to prevent this is to disable JavaScript. That creates more problems as JavaScript is a very important part of the whole web experience and is used on almost every page. So when you do know that you can run a script and when you can't? Well, the "Sandbox" may be a way to surf safely and avoid the installation of malware on your computer without having to disable JavaScript.

My Sandbox experience is based on using the sofware application "Sandboxie" (www.sandboxie.com) with Windows XP and Firefox 3.0. As with everything related to computing, your results might be different. Sandboxie is a very small program, approximately 450 KB. So it is quick to download and doesn't require a lot of memory to run.

Next, let's take a look at what is meant when I talk about a computer sandbox. The sandbox is a complete "virtual computer" running in your computer's memory. This virtual computer is isolated from the real operating system files and creates any files it needs for use within the sandbox. When the sandbox closes, everything in it disappears unless you chose to keep it. It's like having a bank vault within a building where everything can be locked within the vault and nothing is removed without special permission. The neat thing is that nothing that happens within the sandbox can have any effect on your computer. This means that Trojans, rootkits and other malware have no chance to affect the operation of your computer outside of the sandbox. If a problem occurs when you are running in the sandbox, all you need to do is shut it down, you are returned to your normal computer operations and the malware is erased.

When Sandboxie is started it creates a sandboxed folder which contains a drive folder, user folder, and Registry "hives". The "hive" is Microsoft's term for collections of related Registry keys stored together. The parts of the Registry needed for sandboxed operations are stored in a hive which is then integrated into the Registry. There are also instances of Windows services stored within the sandboxed folder that can be accessed by applications running within the sandbox. These are referred to as "process objects" and are needed for normal operations. When the sandbox is running there may be instances of these objects running both sandboxed and non-sandboxed. Also, you can run an application within the sandbox at the same you are running it outside the sandbox. The complete operating system is not loaded into the sandbox. This reduces the

SANDBOX COMPUTING

memory required for the sandbox operations.

Applications running in the sandbox can not hijack non-sandboxed programs. Therefore they can not operate outside the sandbox. New files or other created objects have a path assigned by Sandboxie which directs them into the sandboxed folders. Sandboxie prevents any programs running inside the sandbox from loading drivers directly. It also prevents programs from asking a central system component, known as the Service Control Manager, to load drivers on their behalf. In this way, drivers, and more importantly, rootkits, cannot be installed by a sandboxed program. This is one of the features that prevents rootkits from being installed outside the sandbox.

In actual operation, using Sandboxie is very simple. To make it even simpler, there is a short tutorial available on the Sandboxie web site. This can be accessed from within the program the first time you run it or directly from the Sandboxie home page by clicking on the "FAQ & Help" link.

After installation it can be set to load whenever the computer is started. This puts an icon in the system tray. Clicking on this icon brings up the Sandboxie Control Center. This window lists all sandboxed applications and object. When I started it, the window indicated nothing was sandboxed. So, using the menu I selected run an application and then selected Firefox. This changed the list in the window to show Firefox as well as the two RegHive files. With Firefox up, I did my usual web surfing. Along the way I received a message from Sandboxie that a new version was available that I could download. At this point, I really couldn't tell that anything was different from my previous surfing experience with Firefox. So I went to the Sandboxie page and downloaded the new version. After finishing I closed the Sandboxie Control Center. Then I went looking for the download so I could install it. Well, it didn't exist anywhere on the hard drive! I had closed Sandboxie without marking the up-

date to be saved! As a result the download was deleted, along with all the other sandboxed files when I closed the Control Center. So I opened the Control Center, restarted Firefox and downloaded the update. This time I selected it to be saved before I closed the Control Center. Then I was able to install the update.

I should also point out that now I have an icon on the desktop which automatically runs Firefox sandboxed. Sandboxie can be set up to isolate your browser automatically whenever you open it. To do so, add the name of your browser's executable file, such as firefox.exe or iexplore.exe, to the list of programs Sandboxie always opens in a sandbox. If you don't do this, Sandboxie will not set your browser to open automatically in the sandbox.

