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MEGAPHONE

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MARYLAND USER GROUP

Editor's Note

from Paul Van Bloem

More Lateness

It looks like this newsletter will be going out late, as have far too many in the last few months. I apologize for that, but I'm having trouble juggling work and life and still fitting in the newsletter work.

You all know that we have discussed going to an all-electronic newsletter for some time. Lately, I've been wondering if even the concept of a regular newsletter makes sense these days. For example, would this be more useful if we posted one or more new "article" on the CMUG website every week? We could send an email out shortly before each meeting to remind CMUGgers, but the "news" part of the newsletter would be regularly updated on the website. Just a thought: talk amongst yourselves, and see if you come up with other ideas. (I'm looking for ideas that either (a) reduce the workload of creating the newsletter or (b) allow the load to be spread among more people.)

Thanks, Rob

On the group's behalf, let me extend our sincere thanks to Rob Pegoraro, who came up and spoke at the March meeting (after being snowed out at the February meeting). As expected, his talk about his experiences at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas was very interesting; he touched on other topics such as digital TV, the Eee PC from Asus, and contrasted the Macworld convention with the the sensory overload that is CES.

Rob's regular blog at the Washington Post can be found at <http://blog.washingtonpost.com/fasterforward/>. (If you're using the Post's menus, Faster Forward is under News/Technology, not with the other blogs under Opinions.)

Dave Methvin to Speak

At the April meeting, our old friend (who is quite young, really! Especially compared to most CMUGgers)

Dave Methvin will be speaking. His primary topic will be Windows Vista, which has now been out for over a year. Hopefully we will also hear how things are going at PC Pitstop, which Dave has been a major force behind. (I don't think Dave was involved in this, but there's a cool video of what an exploding laptop battery looks like at www.pcpitstop.com/psafety.) And of course Dave is a font of knowledge about computers and the computer industry, and I expect he'll be willing to share some of his wisdom!

So come on down to the Bain Center on Wednesday, April 16, at 7:30 pm. An added incentive: the Rita's Ice store in the Harpers Choice village center has reopened for the summer.

Sad News

As some of you have heard, CMUG member Dick Roberts died a few weeks ago, at the end of March. Among other things, Dick served as vice president of CMMUG from 1995 until CMMUG merged with CBUG in 2003. In recent years, Dick's muscular weakness made it hard for him to get to meetings, though the last time we spoke, he was hoping to make it to Dave Methvin's next talk (which is this month).

The Baltimore Sun had a nice obituary in the March 31 edition (www.baltimoresun.com/news/obituaries/bal-md.ob.roberts31mar31,0,6791909.story), which even mentions CMUG. The Washington Post ran a shorter obituary on March 30 (halfway down the third screen of www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/)



Next General Meeting

Dave Methvin from PC Pitstop will be visiting. He will focus on Windows Vista, which has been out for over a year now. No doubt he'll touch on other topics as requested, so bring your questions.
Wednesday, April 16, 7:30 pm.....Florence Bain Senior Center

Next Windows SIG Meeting

Topic: Shareware and 2008 Anti Virus Review
Tuesday, April 22, 7 pm.....Florence Bain Senior Center

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[article/ 2008/03/30/ AR2008033002137_3.html](http://www.legacy.com/2008/03/30/AR2008033002137_3.html)).

The Post mentions both CMUG and Dick's interest in Linux. I knew Dick was on the faculty at UMBC before he retired; I hadn't realized that he was one of the faculty founders, back in 1966.

The Roberts family also put a death notice in the Washington Post and the Baltimore Sun (see www.legacy.com/washingtonpost/DeathNotices.asp?Page=LifeStory&PersonID=106566203). There will be a memorial service on Sunday, April 20, at 1:30 pm at First Presbyterian Church of Howard County. (The church's address is 9325 Presbyterian Circle, with zip of 21045; plug that into Google Maps and you'll see it is just east of the U.S 29 - Route 108 intersection.)

