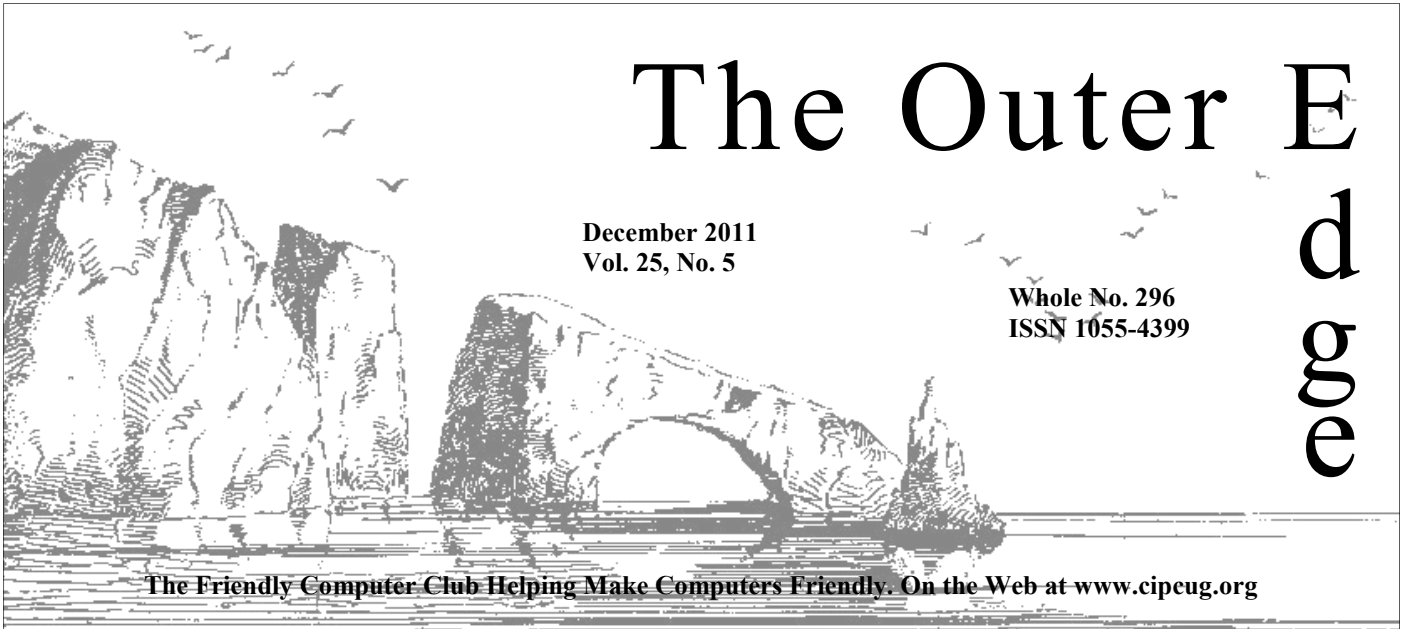


The Outer Edge

December 2011
Vol. 25, No. 5

Whole No. 296
ISSN 1055-4399



The Friendly Computer Club Helping Make Computers Friendly. On the Web at www.cipcug.org

★
★ Attendance at the
★ November general meeting:
★ **49 members and guests.**
★ **We welcome one new member.**
★

To Contact CIPCUG

The Outer Edge.....805-485-7121
General Information.....805-289-3960
Mailing Address...P.O. Box 51354, Oxnard, CA
93031-1354
On the Web: cipcug.org
On Facebook: [Facebook.com/groups/cipcug](https://www.facebook.com/groups/cipcug)

'Secret Guide' is now available

"Secret Guide to Computers & Tricky Living" will be available again at the December meeting. Several members who picked up copies in November were pleased with the book and the information it contains. The book retails for \$25 but is available to CIPCUG members for \$20.

The board ordered more books than we had orders for, so anyone who didn't order one should still be able to get a copy for yourself or as a gift.

For more information about the book, visit author Russ Walter's website using any of these URLs: www.angelfire.com/nh/secret; SecretFun.com; TrickyLiving.com; TrickyLiving.org; SecretGuide.org; or SecretGuideToComputers.com. Earlier versions may be ordered through the site at \$3 each.

COMMAND.COM

By Jim Brown, President

As I write this message I am still in Texas (checking on the oil wells) and recovering from yesterday's (Thanksgiving Day) meal and the gathering of relatives. How Blessed we are! I hope that along with me you would consider this computer club as a blessing also. Behind the scenes are dedicated individuals who put in the hours, intention, and physical energy needed to present our monthly meetings. I think you would agree that the meetings are informative, and the personalities blend to provide a comfortable and pleasant experience. I respect all of the volunteers who put this altogether.



Brown

I encourage all of you to bring a guest, leave an issue of our newsletter for others to see, and share your enthusiasm with others.

Our December meeting will be on the third Saturday of the month so don't be late.

Who knows? I'll probably be in attendance also!!

THE CIPCUG BOARD OF
DIRECTORS WISHES ALL
CIPCUG MEMBERS A MERRY
CHRISTMAS A HAPPY NEW
YEAR,

Root Directory

CIPCUG NEWS

Benefits 19
 Bits & Bytes 15
 Board minutes 3
 Coming CIPCUG events 3
 Contributors to TOE 16
 Command.com 1
 Editor's corner 16
 F1 — Your Help Key 18
 Map, schedule 20
 Membership report 17
 Program: Topaz Laboratories 7
 Q&A session 4
 Treasurer's report 16

GENERAL

Review: iPad 11
 Review: WinPatrol 8
 Review: TrueCrypt 13
 Security: Insecure router
 and more 9
 Rick's rant: Occupy this! 10
 When to back up your
 hard drive 12

ADVERTISEMENTS

Creative Technology 14
 Members' classified ads 14
 O'Reilly 14
 Ventura County Computers 13

**Channel Islands
 PC Users Group**
 CIPCUG mailing address:
 P.O. Box 51354, Oxnard, CA
 93031-1354

Executive Committee

(Elected members of Board of Directors)
 President.....Jim Brown
president@cipcug.org
 Vice President/Program Chairman
Craig Ladd
vicepresident@cipcug.org
 Secretary.....Diane Mortensen
secretary@cipcug.org
 Treasurer.....Art Lewis
treasurer@cipcug.org
 Immediate Past President
Rick Curry
trindflo@cipcug.org

(Appointed members of Board of Directors)

Technical Adviser.....Toby Scott
 Web Page Editor.....Helen Long
webmaster@cipcug.org
 TOE editor.....John Weigle
editor@cipcug.org
 Membership Chairman.....Ken Church
membership@cipcug.org

Ex-officio members of Board of Directors

CIPCUG ISP Signups.....Art Lewis
 Sound Equipment Technicians
 Jim Burke and David Minkin
 Program Chairman.....Craig Ladd
 Publicity Chairman.....Rick Curry
 SIG coordinator.....Larry Hudson

Past Presidents

Walt Yates.....1987-1989
 Lois Evans de Violini.....1989-1991
 Terry Lee.....1991-1993
 Jerry McLoud.....1993-1995
 Robert Provart.....1995-1997
 Toby Scott.....1997-1999
 George Lakes.....1999-2001
 Andy Toth.....2001-2003
 David Harris.....2003-2005
 Lois Evans de Violini.....2005-2007
 Paul Westefer.....2007-2009
 Rick Curry.....2009-2011
 (With the exception of the immediate past
 president, past presidents are not board members.)

Life members

Frank Segesman*
 Toby Scott
 Lois Evans de Violini
 Art Lewis
 *Deceased



**CIPCUG is a member of APCUG,
 The Association of PC Users Groups**

The Outer Edge

Editor.....John Weigle
 P.O. Box 6536, Ventura CA 93006
 485-7121.....jweigle@vcnet.com

The Outer Edge is published monthly by Channel Islands PC Users Group (CIPCUG), P.O. Box 51354, Oxnard, Calif. 93031-1354. an independent, nonprofit corporation. Contents of *The Outer Edge* copyright 2001 © by Channel Islands PC Users Group.

Permission for reproduction in whole or in part is granted to other computer user groups for internal nonprofit use provided credit is given to *The Outer Edge* and the authors of the reproduced material. All other reproduction is prohibited without prior written consent of Channel Islands PC Users Group.

Opinions expressed in this journal are solely those of the authors or contributors, and do not necessarily represent those of Channel Islands PC Users Group, its officers or membership as a whole. The information provided is believed to be correct and useful; however, no warranty, express or implied, is made by Channel Islands PC Users Group, its officers, editorial staff or contributors. This disclaimer extends to all losses, incidental or consequential, resulting from the use or application of the information provided.

Channel Islands PC Users Group does not endorse or recommend any specific hardware or software products, dealers, distributors or manufacturers. All trademarked or registered trademarked names are acknowledged to be the property of their respective owners, and are used for editorial purposes only.

Advertising in The Outer Edge

Advertising is accepted for computer-related materials, businesses and services only. Rates are for Camera-Ready copy (clear, clean black and white masters). Typesetting and graphics are available at an additional fee.

SIZE	Cost/Issue
FULL-PAGE (9½”H x 7¼”W).....	\$50.00
HALF-PAGE (4½”H x 7¼”W) or (9½”H x 3½”W).....	\$30.00
THIRD-PAGE (3”H x 7¼” W).....	\$25.00
QUARTER-PAGE (4½”H x 3½”W).....	\$20.00
BUSINESS CARD ad.....	\$15.00
Discounts for multiple issues (3, 6, 9 and 12 months)	
Ad copy deadline is the 5th of the month of publication.	
Make all checks payable to CIPCUG.	