As you can tell from these comments, Sandboxie does not require a reboot to start the sandbox process. Sandboxie does sandbox access to files, but not to the complete hard drive. It does sandbox access to registry keys. It also sandboxes access to many other classes of system components, in order to trick the sandboxed program into believing that it isn't being tricked. So you can open and close Sandboxie repeatedly while you are using your computer without having to do any rebooting.

If this discussion has interested you and you would like to take Sandboxie for a test run, the free version can be downloaded from: www.sandboxie.com. This application is free for personal use. However, there is a Pro version available for $30.00. If you like the program and can afford it, buy the Pro version. This software is the work of one person, Ronen Tzur, and this payment is his means of support to continue working and improving this software. After some experience in running Sandboxie, I can highly recommend it as an excellent method of protecting your computer from malware. :

*Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years, developing software and assembling systems.

BUSINESS CARDS

NEWSLETTER POLICIES

Submissions to the "News" should be in MS Word, RTF or unformatted text.

Articles, photos, screen shots may be e-mailed over the Internet directly to the editor at:
editor@PhoenixPCUG.org

Please include the author's name, address, phone number and e-mail address on the first lines of the article.

All materials submitted will be considered for inclusion in the "News", but the Editor reserves the right to edit as necessary, to maintain standards of literacy, grammar, and length requirements. No materials will be returned unless arrangements are made made in advance.

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IMPROVING VISTA PERFORMANCE

Improving Vista Performance
Written by Vinny La Bash, a member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group Inc., FL.
www.spcug.org
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Microsoft has added security features in Vista which didn't exist in XP. There are new functions and while the graphics are really neat, they can give your system a big performance hit if you don't have enough memory. Thanks to up-to-the-minute technology, and great manufacturing improvements, RAM is cheap. There is no good excuse for not loading up with as much memory as possible.

Vista is the most RAM hungry modern operating system in existence. One gig is about the lowest amount of memory you can have without feeling that you're slogging through a lake of molasses. Two gigs should give you acceptable response time, and four gigs will put wings on your PC with some afterburner boost thrown in. Don't be a cheapskate. It's false economy to starve your system of RAM.

If you are already loaded with Ram, you can use Vista's built-in ReadyBoost feature in conjunction with a flash memory card or USB key to give an added kick to system memory. You need a high performance flash card or USB drive. Insert the device and Vista will politely ask you if you wish to use the device to speed up system performance. Answer yes, and then tell Vista exactly how much of the device to devote to speeding up the system. ReadyBoost will be active as long as the device is plugged into the system.

Once you have enough memory, examine your video card. If you want to experience the full graphic capabilities that Vista offers, buy a video card that's Vista Premium Certified.

To see how your video card checks out, open up Control Panel, switch to Classic View, and then activate the Performance Information and Tools utility. Look at your base score. This number represents the overall graphic capability of your system. Notice that your base score is not some combination of all the subscores. Your base score is the lowest performing member of all your subscores. That doesn't seem fair, but that's reality. You can try updating your score, but it probably won't change.

If you get between 1 and 3, general operations which include word processing and spreadsheet tasks will work fine. Email and web browsing should be OK, but web sites with large amounts of embedded graphics will take a long time to load. Video applications will be problematical.

A base score between 3 and 4 can run Aero and the majority of the new Vista features, but Vista's more advanced capabilities may bog down your system. For example, your monitor will be satisfactory even at its highest resolution, but multiple monitors may slow down your system severely. You will be able to watch most TV shows, but a high definition broadcast could be a slow motion disaster.

A base score higher than 4 should handle anything that Vista throws at it, including HDTV and 3D gaming. If what you want or need from Vista requires a higher base

IMPROVING VISTA PERFORMANCE

score than your system can provide, you need to replace one or more of your components. Use the subscores to determine what stays or goes. A low score may require you to either turn off the Aero interface or upgrade your video card.

Go back to the Control Panel. From the Classic View activate the System icon and then select Advanced system settings. When the System Properties dialog box comes up, click the Settings button in the Performance section. You're about to make some tough choices.