April is the Cruellest Month

T.S Eliot wrote that back in 1922. I've never found his poems easy to understand, but I don't **think** he was talking about the income tax, which was instituted in the U.S. in 1913. (The deadline used to be March 15th, anyway.)

But other kinds of taxes are in the news. You probably have heard that the Maryland legislature repealed the sales tax on computer services, which was scheduled to go into effect on July 1, much to the relief of computer service providers (even very very part time ones, like me).

Unfortunately, you have to keep chopping off the heads of the tax hydra, or he'll eat you anyway. I saw an article on the CNet news site

([www.news.com/ 8301-10784_ 3-9919420-7.html](http://www.news.com/8301-10784_3-9919420-7.html)) that there is a bill in Congress to allow states to require out-of-state retailers to charge sales tax. Total e-commerce sales for 2007 are estimated at almost \$140 billion, so you can see why the states are interested in this. Assuming that would all be taxable, a 6% tax would yield better than \$8 billion in new revenue. (Maryland's share would be around \$150 million, assuming the tax collection would be proportional to population.)

There's also talk about taxing downloads like iTunes. We've all see the gradual trend from physical media purchases to electronic downloads of software and music and movies and even books. I suppose if the states want to maintain their sales tax revenue, they'll need to figure out how to deal with virtual purchases. There doesn't seem to be much chance of virtual furniture or grocery delivery, but you never know!

On the other hand, if the states are too successful with collecting sales taxes from companies anywhere in the U.S., we may see a surge in international sales, especially when there's nothing

physical to ship. If the music industry is worried about piracy now, just wait till we buy most of our music from sites in China and Dubai.

Small News

I've seen a fair amount of news about these new mini-notebooks recently. Those of you who were at the January meeting got to see the 7-inch Asus Eee PC that Amy Begg DeGroff brought from the Howard County Library.

Asus will be shipping the 9-inch version of the Eee PC beginning on May 1. The 7-inch model is retailing for \$300-450, depending on the amount of memory and whether you get the webcam. The 9-inch model (actually, the screen is 8.9 inches) is supposed to sell for around \$650. I was interested to note that you

can get either Windows XP or Linux for your operating system, for the same price; the difference is that the Linux version will include 20 GB of flash memory vs 12 for the Windows machine. (The Eee doesn't have a conventional hard drive, but uses flash memory instead.)

Apparently, these mini-notebooks are being called "netbooks".

They're not supposed to act as your primary computer, but they're relatively cheap, small,

have good battery life, and are good enough to surf the web, do email, and generally act as a portable computer that's "good enough".

There had been talk that the new Asus would use Intel's spiffy new power-saving Atom chip, which just began shipping. However, it seems Asus is worried about HP's new Mini-Note 2133, which I believe began shipping last week. So in the interests of shipping earlier, the new Asus sticks with a slower and more power-hungry Celeron M chip; HP is using a Via chip, which I gather also has performance issues, so Asus may have made a wise decision.

It's a little funny to see the interest in these netbooks. After all, there are full laptops available for \$500 to 600; they can do more than the netbooks, and give you a full-sized keyboard and a bigger screen. We'll have to see if there's enough of a niche between super-powered cell phones and low-end laptops for these mini-notebooks to become important.



- Paul Ye Ed



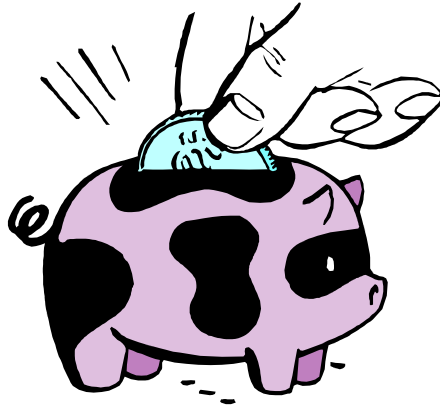
Deals from the DealsGuy

by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click

I read an enlightening article about data center design; even the security was above and beyond what you and I would imagine. Read about new ideas for cheap cooling methods and an interesting concept for filling in the gap between the time the power goes out and your backup kicks in. Well into it, you will read about very tight security. A year ago, I gave you an article about a group of consultants hired to test the security of a company, and they made a joke of the entire building's security; and data security itself, in just a few minutes. I doubt their techniques would work in the facilities described in the article. Here is the Information Week URL: www.informationweek.com/news/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=206900660.