Members' classified ads are free but are limited to 105 characters, including spaces.



2006 Southwest User Group Conference: second place in both the newsletter and Web site contests.

Coming events

Staples schedules presentation on tablets

Programs

A representative from Staples is scheduled to make a presentation on tablets at the Dec. 17 meeting (remember that we meet on the third Saturday this month). The meeting starts at 8:45 a.m. at the Camarillo Boys & Girls Club, 1500 Temple Ave. (Ponderosa Drive and Temple Avenue), Camarillo. (See the map on the last page.)

The doors open at 8 a.m. The Internet and Networking SIG and the Social Media SIG will start at 8:45 a.m.

More information about the tablets that Staples stocks can be found at its Tablet Center at http://www.staples.com/sbd/cre/marketing/technology-research-centers/tablets/index.html?cmSearchKeyword=tablets?cid=PS:GS:SBD:SB:E:9:190:tablets_at_staples.

Other coming meetings:

- Jan. 28: Gene Barlow webinar
 - Feb. 25
 - March 24
 - April 28
 - May 26
 - June 23
 - July 28
 - Aug. 25
 - Sept. 22
 - Oct. 27
 - Nov. 17 (**third Saturday**)
 - Dec. 15 (**third Saturday**)
- Vice President Craig Ladd is working

Door prizes

We have two types of raffle tickets: one for prizes offered by the presenter and one for club-provided prizes. The tickets for the presenter's prizes are free and limited to one per member.

The tickets for the club-provided prizes are \$1 each, \$5 for six tickets, \$10 for 13 tickets, \$15 for 20 tickets and \$20 for 27 tickets and are available to anyone. Those who can't stay until the drawing may sign their tickets and give the person selling the tickets a list of the prizes they would like in the order they'd pick them. Winners' prizes will be held until the next meeting.

Consignment table

A consignment table is set up at every meeting. Anyone can buy, but only members can sell.

The club gets 10 percent of the sales price. Sold items must be picked up at the end of the day's meeting.

Any items not picked up will become the property of CIPCUG and will be subject to disposal at the club's discretion.

CIPCUG is not responsible in any way for items bought or sold at the table. Each item is sold as-is unless otherwise stated.

Meeting, SIG notices

If you would like e-mail notices of regular meetings and SIGs, go to www.cipcug.org, where you'll find a link on the home page to sign up. The URL is cipcug.org/listserv.cfm.

You will need your membership number, which is on the back cover of TOE, to complete the sign-up.

on a presentation by the FBI for next year. Program suggestions are always welcome.

SIGs

The Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are sponsored by CIPCUG and led by volunteer club members. They are free to CIPCUG members.

Other than those presented during or just after the regular meeting, the SIGs run from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Ventura County Computers, 2175 Goodyear Ave.,

Unit 117, Ventura; phone 289-3960. From the 101 Freeway, exit at Telephone, take Telephone south to McGrath, turn left and go one block. Turn right on Goodyear and right again into the second driveway. Unit 117 is the back, right corner of the building. The pre-meeting SIGs are at 8:45 a.m. at the Boys & Girls Club. The after-meeting SIG is at locations to be announced on the meeting day.

The general schedule:

(Continued on page 4)

Minutes of the November board meeting

By Diane Mortensen

The CIPCUG Board of Directors held its monthly meeting on Nov. 19, 2011.

In attendance were Rick Curry, Craig Ladd, Art Lewis, John Weigle, Helen Long, and Toby Scott. Absent: Jim Brown and Diane Mortensen.



Mortensen

Art presented the October 2011 Treasurer's report, which appears elsewhere in TOE.

Craig mentioned that he had a prom-

ise from the "tablet" man at Staples for a presentation at the December meeting.

For January's meeting, Gene Barlow will be doing a webinar, topic, yet unknown.

Beginning Tuesday, Nov. 3, the Camarillo City Library, in partnership with the Channel Islands PC Users Group through Toby Scott, has been presenting a series of programs on security and safety for computers. The sessions included:

Nov. 3, 7-8 p.m. Topic: "How users get malware (viruses and spyware) and what they can do to protect themselves."

Nov. 10, 7-8 p.m. - Topic: "The risks of public online sites and steps to take to make a secure connection."

Nov. 17, 7-8 p.m. Topic: "What the hacking of Sony's servers reveals about user passwords and how to create secure passwords you can easily remember."

Toby said he was attempting to continue making presentations at the library with volunteers, and Craig said that he would follow up on that.

There being no additional business to discuss the board meeting adjourned.

Social Media SIG, Q&A

Twitter offers instant news and comments

Reported by John Weigle

Social Media SIG

The exterior of the Boys & Girls Club was being repainted on the day of our meeting, which delayed the start of the SIGs as we juggled the usual spot for the sign-in table and set up chairs for the Internet and Networking SIG in the area where the sign-in table and name badges usually are.

Michael Shalkey presented most of the SIG, and Jessica Scott periodically added comments. Jessica has expressed concerns about not being sure what members want to know about social media and would welcome suggestions for topics. Talk to her at any of the meetings.

Questions this month covered both social media and unrelated topics. — Editor

Microsoft Security Essentials

Q: How good is Microsoft Security Essentials?

A: It's the best of the free programs, and, in my opinion, Norton Anti-virus is the best of the paid programs. Norton 360 and Norton Internet Security are likely to slow your computer and can make networking difficult.

Whatever you do, don't use AVG. We've had several computers in the shop that are running up-to-date AVG that are infected with viruses.

Twitter

Q: How do I sign up for Twitter? I want to get messages on deals from American Airlines.

Q: Go to Twitter.com and establish an account. You'll need to enter your name, email address and a password. Be careful with the password because you enter it only once, and if you make a mistake you won't be able to get into your account.

Twitter will send an email to the address you listed, and you'll have to follow a link in the email message to complete the process. This is one of the few times you shouldn't worry about clicking on a link in an email because you're expecting it and were told to look for it after entering your information.

The procedure, which includes retyping a "captcha," a word typed in an odd font to make it difficult for bots to interpret, is called dual factor identification. You're being asked for your name, your password and the retyped word (the name and password are considered one item). Various types of dual factor identification are likely to become more common as the war on spammers and hijackers continues. One reason for more stringent measures is that hackers could clean out your credit card accounts if they could learn your name, login and password for an account such as Amazon.com that stores credit card information.

After the Twitter account is estab-

lished, you decide what individuals or companies you want to follow. A search for "American Airlines" resulted in many posts (as did a search for "American Airlines sucks"), but the company's Twitter page appeared in a separate column on the right of the main page.

Twitter is a sounding board for complaints about businesses, and it's often the first source for breaking news because users can post items with their cell-phones. It has the disadvantage that posts (called tweets) are limited to 140 characters, including spaces. Many companies hire people just to monitor Twitter for comments about the company. It doesn't matter if no one follows you; companies are concerned that bad comments can circulate quickly and damage their reputations, so many of them respond quickly to try to resolve problems that people raise.

Many news people use Twitter, both for tips and to obtain information from people on the ground in areas that are difficult to reach quickly. Disasters and political upheavals — even the death of Michael Jackson — are often reported first on Twitter. Tweets are also common during awards shows with running commentary by news people covering the events and viewers watching at home.

Michael recommended the book "What Would Google Do? Reverse-

(Continued on page 5)

More on coming events ...

(Continued from page 3)

Fourth Tuesday: Linux.

Fourth Saturday (or the regular meeting day): Social Media SIG (Jessica Scott and Mark Maidel) and Internet and connectivity SIG (Toby Scott), 8:45 a.m. The location of Michael Shalkey's after-meeting SIG is announced at the meeting.

The December and January schedules follow:

December

Saturday, Dec. 17: Regular meeting, pre-meeting Social Media and Internet,

connectivity SIGs.

Tuesday, Dec. 20: Linux SIG. Topic TBA. Note date change because of the holidays.

January

Tuesday, Jan. 24: Linux SIG. Topic TBA.

Saturday, Jan. 28: Regular meeting, pre-meeting Social Media and Internet, connectivity SIGs.

Be sure to check the calendar on cipcug.org for updates on event programs, dates and times.

Find us on the Web at
<http://www.cipcug.org>
 and at our Facebook
 page at <http://www.facebook.com/groups/cipcug>.

(Continued from page 4)

engineering the Fastest Growing Company in the History of the World” by Jeff Jarvis, a blogging pioneer, for ideas about the future of the Internet. Michael also said that Steve Martin is preparing a book of a year’s worth of his tweets along with responses to them.

Steve Gibson of Gibson Research Corp., the developer of SpinRite and a computer security guru, is active on Twitter, posting as sggrc, Michael said. Tweeters use the @ sign and a user’s screen name to identify posters (i.e., @sggrc).

Users who want more information about Twitter terminology can search for “twitter terminology” for a variety of online help. Twitter’s own terminology guide is at <http://support.twitter.com/entries/166337-the-twitter-glossary>.

Michael provided this addition after the meeting:

More and more other services will use services like Twitter. One instance is my Photo-A-Day project I’ve often mentioned. Once I upload my photo to one of many photo-sharing sites, I tweet the link to it in a message including #mostly365. This means that the Mostly 365 project will add it to its Web page for that day. (You are allowed to post only one photo per person.) Now my photo is on a Web page with photographers from around the world. Best part is, no human had to do this manually; it is automatically updated. You can see one of my photos on the Nov 21 page (Port Hue-neme Bubbling Springs Park in the rain).