If you can't make decisions, you can Let Windows choose the best settings for my computer and be done with it. Adjust for best performance disables all the great visual effects that make Vista a terrific graphical interface. Adjust for best appearance makes your system look spiffy, but you'll take a hit on speed.

Choosing Custom allows you to make some reasonable compromises while keeping full control of your PC. Some features like sliding menus are pure eye candy and do nothing useful. Turning them off gives performance improvement with no loss of function.

There are options in the Advanced tab where you can control how the CPU processes work. What's more important to you, adjusting for visible performance or making sure that the housekeeping services Vista performs are performed efficiently? Make your choice and monitor your system. You can always change it back later.

Unless you know what you are doing, leave the Virtual memory section alone. Virtual memory is a portion of a disk drive that's configured to masquerade as memory. Because it's part of a disk and not physical memory, it can't work as fast as real memory. When the system runs out of physical RAM it can use a disk drive to keep going instead of stopping dead in its tracks.

You can change the location of the file to a different disk, resize it, or do both. Each choice has consequences of its own. Making the wrong choice won't destroy your system, but it could noticeably slow down performance. The default choice is to let Vista manage the file. That's the best choice for most people.

There are many other things that you can do to get the best possible performance from Vista such as modifying the Index Options, but that's a subject for another article.

THE
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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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TID BITS

WEB TOUR

the groups name and we became known as the Phoenix PCUG.

In 1987 I became the Editor of the Newsletter when the previous Editor, Bob Howard, moved to Oregon. This was an absolutely new venture for me as I had only recently owned a computer and had no background in Newsletters. I had never used the Ventura publishing software that was in use at that time. Luckily I tracked down the former Editor in Oregon so I at least had a hint on what to do. I remember I would go through a ream of paper each month to construct a 34 or 36 page Newsletter.

We printed 1000 copies each month as it was the practice to not only distribute the Newsletter to each Member but also provide advertisers promotional copies and to other groups as an inducement to provide us with monthly presentations. With no internet and not many other sources of PC information the Newsletter was a hot item. Some local store advertisers (I am not naming names) would request as many free copies as they could get and then turn around and sell them.

Finding material to put in each edition was a chore. I had a large group working on stories and I put together a network of Newsletters Editors in surrounding States and by phone we would trade our stories for their stories,

Instead of the internet many groups had BBS (Bulletin Board Service) which could be reached by dial up. Ray Moore was the keeper of our BBS which terminated in my bedroom. Ray was the person that kept everything going in that period. There are so many others who worked on the Newsletter. Too many to list.

Well that was then and now is now. Today there are so many sources of PC information that we have lost our monopoly but there still is a place for "Users helping users to understand computers."

Steve Semon

cording support calls, doing audio note taking, music editing, etc.

 Woot.com - one deal of the day, some excellent, some goofy. Hard drives, PC's, audio, camcorders .....

www.giveawayoftheday.com - free daily programs, not restricted for personal use, but no support. Utilities, small programs, often useful, etc.