Enjoyed the Show

I did manage to browse the Electronic House Expo for three hours of pure pleasure (I had to hurry). It was not a large show, but there was enough there to keep you fascinated. I saw mirrors that could change to a TV or monitor in an instant. That large mirror on the wall was hiding a TV screen that was able to shine right through it with a sharp picture. This one is interesting: www.ad-notam.com. Automation of your home was all over the show in many forms. There were many booths with distributors of automation



components for all facets of the home or business, including Worthington, one of the best known.

I was fascinated with some of the doorbell/intercom systems that include a wide-angle camera whose image could be displayed on a dedicated monitor, or appear on your TV to show who is there. Push a button on your remote to ask the nature of their visit and if it was a family member, or your beer-drinking buddy whose TV went out during a game; push a button on the remote to unlock the door. If it was your mother-in-law, you could tell her you weren't home. However, I didn't see an "eject" button on the remote for salesmen, so there's still room for development. I stood where I could easily reach the doorbell button and my entire upper body showed plainly on the screen. I don't remember if that one was Nutone (www.nutone.com) or another company. eKey was there again

with biometric locks. Here are some URLs of interest: <http://eholovision.com>; www.eKeyusa.com; www.linearcorp.com; and www.litetouch.com.

Several companies were showing universal remote controls and touch screen systems. Most people would probably think of remote-controlled lighting and thermostats, but there are plenty of other items that should be included. Remote cameras around the property, a driveway gate, pool pump, alarms and maybe even devices to feed your pets; and that's

Help Still Needed and Upcoming Meetings

As was announced previously, Andrew Rein has stepped down from his job as Program Director. So CMUG is in need of someone who can coordinate presentations for our general meetings.

The presentations are an important part of the educational mission of our user group. The Program Director acts as a central coordinator, and as liaison between the group and the speaker. So, this is an important job. On the other hand, it's not especially time consuming; we only have 11 presentations a year, after all, and most of the communication can be done via email. If you have questions about the workload or are otherwise interested, you might speak with Andrew (or one of the other officers) at the meeting.

May 21: Howard County Library; details to be determined.

June 18: Elections; speaker to be determined.

July 16: To be determined.

Windows SIG April 22 Meeting: "More Useful Freeware"

The Windows Special Interest Group (SIG) meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month, except in December. The SIG focuses on using and maintaining Windows, all platforms. We take questions, present tips and techniques, demonstrate freeware/shareware and even feature some web topics using a little trickery.

This month, our topic will be "Shareware and 2008 Anti Virus Review." If you have a suggestion for a topic for a future SIG meeting, please email me at mikes_line@hotmail.com.

Remember that the meetings are at the Florence Bain Senior Center, and begin at 7 pm. See the CMUG website at <http://myCMUG.org> for maps and directions.

- Mike Hayes

only part of the list. I noticed that using a universal remote (similar to your TV remote) was not as easy as using a touch screen device because a touch screen icon often brought up a menu of other labeled icons for choices, but the button on the remote called for action, so you'd better get it right the first time. I read in Electronic House magazine (www.electronichouse.com) about an installation beyond "my" finances, but it was interesting what was done in this home: www.electronichouse.com/article/smart_controls_for_a_complicated_home/.

The EHX show included plenty of luxury audio products to enjoy from your easy chair, featuring great surround sound. There was even a plush chair with the sound strategically located and controls at your fingertips. Solid Drive (www.soliddrive.com) was featuring a product that would make a speaker out of anything, and actually, the sound produced was great, (including good bass), from a large glass panel that also featured a large rectangular thin film fastened to it that allowed a projected TV picture to be shone through it clearly. There were also products that would hide your TV, when it was not turned on, by showing art from your choice of artists inside a beautiful wooden frame, or could automatically cover it with tapestry: www.vutec.com; www.tapestriesltd.com; www.visionartgalleries.com.