Twitter vs. LinkedIn

Q: What’s the difference between Twitter and LinkedIn?

A: Michael Shalkey: I don’t know anyone who’s really using LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>), although I’ve had requests to join other people’s pages. As far as I can tell, it’s mainly for people who are looking for jobs. LinkedIn calls itself a business networking tool.

Twitter vs. Google+

Q: How do Twitter and Google+ compare?

A: Google+ doesn’t have the numbers that Twitter does, although it would like to. Twitter limits you to 140 characters, while Google+ has no length limit and lets you embed photos.

This month’s Q&A topics:

Social Media SIG

Microsoft Security Essentials

Twitter

Twitter vs. LinkedIn

Twitter vs. Google+

Tabbed browsing

Regular Q&A

64-bit Vista installation disc

XP Pro 64-bit

MSCONFIG

CTFMON.exe

Restoring items that were unchecked

Thunderbird address books

Kindle wireless problems

Internet problems

Access points

Roku and Angry Birds

FiOS

Windows 7 SP1

Google doesn’t advertise. If it did, it could probably attract many more users for Google+, but it wants to grow carefully and slowly so its servers aren’t crashing regularly.

Jessica: Facebook, Google+ and Myspace are basically the same thing. Twitter focuses on short posts on specific subjects. My generation won’t read many things longer than Twitter posts, while your generations will read newspapers and books.

Michael: They all fit together. As we’ve often said about links in emails, don’t blindly click on links in tweets because they can take you to places you don’t want to be. More and more tweets promise porn — and some of them will even give you the porn, along with a batch of malware.

Jessica: Twitter posts can spread like wildfire.

Tabbed browsing

Michael: Tabs are becoming more popular in browsers. Some people regularly have 100 tabs or more open.

Q: How does that affect your bandwidth?

A: It depends on the pages you have open. If they’re all static, the effect is not tremendous. If all the pages are changing often, like news sites and sites with flashy ads, there is a tremendous effect.

Regular Q&A

Unless otherwise noted, Toby Scott of Ventura County Computers answered the questions and Michael Shalkey handled the computer duties. — Editor

64-bit Vista installation disc

Q: I have a laptop with a 64-bit version of Vista. The recovery partition disappeared because of a virus. How can I get an installation CD?

A: We can provide one for you. The

discs are ubiquitous. You can exchange them or borrow them. The 25-character certificate of authenticity or key code is the key to the installation. If you don’t have that, you’re out of luck. Never share the key code with anyone.

Michael Shalkey: If you have a laptop, look at the sticker on the bottom, write the number down and put it in a safe place. Those numbers disappear because of the heat from the laptop and liquids soaking the sticker.

Toby Scott: Some manufacturers are putting the sticker in the bottom of the battery holder, where there is little heat. If the number is gone, we can not replace it, and you’ll have to buy a new version of Windows.

Do not download Windows from a torrent website. Those are usually pirated versions with a built-in COA aimed at Third World nations. The downloads often include malware.

XP Pro 64-bit

Q: Is the 64-bit pro version built in to XP?

A: There are installation discs with the 64-bit version, but you really have to search for them. If you have one, don’t lose it. The 64-bit pro versions of Windows 7 and Vista are included on the installation discs.

If you buy a laptop today, you’re pretty much limited to the 64-bit version of the operating system.

MSCONFIG

Q: I’m trying to find the equivalent of the system configuration utility in Windows 7.

A: Michael: Go to Start and type msconfig in the search box. Click on it, and you’ll get the program, which has General, Boot, Services, Startup and

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

Tools tabs. As he looked at the startup items, Michael found one called pflset.dll, and Toby said he thought it was a virus. After the meeting, Michael said he had searched for the file and run a scan and found no infestation.

Toby: You want to be careful in here because you can disable your machine if you disable the wrong program or service. The purposes of some items are not always clear from their names, but if they control a video card and you disable them, you'll be in trouble. If you don't know what something is, Google is your friend. Some items are generic to your computer brand.

CTFMON.exe

Q: In my XP, the only item checked in Startup is CTFMON

A: It's OK. I've forgotten exactly what it does, but it's not malicious. (It's related to Microsoft Office; see <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/282599>. — Editor) Windows 7 generally has more startup items checked than XP does.

Restoring items that were unchecked

(This related question was placed here although it was asked later in the session. — Editor)

Q: If you uncheck something can't you restore it by just rechecking it?

A: Normally, yes, but there are some services, such as software for video cards, that are difficult to fix. If your video card doesn't work, you won't be able to see anything on your monitor.

Michael Shalkey: That's generally not a problem if you use the MSCONFIG option to hide Microsoft programs.

Toby Scott: That's true, but there can still be problems. If you're not sure what something is for, find out before you disable it.

Thunderbird address books

Q: I use Thunderbird for email, and I'm locked in to one of the address books. How do I get out?

A: I don't use Thunderbird, so I don't know. Try to create a new address book and see if that gives you a list of the existing ones. If it doesn't, you might have to reinstall it.

Before you do that, get the **MozBackup program** (<http://mozbackup.jasnapaka.com>), which backs up bookmarks, mail, contacts, history,

extensions, passwords, cache etc. in the various Mozilla programs. It's primarily used when you're moving to a new computer, but it will also work for a reinstallation of the programs. It does not make automatic backups; you have to run it manually.

Kindle wireless problems

Q: I'm having trouble with my wireless network on my Kindle. I've been able to connect to email on the computer so I know the router is working. I've unplugged the router, let it sit and powered it back on, and then it has worked. I have a Linksys router and a Time Warner modem.

A: If you have the separate items, turn them both off. Turn the modem back on first and wait for the lights to go solid. They should blink slowly, then fast and finally go solid. If the lights blink slowly, speed up and start blinking slowly again, your Internet connection is down. If you get a solid green light, turn on the router. If that works, you should be good to go. If you're not, you have to log in to the router (you'll need name and password), to the administrative tools and ping an IP address. Use 8.8.8.8 because it's the easiest one to type. It's a DNS router at Google so should be up and running. You should get four replies that say it arrived. If you can't get to the router at 192.168.1.1, the default IP address for a Linksys router, it's time for a new router. Don't get the cheapest one. Get one of the brand names like Netgear, D-Link, Linksys or SMC. If you have a large house, get one with three antennas, which have more ability to get through walls and other obstacles. I like the WRVS440N by Cisco, which runs \$170-\$180. The more antennas you have, the stronger signal you have. If you're in a small apartment, a router with one antenna is fine.

Internet problems

Q: For the past few weeks I've had trouble with the Internet connection. I've had to power off the modem and the router regularly to get the connection to work. I'm blaming Time Warner for that. Am I right?

A: It's more than likely the router. It could also be power issues or a bad socket. You can plug one computer into the modem without turning the modem off to see if you can get to the Internet. If

you can get to the Internet straight through the modem, the problem is with your router. Look for diagnostic tools, router status, connection status or something similar — different routers put it in different places — and look for check connections or ping. Try that to see if you can connect. I think all the high-end routers now support VPN (Virtual Private Networks). It's not something you can split out.

Access points

Q: What do you recommend for an access point?

A: First, check to be sure that your router has the capability to be an access point. It will say on the box. Some do, some don't. Almost all Belkin routers will act as an access point. Let's say you're in a large house or office and your DSL is connected to one computer and your network, but you want to get the signal to a point far away, such as the picnic table in the backyard. You can run Ethernet cable to a point near the backyard and plug another router in or you could use the router as an access point. If you use it as a router, you can only get to the Internet from the backyard. If you use it as an access point, you'll be able to see the other computers on the inside network, so you could print or access shared data from outside. If you use it as a router, make sure the two routers have different IP addresses. The main router would be 192.168.1.x (this number can change); the second router could be given the IP address 192.168.11.x. If you are using it as an Access Point, it will have an IP address like 192.168.1.2 with a gateway of 192.168.1.1, which will be the IP address of the primary router.

The difference between this and a wireless bridge is that the bridge generally connects you to another network; it's generally a one-to-one.

Roku and Angry Birds

Q: A while ago, I bought a Roku 2 box and it has Angry Birds on it. I've forgotten how to play the game. Is there a manual or something?

A: Michael Shalkey: It can be addicting. Angry Birds is also a Chrome plugin. The object is that the birds are angry because the pigs stole their eggs. The

(Continued on page 7)

Program: Topaz Laboratories

Plug-ins allow building a picture from scratch

By John Weigle

jweigle@vcnet.com

As one member of the audience said during last month's program, you can no longer believe anything you see in pictures.

The comment came during a presentation by Ivan Randall, who demonstrated Topaz Laboratories' plug-ins and Layer Cake software, which can do, as Randall said several times, wild and crazy things with pictures.

When he was here a couple of years ago, Randall showed us what appeared to be just a black blob that, it seemed, could never show any details. As he worked on it with Topaz products, it turned into a full-color picture of a pizza. This

time, he showed, among other things, how to produce pictures of things that never happened by combining a picture of a person from one photo, and pictures of the sky and a foreground from Layer Cake, a collection of backgrounds, foregrounds, animals and other things.

Many of the adjustments can be performed with one-click actions, but a variety of effects can also be obtained with slider adjustments to make the effects even more dramatic.