Logmein.com - remote support for your computer or to help others. Free version will support several PCs. Can be toggled on/off as needed. Excellent support tool to demo remotely to others what you are doing.
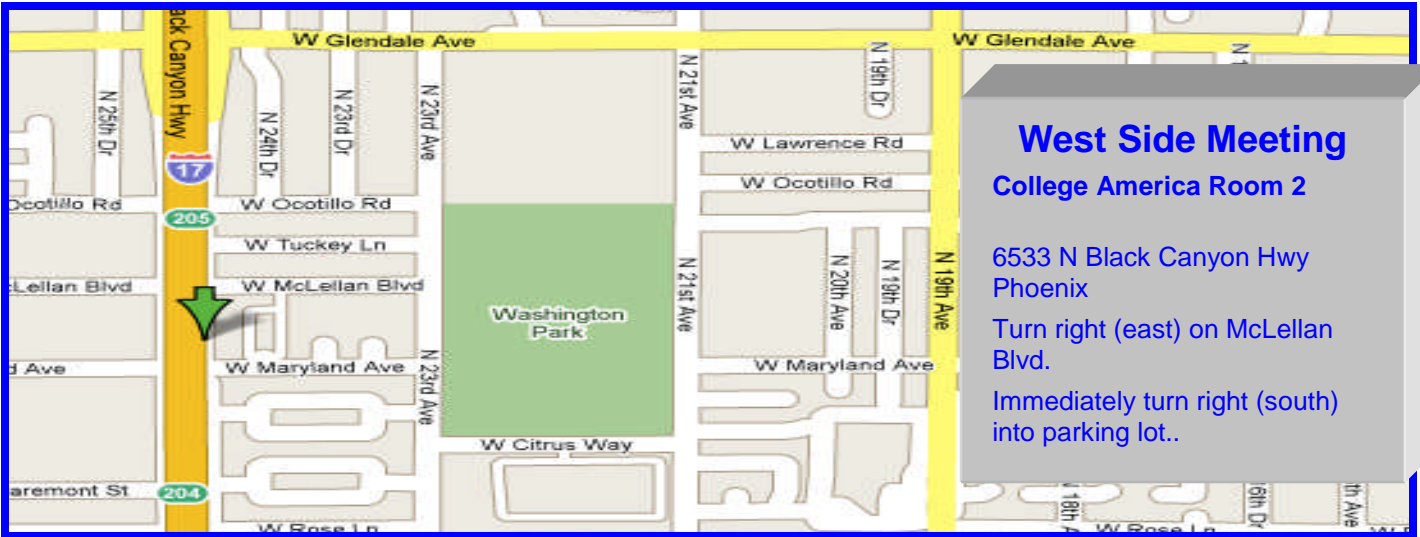
David Yamamoto

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Web Tour idea has been tried several times and hopefully it has found a home at last.

In future Newsletter editions we will search the internet for the useful, the unusual, and the freebies you might not be aware of. Please share your favorites with us. Send to : Editor@PhoenixPCUG.org
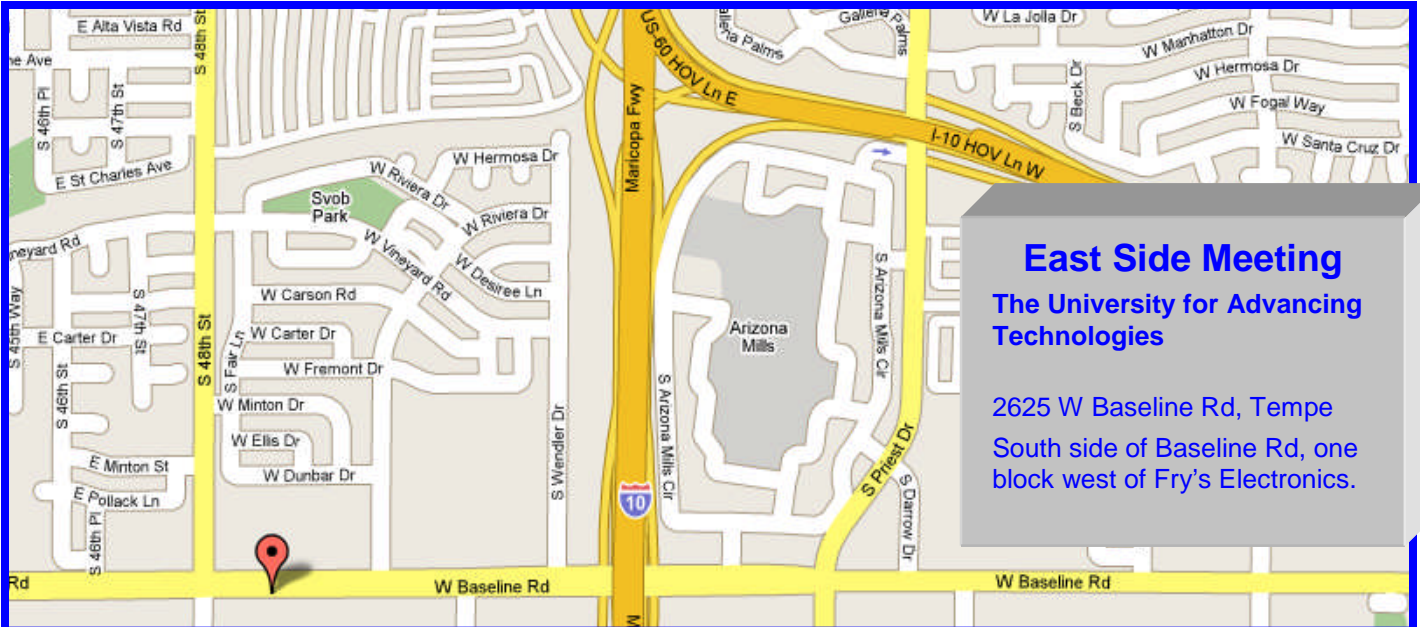
Next month we plan to tour the Internet in search of "open source" programs for your PC.