Two companies with central vacuum systems were there with impressive products; here is one: www.airkinglimited.com. There was a great little digital camera/camcorder being sold there that could publish your pictures or movies to the Web. One booth had a favorite of mine, a motorized drapery rod that could be programmed, or operated with a remote. I loved the motorized drapery rod we had for about ten years, but it finally bit the dust. It would take a lengthy article to describe that show adequately.

At the same time, other computer-oriented shows were going on in nearby hotels, another over in Tampa, a Microsoft Show nearby and the prestigious Winter Park Art Festival. There are many computer-oriented trade shows these days. Microsoft will be back here in June with the large Tech Ed Developers show and the IBM show in early April.

Products Announcements

The items below are available with a user group discount, or are free. But please exercise caution and check the company's website for anything you're considering downloading, as I have not tried the products.

How About an Add-on Toolbar!

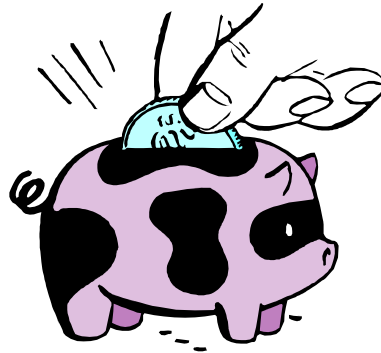
ALToolbar (www.altools.com/ [ALTools/ALToolbar.aspx](http://www.altools.com/ALTools/ALToolbar.aspx)) offers their latest toolbar. ALToolbar is a new add-on that extends Internet Explorer with its suite of tools. It improves many

common Internet tasks, making them faster and easier.

- ↪ Search popular web sites FASTER.
- ↪ Visit favorite sites INSTANTLY.
- ↪ SECURELY store logins and bookmarks online.
- ↪ AUTOMATICALLY login to web sites.
- ↪ Navigate easier with MOUSE GESTURES.
- ↪ Capture full web page SCREENSHOTS.

There are other tools in ALToolbar to make online life easier and faster. This one is more than other toolbars that all duplicate each other's limited functionality. It's a real suite of Internet tools designed for faster and easier Internet usage by real people. ALToolbar, like other ALTools, is completely free. We only ask that you enjoy it enough to tell a friend.

- Ryan Smyth
www.altools.net



Need Some Tweaking?

YL Software announced the availability of WinUtilities 6.1, the newest version of its system-tweaking suite that offers over 20 computer productivity tools. WinUtilities provides everything a user needs to remove junk data, and improve PC performance. The WinUtilities update offers users additional features as well as improvements on the technologies. For more information or to download a free trial, please visit www.ylcomputing.com/content/view/9/27/.

Two modules, Duplicate Files Finder and Registry Cleaner, are now able to export reports. Other advancements include an improved File Undelete Module for NTFS and FAT32 volume; an improved Plug-ins Editor for the History Cleaner module; improved compatibility for Windows Vista 32 bit and 64 bit systems, plus an improved Registry Cleaner.

Computers accumulate a great deal of junk files. Applications can add things we may not be aware of and you should get rid of these things, but you may not have to if you install WinUtilities. It includes such tools as Junk File Cleaner, Registry Cleaner, Memory Optimizer, System Information, Registry Backup, File Encryption, Safe Uninstaller, Duplicate File Finder, File Shredder, Data Recovery & File Undelete tools, etc. WinUtilities also includes an Internet Tracks Eraser, with Cookie Manager and Secure Deletion.

WinUtilities Disk Cleaner helps get rid of temporary files and folders, cookies and browser history, duplicate files and links that are no longer valid. It locates zero-length files clogging



up your file lists. The Registry Cleaner helps delete entries in the registry that no longer apply to your system. History Cleaner handles all those items you can delete from within the Internet Options dialog box in Control Panel, as well as your system's document history, log-on history, search history.