One plug-in converts photos from color to black-and-white and adjust the transparency of parts of a picture — like a bridal veil — so the new background can be seen through it.

Animals can be added to a scene, and their shadows can be adjusted to match the position of the sun for the other parts of the picture.

The bundle of effects include Adjust (customize exposure, color and detail strength), DeNoise (remove color noise and banding but preserve image detail), B&W Effects, Remask, Lens Effects, Detail, Simplify, Clean, InFocus, DeJPEG (eliminate jpeg compression artifacts) and Fusion Express.

The Topaz Labs website has numerous training videos for all its products along with examples of what the plug-ins can do.

Layer Cake contains 1,000 high-resolution photos with the masking work completed.

"Problems in Digital Photography" was the title of Randall's demonstration, and he described the problems and their solutions.

Cameras range from simple, inexpensive point-and-shoot models to expensive models that come with interchangeable lenses — and good pictures can be taken with all of them, Randall said.

Discussing RAW vs. JPEG formats, he said there are good reasons to use both formats. The best argument for JPEG is that many cameras can shoot in only that format. RAW is an uncompressed format, while JPEG compresses photos, eliminating some data, he said.

Many photographers prefer to shoot in RAW so they have the

(Continued on page 8)

More on Q&A ...

(Continued from page 6)

only way to kill the pigs is to the use birds' own bodies and a slingshot.

FiOS

Q: My Verizon FiOS wireless on Windows 7 is usually fast, but it's been slowing down recently. Is there some way to check to see if someone else is using my network when it slows down?

A: Make sure that you have selected WPA or WPA2 for your security protocol for wireless security. As Michael can tell you, it's easy to break through WEP. (Michael said he had moved and it took 31 days to get DSL hooked up; he managed to break into a neighbor's network in 2.5 minutes.)

Michael: Be sure you're not using "none" for your security option because then anybody can get in.

Toby: Some older laptops might not have WPA2. If you have all new equipment use WPA2, but I wouldn't upgrade old equipment just to use WPA2.

Michael: I'm guessing, but I think my

neighbor is using WEP because he has an X-box or old gaming console that doesn't support WPA2 and he's playing on the Internet.

Toby: If you have such devices, I recommend connecting them to the network by wires so you can use WPA2.

You need to know your IP address, which you can find by going to a DOS box and typing ipconfig. It will give you the IP address and gateway address. Type the gateway address into your browser and it will take you to the router (you'll need your username and password). Usually the username is "Admin" with a password of "admin" or "password." If you have a modem/router combo, the serial number on the bottom of the box might be your password.

From audience: Slowness could also be a problem with the DNS servers, especially if you're using Time Warner and Roadrunner.

Toby: True. You can use OpenDNS or the old GTE servers at 4.2.2.1 (or 2 or

3 or 4 or 5). The default OpenDNS (opendns.com) will probably block you from porn sites.

Windows 7 SP1

Q: I'm using Windows 7 and want to hide the Service Pack 1 update because it won't install.

A: Hiding the update is not a good idea because viruses and spyware are the No. 1 reason that updates fail. I would not ignore the update or the problem, and I wouldn't hide the update.

You need critical updates for your browser, Windows and scripting languages because the updates are fixing holes that make it easier for malware to get in. There is a fix-it tool available from Microsoft (<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/2530477>).

Estimates are that 30 percent of the world's computers are infected, so it's not surprising that many people are reporting similar problems, but SP 1 has been out long enough now that any bugs in it have been fixed.

Review: WinPatrol

Take back control of your computer with Scotty

By Jim Thornton

jasthorn@gmail.com

One of the more common ways to keep your computer running at its best performance is to be aware when any new programs are being installed and when any existing programs are slowing down your computer. WinPatrol is a small program that puts you back in control of your computer. The goal of WinPatrol is to help you know what programs are running on your computer, to alert you whenever new programs have been added without your permission, to have you know that all existing programs are always being monitored, and to let you know whenever any program is attempting to make any changes to your computer. WinPatrol calls its monitoring feature Scotty, the WinPatrol dog, and Scotty is always on patrol and will bark to get your attention whenever he has discovered any of these potential problems.

In addition to Scotty, WinPatrol provides 14 separate lists of programs: (1) Startup Programs, a list of programs that start every time you turn on your computer or anytime that you restart Windows; (2) Delayed Start, a list of other startup programs that are delayed in starting, thus improving your startup time; (3) IE Helpers, a list of programs that aid your Internet Explorer browser; (4) Scheduled Tasks, a list of programs that are scheduled by your Windows Task Scheduler to run on certain dates and times; (5) Services, a list of Windows Services including client/server applications, Web servers, database servers, and other server-based applications to users, both locally and across the network; (6) Active Tasks, a list of the programs currently running on your computer; (7) Cookies, a list of cookies that you may want to selectively remove; (8) File Types, a list of programs associated by a particular file type; (9) Hidden Files, a list

of the hidden files; (10) Recent, a list of malware infections; (11) ActiveX, a list of controls that have been registered to be used by your Internet Explorer; (12) Registry Monitoring, a list of registry locations that shouldn't be changed without your permission; (13) Plus, shows the version number of WinPatrol and your name and registration code; and (14) Options, shows your performance and security needs.

Nine of the program lists have an Info option, and these lists of programs are Startup Programs, Delayed Start; IE Helpers; Scheduled Tasks; Services; Active Tasks; File Types; Hidden Files; and ActiveX. When you have highlighted a program within the list, and click on Info, it will provide the program's company name, the version number, the copyright information, the location of the program on your hard drive, etc. And if you are using WinPatrol Plus, you may click on

(Continued on page 9)

More on Topaz Labs ...

(Continued from page 7)

most data possible in every photo.

Dynamic range is a difficulty in photos. For example, if you look at a family sitting in front of a window, your eye can adjust for both the interior and exterior views. But a photographer has to pick one or the other for the picture. Topaz plug-ins can solve such problems, Randall said.

The plug-ins work in Photoshop and most other photo editing software, he said.

The DeNoise plug-in removes noise and restores details blocked by the noise, he said. "It was black, now it's back," he added.

Some photographers use HDR (High Dynamic Range) to create a variety of effects by taking four pictures at different exposures and merging them. But very often something in the picture, such as the leaves on a tree, moved as the pictures were taken, leaving them blurred. Topaz can create the HDR effects from a single

picture, so "we never worry about things moving anymore."

One plug-in lets the photographer improve or soften the focus of specific objects to create depth-of-field effects to focus more attention on the object in the foreground.

Randall also showed how the focus of a picture can be improved so that blurry numbers on a license plate can be read and a person in the background can be identified. Shades of TV's crime shows.

"It's crazy what black and white does for your photos," Randall said as he showed how black and white pictures can be turned into something more dramatic than a color picture of the same subject.

It's also possible to turn a color photo into a black and white photo and then add color to just part of the picture — his example turned a color street scene with a phone booth in the foreground into black and white and brought back the color on just the phone booth.

"I love it when the software does the

thinking for me," he said of how easy the work is.

He also showed plug-ins that adjusted photos so they looked more like paintings than photographs.

Portraits can be adjusted to remove skin blemishes and change skin tones, he said, and then showed how a woman's lips can be readjusted so they look more natural after skin tone is changed. Take care when dealing with portraits, he warned, suggesting that photographers never check on the "small details" option for a portrait because that will show every pore. The program can make women beautiful or turn them into monsters, he said.

"We're doing a lot of crazy stuff here — a lot of crazy stuff," he said.

On the Net:

<http://www.topazlabs.com/>

The tutorials and examples of what many of the plug-ins can do can be found here.

Security

Router can leave wireless network wide open

By **Bob de Violini**
rjddev@gmail.com

Fair warning from US-CERT (the United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team) to those of you who are using a D-Link DIR-685 Xtreme N storage router! According to its site at <http://www.kb.cert.org/vuls/id/924307>, this router is vulnerable to leaving your wireless network's security wide open to outsiders if you use it for very heavy network traffic, such as a large file download of over a gigabyte or media streaming like watching a TV episode or a movie over your Internet connection. What can happen during these conditions is that the router can drop its security completely, allowing anyone within range to use your Internet connection for whatever they please, such as sniffing the packets traveling between the router and any computer

that's connected to it wirelessly or just using the bandwidth for their own surfing free of charge. To quote the US-CERT site, "An attacker within physical range of the wireless router may be able to connect to the router's network without having to authenticate and then sniff traffic and also use the victim's Internet connection to launch other attacks." This condition allegedly persists until the router is rebooted. There are certain settings that must be present in order for this to happen with the router, and they are just the settings that I use and most folks *should* be using to ensure air-tight security for their wireless connections. Those settings involve setting the wireless security scheme to WPA or WPA2 and the encryption scheme to AES with a pre-shared key. A pre-shared key is a password known to the router and the computer(s) connected to it wirelessly that

you enter during the router's setup sequence. As of this writing, there is no fix available from D-Link or anyone else. If D-Link issues one, it will probably be in the form of a revised firmware update that will probably be available from its website. Portions of the above paragraph are produced 2011 by US-CERT, a government organization.

What the D-Link vulnerability means for most folks is that there's a chance your neighbors will be able to use your Internet connection for free if you have this router and if they are in range of its wireless signal. So, what to do about it if D-Link hasn't issued a fix for this bug yet? There is a glimmer of hope in a built-in function in the router's firmware that you access via its browser interface. It involves enabling a feature called Network Filtering or MAC Filtering. It basi-

(Continued on page 10)

More on WinPatrol ...