Most of us know and many use "open office" but this is only the beginning. There is a whole universe of goodies waiting for us.
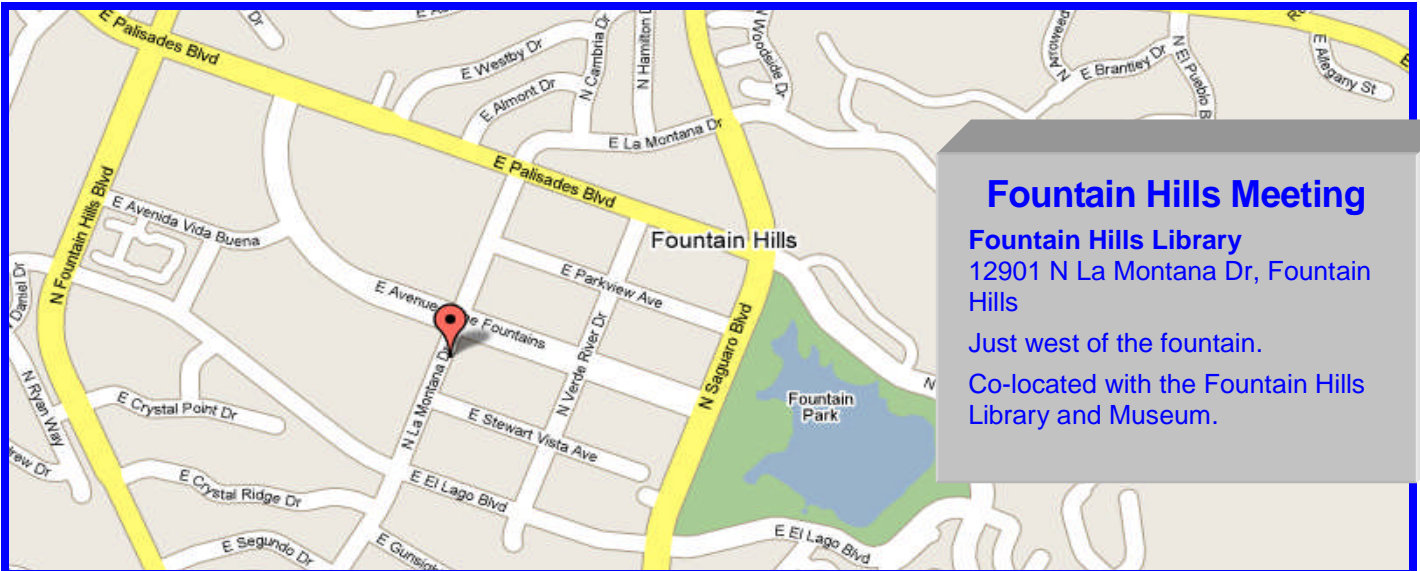
HOW TO GET THERE

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.

Co-located with the Fountain Hills Library and Museum.

Web address:
phoenixpcug.org

March 2009

The Newsletter of the Phoenix Personal Computer Users Group
"Users helping users to understand computers"