WinUtilities 6.1 runs under Windows Vista, XP, 2003 Server, 2000 and 98. Registered users get a fully functional product, a year of free upgrades and life-of-product technical support. Additional information and a 30-day evaluation version are available from www.ylcomputing.com.

Mailing address: 3831 Valley Center Dr. Suite 706-295 San Diego, CA.

The software is \$39.99, but we get a 30% discount. The following URLs are too lengthy for Word to make them a link. Copy & paste them to your browser or they won't work. They take you to a PayPal page to buy the product with 30% discount. I'll comment on not using Tiny URL next month.

WinUtilities 6.1 Personal License: [https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_xclick&business=paypal%40ylcomputing%2ecom&item_name=WinUtilities\(Personal License\) Special Offer& item_number=7019-8-1& amount=28& no_shipping=2& no_note=1& currency_code=USD& lc=US& bn=PP-BuyNowBF& charset=UTF-8](https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_xclick&business=paypal%40ylcomputing%2ecom&item_name=WinUtilities(Personal License) Special Offer& item_number=7019-8-1& amount=28& no_shipping=2& no_note=1& currency_code=USD& lc=US& bn=PP-BuyNowBF& charset=UTF-8)

WinUtilities 6.1 Family License: [https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_xclick&business=paypal%40ylcomputing%2ecom& item_name=WinUtilities\(Family License\) Special Offer& item_number=7019-8-2& amount=49& no_shipping=2& no_note=1& currency_code=USD& lc=US& bn=PP-BuyNowBF& charset=UTF-8](https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_xclick&business=paypal%40ylcomputing%2ecom& item_name=WinUtilities(Family License) Special Offer& item_number=7019-8-2& amount=49& no_shipping=2& no_note=1& currency_code=USD& lc=US& bn=PP-BuyNowBF& charset=UTF-8)

WinUtilities 6.1 Corporate License: [https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_xclick&business=paypal%40ylcomputing%2ecom& item_name=WinUtilities\(Corporate License\) Special Offer& item_number=7019-8-3& amount=350& no_shipping=2& no_note=1& currency_code=USD& lc=US& bn=PP-BuyNowBF& charset=UTF-8](https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_xclick&business=paypal%40ylcomputing%2ecom& item_name=WinUtilities(Corporate License) Special Offer& item_number=7019-8-3& amount=350& no_shipping=2& no_note=1& currency_code=USD& lc=US& bn=PP-BuyNowBF& charset=UTF-8)

That's All for This Month

Visit my website (www.dealsguy.com) for more new product announcements (most not offering a discount). Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound.

- Bob (The Cheapskate) Click

[bobclick at bellsouth dot net](mailto:bobclick@bellsouth.net)



The Switch to Digital TV

by Sandy Berger, via APCUG

The switch to digital is on the way. On February 17, 2009, U. S. broadcast stations, who are currently broadcasting in both analog and digital, will turn off their analog signals and will transmit only in digital.

What does this mean to you? Most consumers who get their television from a cable or satellite provider won't notice a difference. Cable and satellite companies are not required to make the transition, so they can continue to broadcast in both analog and digital. Eventually, though, if your cable company moves to all digital, you will not be able to get the cable straight from the wall, but will need a box from your cable company. Most cable customers already have a cable television box, anyway. Don't worry about that now, your cable company will notify you, if and when that happens. And it may be years down the road.

The people who will be most affected by the transition to digital are those who get their television "over the air" with rabbit ears or an antenna in the attic or on the roof. Older analog televisions will not be able to pick up the digital signal. You don't, however, have to go out and buy a new TV. You simply will need to add a digital-to-analog converter box to your television. These boxes are already available in stores like Wal-Mart, Best Buy, Circuit City, Radio Shack, and Target. They will be priced between \$40 and \$70.