(Continued from page 8)

Plus Info, and you will be automatically connected to the WinPatrol website, which provides more information, including if the program is safe or not.

One of the most frequently used lists of programs is Startup Programs, where you can disable or remove a program based on the information and recommendations provided. The better option is to disable it for later removal. Then, should you find that the disabled program should be active again, you can easily add it back.

The other lists of programs where you can remove or disable programs are Delayed Start, IE Helpers, Scheduled Tasks, Cookies, File Types, ActiveX, and Registry Monitoring.

WinPatrol does a good job in monitoring and exposing adware, keyloggers, spyware, worms, cookies, and other malicious software and alerting you anytime new programs being added without your permission.

If you are a Window Vista user and use the User Access Control feature,

you'll find opening the main WinPatrol interface will require the additional permission. It's Vista's way of protecting your system from programs that are accessing critical system locations. In addition, you may already have some startup programs that require User Access Control interaction; moving these programs to your WinPatrol's Delay Start list will make Vista less annoying to use.

If some of your Delayed Startup Programs no longer work, it might be caused if you use a registry cleaner and some of your Delayed Startup Programs were removed. With WinPatrol, you can restore these removed Delayed Startup Programs by clicking WinPatrol's History button, which will list any Delayed Startup Programs that may have been erased so you can selectively restore any of the Delayed Startup Programs of your choice.

WinPatrol was first released in 1997, and since I first reviewed it more than five years ago, in December 2006, many improvements have been added. Back then, there were only seven lists of programs; the new ones are Delayed Start,

Hidden Files, Recent, ActiveX, Registry Monitoring, Plus, and Options.

There are three versions of WinPatrol: (1) a free version, which doesn't receive automatic updates; (2) the \$29.95 WinPatrol Plus version, which is stated for unlimited personal computers and gets a lifetime of updates; and (3) the \$49.95 WinPatrol Plus Family Pack, which is stated to support your entire family, and gets a lifetime of updates. The automatic updates provide new detecting features. If you have the free version, you can go frequently to the WinPatrol website to see if a new update has been released, and, if so you can download the newer free version. The current version is 20.5.2011, which was released on May 15, 2011, and is designed to work with Windows 95, 98, Me, XP, Vista, and 7, including the 64-bit version and Firefox. The Win Patrol website is <http://www.winpatrol.com>.

Both the PC World magazine and Kim Komando, on her weekly radio show, have recommended the WinPatrol program.

Occupy this!

By Rick Smith
rants@vcmail.net

I never thought I'd agree with the "OCCUPY WALL STREET" crowd, but it seems we have something in common. They advised everyone to boycott BLACK FRIDAY and not go shopping at major retailers. I heard and answered the call. While everyone else was hitting the stores at 12 a.m. and other ungodly hours I was sleeping off an incredible meal enjoying the break after preparing a fabulous feast for family and friends. Yes, I know I probably missed a few bargains, but, hey, let's face it, we all have enough stuff and I find

waiting for things I desire a virtue of my maturity. I am amazed at how people will act crazy to get something at a discount and then go live their lives wasting money every day. I wonder how much of that DISCOUNTED stuff goes on credit cards with interest. Not so discounted now, is it?

Rick's rant



Smith

Nonetheless, I even stayed home on Saturday, which was "SHOP SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY." They even have a Facebook page devoted

to it. Go ahead; I know you're thinking it: Call me Scrooge for not getting too wrapped up in the whole retail thing that has turned my beloved holiday Christmas into an excuse for self-indulgence. What is supposed to bring peace and good will to all instead brings out the mob mentality of "I'm going to get mine before you get yours." So I think I'll shop early this year online at Amazon while I still can get tax-free items. I'm staying home for Christmas so no airports to hassle with. I'm not making my annual pilgrimage to visit my relatives and sit through another horrible gift exchange where we fight

(Continued on page 11)

More on security ...

(Continued from page 9)

cally lets you spell out exactly which networked devices are allowed to access the network (and router) wirelessly. If you're not on the list, you're out of luck, *period*. There are ways around this method of protection, but we won't discuss them here. By the way, most wireless routers have this type of feature; it's just a matter of digging around in the geeky settings pages to find it. Even if you don't have the aforementioned D-Link router, this is still a *very good* feature for the majority of home users to use. If you'd like more information for your specific router, just drop me a line at the address at the top of this column, and I'll send you some info for your router, as long as it's available. However, *be very careful not to change the wrong settings on any other pages or you could wind up "bricking" your router inadvertently*. By bricking, I mean making your router almost useless and having to wipe out the customized settings by doing a "hard reset" to get them back to the factory settings the router had when you first took it out of the box.

Java updates

Fresh from the update merry-go-round, there have been numerous bugs found in Java's versions for all computers with version 6 update 27 and earlier. Most of these bugs allow Java applets to run with the full privileges of the Web

browser it's running within, rather than within a special "sandbox" that protects the browser and computer from any malicious code in the Java applet. Oracle has patched the bugs and has released version 6 update 29 as a result of the findings. If you have Java, go get the update from the following page as soon as you finish reading this: http://www.java.com/en/download/inc/windows_new_xpi.jsp.

Mozilla updates

Another member of the update merry-go-round of late has been Mozilla for its browser, Firefox, and email program, Thunderbird. Both have been undergoing major version changes of late in an effort by Mozilla to both plug security holes that have been uncovered and make new features available to users. Earlier this year, both Firefox and Thunderbird were in their respective iterations of version 3 (around 3.6.X for Firefox and 3.1.X for Thunderbird) and as of this writing, they now both stand at version 8.0. Version 8 of Firefox also boasts a greatly improved load time when you initially start it compared to earlier versions since 3.6 because of its improved memory management. This also leads to a better browsing experience, with pages loading much faster than before. Mozilla's current plans call for a new release with a new version number (i.e. 8.X.X to 9) to occur approximately every six weeks. By the way,

Thunderbird is also being changed to the rapid release schedule, but it's not too clear when that will be finalized by a formal announcement, so stay tuned.

Adobe updates

And what would an update roundup be without mentioning at least one Adobe product? Adobe's been busy since September, releasing updates to Acrobat and Adobe Reader as well as Flash and Shockwave. As in many other instances, these updates are all a result of various security bugs that have been found in the products. As of late November, Reader stands at versions 10.1.1 and 9.4.6 for folks who can't run version 10.

Those of you who have been running version 8 of Adobe Reader are now officially out of luck. Back on Nov. 4 Adobe discontinued ALL security and update support for all variations of version 8 of Reader, meaning that you now need to upgrade to version 9.4.6.

During the same time period, Flash player has gone through a couple of back-to-back updates, again because of security issues, bringing it up to version 11.1.102.55. Adobe Shockwave is up to version 11.6.3.633 because of the same security issues.

Is anyone getting dizzy yet on this merry-go-round?

Until next time, happy and safe computing.

Review: iPad a luxury not a necessity

By Terry Currier

president of the WINNERS WIndows users group, CA

June 2011 issue, *Winners Notepad*

www.windowsusers.org

winnersug@aol.com

Yes, I brought an iPad. But there is a reason or rationale behind it. While at CES, I won an Apple iPhone 4. As it turned out, though, they sent me an Apple Store card worth \$199, which would purchase the iPhone 4 but was good for anything. I did think about selling it, but I started to see the iPad as something the grandkids could use to play educational programs.

This is kind of like when my son

some years back bought us a good set of speakers for \$200 for our TV. My wife went out and brought a \$450 hutch to hold them. Not quite equaling out. So I'm getting \$199 off, but still have to spend about \$350 to get the iPad.

After hearing about the iPad 2 coming out, I was really interested. Like many others, I was disappointed to see it did not come out with the predicted USB port or media reader. Some were even saying wait for the iPad 3, but I decided to go ahead and get the iPad 2.

There was a four-week wait for it at the Apple Online store so I put the order in and got \$199 taken off. After it arrived, I had to set up an iTunes account. My first impression was — looks cool, but

not really ergonomic. The top is very smooth like glass. At least in my personal opinion I would like something like a rubberized strip. I want something to stop it from slipping out of my hands. This is especially true when the grandson starts playing with it. I did buy a case to hold it.

So far I've installed a number of educational apps (programs) and a few games. I have bought about \$50 worth of apps. I'm also trying many of the free educational apps. They are light versions; that is, they show you a small portion of what it will look like to get you to buy the full version. My grandson is 4 so most of them are ones that help kids learn the alphabet or how to count.

(Continued on page 12)

More on Rick's rant ...

(Continued from page 10)

each other for the right to claim the only decent gift. You know what I'm talking about: the game where you all get a number and choose a gift, and it can be claimed three times and then it's frozen. My relatives are so unimaginative that they give the same gifts every year. Lottery tickets, Starbucks gift card and coffee cup and the DVD movie with popcorn and a blanket. We're going to enjoy our home, each other, listen to Christmas music and go to a Christmas Eve service at our church. Who knows, if I have enough spiced eggnog, we might go by the neighbors and sing songs to them. So let me wish anyone who reads this a Merry Christmas and a very joyous holiday season. Now let's start talking about computers.

Sony, Sony, Sony. Just when I thought I had had enough, they pull me back in. I had a Sony VIAO notebook come in for a Solid State Drive upgrade. If there's anything you want under your tree, this should be it, folks. My customer had asked me to fix the battery icon as it was gone and he had no way of knowing when the notebook was going to run out of power. Well, sure enough, the power meter icon was grayed out and could not be selected. I tried everything under the sun to fix this thing. Oh, yeah, there were

fixes for this kind of thing, but none of them worked. And not knowing when the notebook was going to turn off was a major hassle. Imagine, if you will, you're working on a Word document and the thing just goes black. Yes, that's what happens when you cannot gauge battery power and the notification does not work either. As it turns out it's a known issue with Sony. Oh, by the way, continuing a trend, this model required me to remove 28 screws, the keyboard and a couple of other small parts before I could remove the hard drive. Be forewarned if you try to do this yourself.

My second Sony notebook was a PCG-8VIL. But it's really not. It's a VGN-AR1906. Sony puts about three different numbers on its PCs and it's confusing for me. It took me about 10 minutes to find the number written very small under the LCD screen. This was a high-performance notebook that Sony loves to hype. It came with two hard drives set up as a RAID. Since you all now know all about RAID you would think OK, it's going to be a RAID 1 for data protection. But no, it's shipped as a stripped configuration RAID 0. This increases performance but makes it hugely more likely to lose data. Sure enough, we worked on this last year, and I told the person that this was only going to end badly. I sold

her a backup drive and warned her the best I know how about the dangers. Well, sometimes I hate being right. One of the drives failed, and the notebook takes an hour to start. Unfortunately, when you remove the drives another PC does not even recognize them — and the person, of course, never used the backup drive I sold her. I find myself wondering why with my infinite knowledge of human nature I didn't just force the issue and do a complete reinstall of the OS on a non-RAID drive and set her up to go through life with a small margin of safety. Now she is going to have to spend lots of money paying me to try to get her data. As I have said before, RAID should not be used outside of a server environment and certainly not on a notebook with non-raid notebook hard drives. I just pity all the people under similar circumstances who trust major vendors to look out for them. That notebook should have come with a big red warning label stating that you better be religious about backups if you're going to own one of these.

Yes, it seems I'm on a one-man quest to get Sony out of the PC business. So let's see what next month brings me as I search for the world's worst computer problems to share with you.

Happy New Year and Merry Christmas to all and to all goodnight.

When to back up your hard drive

By Gene Barlow

User Group Relations

Copyrighted November 2011

This past week, my computer failed and I was left without a working computer. Yes, computer failures happen even to the experts! Fortunately, I practice what I preach and had several good backups to use to rebuild my computer system. In fact, while rebuilding my computer system, I made additional backups to protect me as I worked through this problem. Everything is working perfectly now thanks to my backups.

This experience got me thinking. As a backup expert, I know when to do different types of backups. I was concerned that many of my customers and friends that don't have this knowledge may not know what to do in backing up their computer system. So, I thought I would share some of my experience in this area with you this month.

As a beginning, every user needs to do a basic backup process that I describe in my tutorials and documents (<http://www.ugr.com/nl0804.html>). This is a full image backup of your entire main hard drive done each week with the images stored on an external hard drive. If you do no more than this, you will be well protected. However, there are other important times when additional backups are needed. Let me explain.

The following is a list of important times to do additional backups of your computer system:

1. When you first buy a new computer is an ideal time to immediately back it up before you start to make changes to the

Gene Barlow is scheduled to present a webinar at our January meeting.

computer. This will give you a basis to return to when your computer was clean and working.

2. When you decide to do backups, get a copy of Acronis True Image Home 2012 from us and an external hard drive from your local computer store. Follow the instructions in the Starter Guide I provide my customers to do your first backup immediately. Don't wait months before you do your first backup. It may be too late then.

3. I recommend separating your important data files from your program files on the hard drive. Then, you can back up your important data files daily and your less critical program files weekly. This will give you much better protection of the files that are most important to you. See a paper I wrote on this subject at <http://www.ugr.com/nl0608.html>.

4. Always do a full hard drive backup immediately before you partition that hard drive and then do another full hard drive backup after the partitioning is completed. This will let you return to where you were before partitioning if anything should go wrong with your revisions.

5. I recommend doing a full hard drive backup just before you install any major new software product on your computer. Software installations can mess up a computer when things go wrong. Having a full backup to use in those situations is a great protection.

6. Today, we see lots of "Speed-Up"

and "Clean-Up" utilities on the market. These promise great improvements of your systems. However, you must trust these programs to work correctly. Unfortunately, they may over clean your computer, and important files and function may be lost. Always do a full backup before using these types of utilities.

7. From time to time, we must take our computers into the experts to be fixed. Often, the computer will be returned to you with all of your programs and important data files removed from the hard drive. Sure, your computer works now, but you are missing many important things from your hard drive. Make sure you always do a full hard drive backup before leaving your computer at the repair shop.

These are just a few of the many important times to do a backup of your main hard drive. Set up your backup program to run automatically on a regular basis, but don't forget to do extra backups when you are faced with any of these special situations.

The top rated backup utility on the market today is Acronis True Image Home 2012. This outstanding product is very easy to use, completes full image backups very quickly, and can restore your computer to its working condition in minutes. We work with Acronis to market this excellent backup product to the user group community. Through this special connection, we can offer you True Image 2012 for half (\$25) of its normal retail price (\$50). To order at this great discount, simply go to our secure website at <http://www.ugr.com/TrueImage.html> and click on the appropriate Buy Now button.

(Continued on page 13)

More on iPad ...

(Continued from page 11)

The one game that is addicting to all of us is Angry Birds. Even my non-computing wife likes playing it. With my grandson. I have to set a limit with him so he also plays the educational games.

One I thought would be really cool is the Time Warner app. If you have them

as a TV and Internet provider, you can download the app for free. With it you can watch a number of their channels on the iPad. Only problem is Wi-Fi connection is poor for the iPad. I can be sitting in my living room and not get a connection, and it is especially evident with the Time Warner app. I can catch the Wi-Fi

signal very easily with my notebook. I have sat right in front of the router. and it still has to buffer the video to the iPad or it simply loses it.

While the iPad is fun I do still consider it to be a luxury item, but grandparents have been known to spend lots of money on their grandkids.

TrueCrypt is free data-encryption software

By John Langill

Newsletter Co-editor, Southern Tier Personal Computing Club, NY

August 2011 issue, Rare Bits, STPCC Newsletter

jlangill (at) stny.rr.com

The May 2011 issue of *Rare Bits* contained an article by Dick Maybach titled “Cloud Computing” in which he pointed out the necessity of securing your data via encryption when it “... is stored on the same disks, uses the same memory, and passes through the same processors as

everybody else’s.” And I recall Dave Bilcik voicing a similar warning at the May meeting and also mentioning the program TrueCrypt. It just so happens that I am currently using TrueCrypt and I believe it to be very satisfactory solution whether you need relatively modest security or very tight and sophisticated protection.

TrueCrypt is a software system for establishing and maintaining an on-the-fly-encrypted volume (data storage device). “On-the-fly” encryption means that data is automatically encrypted or decrypted right before it is loaded or saved,

without any user intervention. The entire file system is encrypted; e.g., filenames, folder-names, contents of every file, free space, meta-data, etc. No data stored on an encrypted volume can be read (decrypted) without using the correct password and/or key file(s), or correct encryption keys.

I’m not sure how unique TrueCrypt’s approach is, but I was nevertheless intrigued by it. The first step is to create a “container;” otherwise known as a TrueCrypt “encrypted volume.” To my mind,

(Continued on page 14)

More on backing up ...

(Continued from page 12)

To get this special price, just indicate the name of your user group and the order code of UGNL1011 when you place your order.

If you have questions about this article or the True Image product, send an

email to support@ugr.com and I will try to help you with your questions.

This is one of a series of technical articles that I distribute to those who have subscribed to the newsletter. You can subscribe at <http://www.ugr.com/NewsletterRegistration.html>. Watch for

them and learn more about your computer and its hard drive. User group newsletter editors may print this article in their monthly newsletter as long as the article (between the two horizontal lines) is printed in its entirety and not cut or edited.



Ventura County Computers
Fast, Friendly, Humorous Service... Most of the time.

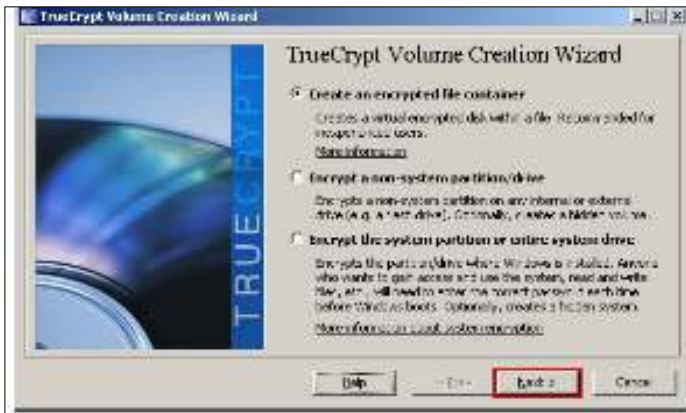
(805) 289-3960
2175 Goodyear Ave. #117, Ventura 93003

Intel® Solid-State Drives just got better with the Intel® SSD 320 Series. Utilizing Intel’s compute quality 25nm NAND silicon, these drives boast improved performance, built-in data protection features and capacities from 40GB up to 600GB. All Intel SSD 320 Series products are now covered by a 5-year limited warranty.