Luckily for those with rabbit ears and old televisions, the government has created a \$1.5 billion coupon program to subsidize the cost of the converter boxes. This program is being overseen by the National Telecommunication and Information Administration agency. Each household, regardless of how they receive their television signal, is eligible to receive two \$40 coupons. The coupons are available now. As I write this, over 5 million coupons have already been requested.

To get a coupon you can apply online at www.dtv2009.gov or call the 24-hour hot line, 888-DTV-2009 (888-388-2009). You can also mail a coupon application to P.O. Box 2000, Portland, OR 97208-2000. The program itself expires on March 31, 2009. The government is trying to get everyone ready as quickly as possible, so be aware that the coupons expire three months after they are mailed to you. Since many television stations are already broadcasting in digital, you can use the converter box immediately.

If you are still asking why we are doing this, the official government explanation is that switching to digital TV will free up parts of the valuable broadcast spectrum for public safety communications such as police, fire



Shortcuts

by Mike Moore, via APCUG

Why do some icons on your desktop have a little white arrow embedded in the picture?

These are shortcuts (sometimes called links). They are small files that represent and “point to” the real thing. When you double-click on a shortcut icon, Windows reads the location of the file to open from within the shortcut file, then opens the target file.

Shortcuts are, in the lingo of computer programmers, symbolic links to actual files. They don't contain any of the file's information—they just point to it. In real terms: if Peoria, Illinois was a file, then its shortcut would be the map telling you how to get there.



Why do we use shortcuts? Why not just put the real, actual file on your desktop? There are several reasons. First, since a shortcut does not contain any of the target file's information, it can be deleted without damaging the file it points to. Therefore, placing shortcuts on the desktop (or in any directory) is safer. Accidental deletion of these links will not affect anything other than you may lose track of where your file was!

The other reason is that you can have many shortcuts and place them anywhere you might need quick access to your file. For example, when we give away computers, we organize the software links in various folders on the desktop. There's a folder for Educational software and Game software links, and for the software that is both Educational and Fun, we put links to the same program in both the Educational and Game folders. You can rename shortcuts to anything you want, and it won't affect the real name of the file they point to.

Shortcuts are also portable! If I know for sure that a program will be in a certain place on nearly every PC, I can email a link to someone and tell them to place it on their desktop. Double-clicking on it should open that file on my recipient's PC! Emailing a link is much more of a sure bet than emailing an executable file—because most email servers just won't allow executables (files ending in .EXE) to be delivered!

How does one create a link? The best way is to find the file you want the link to refer to, then do a right-click on it. This brings up a context menu where you can create the shortcut. Once the shortcut is created you can move it to any directory or to the desktop.

For creating desktop links, Windows provides a shortcut wizard that allows you to create a shortcut for any file type including a web page or another folder. From anywhere on the desktop, right click and select 'New' and then 'Shortcut' to activate this wizard.

This article comes to us from APCUG, the Association of PC User Groups, of which CMUG is a member. Mike Moore is the newsletter editor for the Bowling Green Area Microcomputer User Group (www.bgamug.org) in Kentucky. He can be reached via email at [ml.moore\(at\)insightbb.com](mailto:ml.moore(at)insightbb.com).



departments, and rescue squads. The bigger reason, though, is that some of the spectrum will be auctioned to companies for advanced wireless services. This, of course, will be very lucrative for the US government.

It may also be a good thing for consumers, as well. With the digital converter box, even your old analog television may give you a better picture. You will also be able to see more channels as some broadcasters will choose to multicast programs. Multicasting means that a broadcaster can split up its signal into several channels, each with a different set of programs. This type of programming is only available with digital broadcasting.

One thing to remember is that digital television is not high-definition television. Although high-def TVs will display digital television, you do not need a high-def TV just because of this transition. Digital broadcast television includes both Standard Definition (SD) and High Definition (HD) formats. You can watch both standard definition and high definition programming on an analog TV hooked to a digital-to-analog converter box, but the high definition won't give you the full high definition quality that you would receive on a high definition television.