Intel Solid State Drive Sale
Mention this ad and receive 20% off our regular price



Top: TrueCrypt's volume creation wizard. Bottom: A directory shows the TrueCrypt volumes.

(Continued from page 13)

this is somewhat like obtaining a safety-deposit box at a bank.

TrueCrypt provides a “wizard” to assist with the task. As at a bank where safety-deposit boxes of various sizes can be rented, the encrypted volume can be created to have as much capacity as you need. For example, it can be a specific portion of a hard disk, or an entire flash drive or other storage device. Unlike a safety-deposit box, however, you hold the only key ... so you need to remember and protect it. And into the container (the volume) you can store any number of files. If the capacity of the volume is exceeded, you simply create a bigger container.

One of the interesting facets of a TrueCrypt volume is that it has most of the characteristics of an ordinary file. That is, the volume can be moved or copied within the storage areas of a given PC, or to a different PC. The name of the volume can be changed; and the volume can be included in routine backups. It can be transmitted across the Internet; and even into the wild blue yonder, if you're so inclined. And, even if you have no intention of salting “the cloud” with your personal data, what

(Continued on page 15)

Members' classified ads

Classified ads are free to members. Each ad is limited to 105 characters, including spaces and to one ad per member per month. Copy has to be to John Weigle, editor of TOE (editor@cipcug.org), within the week after the regular meeting. Otherwise, the ad is held to the following month.

Free

For sale

Wanted

Other categories as needed

The Outer Edge is printed and prepared for mailing by:

Bob Weisensee
Production Supervisor



CREATIVE TECHNOLOGY
of Sarasota, Inc.

5959 Palmer Boulevard
Sarasota, FL 34232-2841

bob@ctimbs.com
newsletters@ctimbs.com

(941) 371-2743 Fax: (941) 379-2933 (800) 533-1031

User group members
SAVE 40% off print
and **50% off ebooks**

ENTER DISCOUNT
CODE: DSUG

O'REILLY



Spreading the knowledge of Innovators

oreilly.com

Be sure to keep your anti-malware programs up to date and run regular scans.

'Secret Guide to Computers' now available

Art Lewis received the "Secret Guide to Computers & Ticky Living" last month and will have them with him this month also. If you have ordered the book but haven't picked it up, please do so this month.

Craig has promised AGAIN that we will have a program on tablets in December. DON'T FORGET WE MEET THE THIRD SATURDAY — DEC. 17. If Staples stands us up again, I'm not going to publish it again!

He also mentioned that he was work-

Bits & Bytes



Long

stration Desk.

I need someone to take over the updating of CIPCUG'S Web page. It is becoming more than I can handle and I hate

ing on AVAST, Samsung Products, and Moz-Backup for next year.

If you haven't filled out a "preference" card on the types of programs you are interested in please do so. Art Lewis is collecting them, and he has them at the Reg-

istration Desk. I have done it for 15 years, and it is time for me to step down. Anyone interested please contact me at helen@cipcug.org or Toby Scott at home@scotts.net. Please! Somebody come forward.

Welcome back to our esteemed President Jim Brown; we have missed you. He has been very busy — it's called "life happens" sometimes at inopportune times!

HAVE YOU RUN YOUR ANTI-SPYWARE PROGRAMS LATELY?

More on TrueCrypt ...

(Continued from page 14)

about that minuscule 8- or 32GB flash-drive you carry around in your pocket. The smaller they get, the easier they are to lose. Wouldn't it be reassuring to have made it an encrypted volume so that whoever finds it won't have an easy time of it when they try to discover the contents of your personal data?

The downside of the file-like characteristics is that, like any file, an encrypted volume can also be deleted and all its content lost (... thank goodness for the Recycle Bin). That would be very bad if done unwittingly. But that's why we do backups! Yes?

Once a TrueCrypt volume is mounted, the data files it contains can be copied to and from the volume just like they are copied to or from any normal disk; for example, by simple drag-and-drop operations.

Files are automatically decrypted on the fly in RAM (Random Access Memory) while they are being read or copied from an encrypted TrueCrypt volume. Similarly, files that are being written or copied to a TrueCrypt volume are automatically encrypted on the fly in RAM right before they are written to the volume. Note, however, this does not mean the whole file that is to be encrypted/decrypted must reside in RAM before it can be encrypted/decrypted. That is, there are no extra RAM requirements for TrueCrypt. The following paragraph explains

how this is accomplished.

Let's suppose that there is an .avi video file stored on a TrueCrypt volume; that is, the entire video file is encrypted. The user provides the correct password and/or key file and mounts (opens) the TrueCrypt volume. When the user double-clicks the icon of the video file, the operating system launches the application associated with the file type — typically a media player. The media player then begins loading a small initial portion of the video file from the TrueCrypt-encrypted volume to RAM in order to play it. While the portion is being loaded, TrueCrypt is automatically decrypting it in RAM. The decrypted portion of the video in RAM is then played by the media player. While this portion is being played, the media player begins loading the next small portion of the video file from the TrueCrypt-encrypted volume to RAM and the process repeats. This process is called "on-the-fly" encryption/decryption and it works for all file types, not just for video files. The process also ensures minimal impact on processing performance.

Note that TrueCrypt never saves any decrypted data to a disk — it only stores it temporarily in RAM. Even when the volume is mounted, data stored in the volume remains encrypted. When you restart Windows or turn off your computer, the volume will be automatically dismounted, and files stored in it will be inaccessible and encrypted. Even when

power is suddenly interrupted (i.e., without a proper system shut-down), files stored in the volume are inaccessible and encrypted. To make them accessible again, you have to mount the volume by providing the correct password and/or key file.

Of course, as with any unintended power interruption or shut-down, unsaved changes to files are lost because re-encryption of changes occurs only when files are saved to the volume in a normal fashion.

I've only touched on a few of the main facets of TrueCrypt. In addition, TrueCrypt offers a choice of encryption algorithms from which you can select one that will give the degree of security you feel you need. This and other aspects of TrueCrypt are fully documented in an excellent User Guide. The latest version of the free software, Release 7.0a, can be downloaded from the product's home website at <http://www.truecrypt.org>, as well as from CNET's <http://www.download.com>, and other sites on the Web.

The User Guide PDF and a more detailed description of TrueCrypt can be found at the product's home website.

TrueCrypt is one free program that is, in my opinion, an exception to my general perception of the breed. Of course, the developers gratefully accept donations. In this case, I think they are well deserved.

Google is offering personalized pages

I've been playing a bit with Google's iGoogle, a customizable replacement for the clean and simple Google home page. As is usually the case with such pages, I have my choice of an array of gadgets that give me immediate access to a variety of information and games — far more games than I want sitting on my home page or than I would ever play.

I've picked some of the usual suspects — a clock, a calendar, a weather report, a CNN news report and a separate top stories of the day, which grabs articles from a variety of sources.

Editor's corner



Weigle

Then there a couple of unusual items: a Doppler radar gadget that will warn me of coming extreme weather (not that we have a lot of that in Southern California) and an Unexplained Mysteries gadget that lists the top paranormal news, also gathered from a variety of sites. As I write this, the headlines there are "NASA successfully launches Curiosity rover," "Second Mayan 2012 reference found" and "Whist game deals at incredible odds." A TV Guide gadget offers me an "Editor's Hot List" of the evening's TV shows (somehow I doubt "Walking Dead," "The Amazing Race 19" and "Wilson Phillips: Still Holding On" aren't likely to draw me to the screen tonight), along with sections on news and photos of whatever celebrities happen to be in the news that day.

Google offers several categories of themes: Animals, Nature, Sports, Destinations, Abstract, Trendy, Fun, Causes, Comics, Games, Food and Photography by Google.

You can find a list of the available gadgets at <http://www.google.com/ig/directory?dpos=top&root=%2Ffig>, but you probably need a Google account to see them (I'm not sure of this; if you're interested type in the URL and see what happens).

If you're interested in a straight news page from Google, check out News.Google.com, which you can also personalize by selecting the categories of news you want emphasized. The default page shows overall top stories, and top stories in these categories: U.S., World, Sci/Tech, Business, Entertainment, Sports, Health, Elections, Technology, Science, along with Editor's Picks from PCMag.com and links to Spotlight Stories and Spotlight Video.

News.Google's stories are chosen by computers, not human beings, and the process is explained at http://news.google.com/intl/en_us/about_google_news.html. A version of News.Google is available for mobile phones.

I found News.Google helpful when I was working at The Star because I could get a glance at top news stories as reported by many sources and the ability to easily check statements and garbled wire stories on deadline. But as Google points out, it's also helpful for people who want to be sure they're up to date with specific types of news that not everyone covers.

— John Weigle, editor

Treasurer's report for October 2011

By Art Lewis

treasurer@cipcug.org

10-1-2011 through

10-31-2011

Category Description

INFLOWS

Coffee income	-6.75
Donation	11.00
Membership Income	
Renewals	245.00
TOTAL MEMBERSHIP	245.00
Publication sales	320.00
Raffle	78.00

TOTAL INFLOWS 647.25

OUTFLOWS

Raffle prizes	82.06
Rent Paid	150.00
TOE	190.54

TOTAL OUTFLOWS 422.60

OVERALL TOTAL 224.65

Unrestricted Funds	6,182.79
Restricted Funds	0.00
Bank Balance 10-31-11	6,182.79
Year to Date Income	2,533.50
Year to Date Expense	2,138.04
Net Year to Date	395.46



Lewis

2011 contributors to The Outer Edge

Your name can appear here, too. Share your knowledge with other members by sending an article, letter or computer tip to editor@cipcug.org.

CIPCUG MEMBERS

Ken Church
Rick Curry
Bob de Violini
Art Lewis
Helen Long
Diane Mortensen
Toby Scott
Michael Shalkey
Rick Smith
Jim Thornton
Bill Wayson
John Weigle

OTHERS

Gene Barlow (User Group Relations)
Terry Currier (APCUG)
Bill Kenworthy
Jeff Levy
Brian K. Lewis (APCUG)
John Langill (APCUG)
Warner Mach (APCUG)
Dick Maybach (APCUG)
Sr. Dorothy Robinson (APCUG)
SANS Institute
Sharon Parq Associates Inc.
Smart Computing magazine
Les Townsing (APCUG)
US-CERT
Jonathan Wylie
Worldstart computer tips,
www.worldstart.com

Membership report:

Is it time to renew?

By Ken Church

email address: membership@cipcug.org



CHURCH

Welcome –
New Member: Marque Provart

Attendance at the November 2011 general meeting:
49 members and guests

Total membership: 192

MEMBER RENEWAL INFORMATION

\$30 for single membership,
\$35 for two or more family membership.

NEW MEMBER INFORMATION

\$40 first year for single membership,
\$55 first year for two or more family membership in same household.

Please send your payment to:

CIPCUG MEMBERSHIP
P.O. BOX 51354
OXNARD, CA 93031-1354

Or bring your payment to the sign-in table for the Dec. 17, 2011, meeting.

October 2011 renewals payment due:

Mbr#	Last Name	First Name	Pd to Dt
1224	Alexander	Doug	201110
1107 T	Carlson	Gordy	201110
0990	Mehr	Steve	201110
0942	Mickey	Barbara	201110
0158	Volpi	Ralph	201110

November 2011 renewals payment due:

Mbr#	Last Name	First Name	Pd to Dt
0388	Armstrong	Bob	201111
1074	Chaison	Doris	201111
1061	Churchyard	Martha	201111
0915	Clayton	Phil	201111
1215	Cobb	Charles	201111
0944	Coon	Donn	201111
0945	Gorelik	Donn	201111
0789	Knauer	Wolfgang	201111
0145	Lee	Bill	201111
0542	Salisbury	Wayne	201111
1194	Tsutsui - Trujillo	Sandy	201111
0863	Zapf, D.P.M.	Michael	201111

December 2011 renewals payment due:

Mbr#	Last Name	First Name	Pd to Dt
1044	Cohen	Jerry	201112
0908	Cronin	Richard	201112
1130	Hollingsworth	Don	201112
0037 T	Hosford	Victor	201112
0993	Ladd	Craig	201112
0536	Larraburu	Philippe	201112
1115	Nagy	Marlene	201112
1131	Richardson	James	201112
1079	Schrum	Jerry	201112
1001	Toth	Andy	201112
1048 T	Ulam	Frederick	201112
1237	Wishon	Bill	201112



F1—Your Help Key

(Revised Sept. 7, 2008)

COMMUNICATIONS/INTERNET (GENERAL)

World Wide Web DM

DATABASES

Access BR

DOS

RP

E-MAIL

Outlook MS
 Outlook Express BR, DM
 Thunderbird MS

GRAPHICS PROGRAMS

IrfanView MS
 Paint Shop Pro DM
 Photo Shop Elements BR
 Print Shop BR

SPREADSHEETS

Microsoft Excel DM

WORD PROCESSING

Microsoft Word DM
 WordPerfect DM

WINDOWS

Windows 98, 95 DM, MS (98)
 Windows 2000 BDV
 Windows XP DM

<u>Initials</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>(805)</u>
BDV	Bob de Violini	rjddev@gmail.com
BR	Bill Robinson	389-2997 (b) bill@bzus.com
DM	David Minkin	469-6970 (cell); 484-2974 (home); dddave@cipcug.org
MS	Michael Shalkey	mshalkey@cipcug.org
RP	Robert Provart	498-8477 (b)

Phone: (d) = days; (e) = evenings; (b) = both

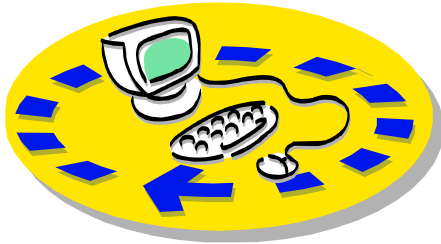
If you would like to volunteer to help others, please send your contact information and programs you're willing to help on to editor@cipcug.org.

.....

WEB HELP SITES (Updated 4-5-11)

Annoyances Central blog (from authors of the O'Reilly Annoyances series, including Steve Bass):
www.annoyancescentral.com
 Steve Bass TechBite Newsletter registration page:
www.techbite.com
 DSL reports: www.dslreports.com
 Steve Gibson: www.grc.com
 Kim Komando: www.komando.com
 Leo Laporte: www.leoville.com
 Jeff Levy: www.jefflevy.com
 Linux distributions: www.DistroWatch.com
 Microsoft: www.microsoft.com
 OnGuard Online: <http://www.onguardonline.gov>
 Online safety tips: www.OnGuardOnline.gov
 PC Pitstop: www.pcpitstop.com
 PC World: www.pcworld.com
 Recalled products: www.recalls.gov
 SANS Institute — Computer Security Education and Information Security Training: www.sans.org
 Smart Computing: www.smartcomputing.com
 Spyware Warrior: www.spywarewarrior.com
 User Group Relations (Gene Barlow): www.ugr.com
 Ventura County Computers (Rick and Toby's shop):
www.vccomputers.com
 Virus Bulletin: www.virusbtn.com/index
 Windows Secrets: www.windowssecrets.com
 Windows The Official Magazine (UK):
www.officialwindowsmagazine.com/

If you have a favorite help site on the Web, please forward it, so we can expand the section. If you find a link that doesn't work, please tell us that, too.



Why join Channel Islands PC Users Group (CIPCUG)?

Every month, members of the Channel Islands PC Users Group have access to:

- ◆ The Outer Edge newsletter, which includes a list of members willing to help other members.
 - ◆ The general meeting, featuring a question-and-answer session and program on new software or hardware.
 - ◆ Special Interest Groups — special meetings held several times a month.
 - ◆ Door prizes at the regular meeting.
- Other benefits include:
- ◆ Special user group discounts on books and software.

- ◆ A flash drive containing many useful freeware programs.
 - ◆ A chance to make friends with people who have similar interests.
 - ◆ The ability to put your knowledge to good use by helping other members.
- The whole concept of user groups is members helping members.

Please clip the coupon below and send with payment to CIPCUG-Membership, P.O. Box 51354, Oxnard, CA 93031-1354.

Please make checks payable to CIPCUG.

Dues for new members

- Individual member, \$40.
- Family membership (same address), \$55.
- Renewals are \$30 and \$35 per year respectively.
- TOE subscription only (in the U.S.), \$20.

CIPCUG E-MAIL ADDRESS

Members who would like to have an e-mail address through CIPCUG in the form of YourName@cipcug.org may obtain one for \$20 per year.

CIPCUG MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Amount enclosed: _____

Please Print the following information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____, State: _____

ZIP Code: _____

Phone (Home): _____ (Work): _____

E-mail address: _____

User level: Novice ____; Intermediate ____; Advanced ____

Can you help the club as a volunteer? If so, what would you be interested in working on?

Date _____ Member # _____

Channel Islands PC Users Group Inc.

P.O.Box 51354
Oxnard, CA: 93031

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
OXNARD, CA
PERMIT NO. 1785

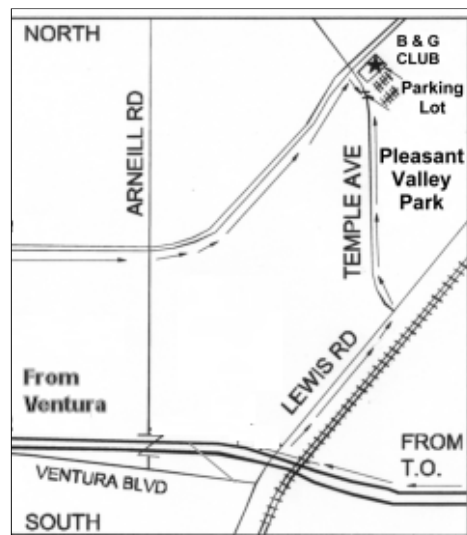
DATED MATERIAL
Please Do Not Delay

DUES REMINDER

If the number above your name is 2011 DECEMBER, your membership dues are payable in December 2011.

DECEMBER 2011 MEETING OF THE CHANNEL ISLANDS PC USERS GROUP

The map shows the easiest route to the Boys & Girls Club, but if you prefer, you can take the Carmen Drive offramp to Ponderosa Drive, which leads to Temple Avenue.



Saturday morning, Dec. 17, at the Boys & Girls Club, 1500 Temple Ave. (Ponderosa Drive and Temple Avenue), Camarillo.

Meeting Schedule:

8:00 a.m.	Doors open
8:45-9:30	Internet and networking SIG, Social Media SIG
9:30-10:30	Business meeting, Q&A
10:30-11:00	Break — Please contribute requested amounts for coffee and doughnuts
11:00-12:00	Program — Tablets available at Staples Drawing