If you have a newer TV that you purchased in the last few years, it may already support digital. Look at the markings on the television to find out if it has a digital tuner built-in. Words like “Digital Tuner or Receiver”, “DTV”, or “HDTV” indicate that it will display the digital programming. However, if your television says “HDTV Monitor”, “Digital Ready” or “HDTV Ready”, you may still need a converter box.

If you need more information on the move to digital television, check out the Federal Communication Commission's DTV website at www.dtv.gov. They have done a good job explaining everything you need to know.

This article comes to us from APCUG, the Association of PC User Groups, of which CMUG is a member. Sandy Berger has been a computer consulting and training guru for over 30 years; her website is at www.compukiss.com; she can be reached via email at [sandy\(at\)compukiss.com](mailto:sandy(at)compukiss.com).



Windows Vista – Slow Ahead

by Mike Hayes

If you have purchased a new PC with Windows Vista you may already understand. If you are thinking about upgrading to Vista you may want to hold that thought and do some more research. If you are thinking about buying a new PC be advised that XP is supported by Microsoft until June '08 extended from January '08. Is a pattern developing here?

In a January report from InfoWorld, “Nearly half of businesses polled in a recent survey are in some phase of upgrading to Vista and of those companies, 53% are small businesses.” As I read that, **more than 50% are NOT!** CNET News, January '08 reported the same “Adoption of Microsoft's Windows Vista operating system is starting to pick up among businesses in the U.S. Just under half--48 percent--of IT decision makers in the U.S. are using or evaluating Vista, according to a poll by IT services firm CDW.”

According to MS the upgrade path is limited to Windows2000 and XP, and some upgrade paths do not support in-place upgrades. You must perform a clean install. MS recommends that those individuals backup all data and use the Windows Easy Transfer utility to copy files and settings to an extra drive. (You do have an extra drive, don't you?) Be sure to run the Vista Upgrade Advisor (MS web page) first.

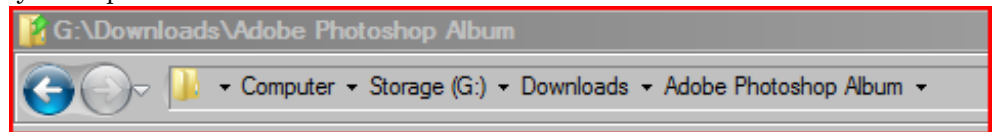
I started using Vista in January and have remained open minded and will not let the bias of others influence me. I follow polls, blogs, and trade publications to stay informed on technology. I moved almost everything from my aging XP and use Vista for 100% of my PC needs. This forced me to learn Vista quickly and will most likely expose to me to the benefits and issues. So now into the third month and I am still discovering Vista “features.” Some of the complaints about file transfer speed from a year ago still plague users today. I have done some benchmarks and clearly see a bottleneck with Vista.

In my professional capacity, a client contracted me to network his Vista and XP PC and upgrade QuickBooks to multiuse mode so he and an employee could share the application and data. Networking the two PCs was easy. Adding an additional QB seat was expensive and required some phone assistance from QB tech support, but after about two hours we just couldn't get the second PC to successfully load up QB data from the Vista PC. The problem was intermittent, but failing about 8 out of 10 times is not acceptable to a user. The fact that it worked once convinced us that QB was setup properly and the resolution will be my responsibility. I have some additional ideas I want to try

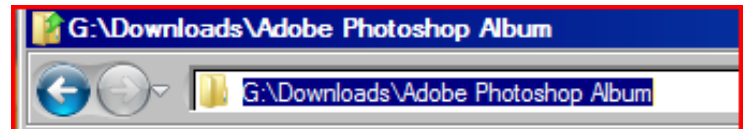
on my next visit, but I am very suspicious about Vista data transfer.

There are also issues with Vista user interface, features that we users were comfortable with in prior Windows, but have now been redesigned. One example: Windows Explorer has always made navigation easy by using the left hand navigation pane and providing a tool bar icon for the “up 1 level” function. That is gone in Vista (at least I can't find it.) The Start Menu was redesigned and using that has taken some getting use to. (There is a config setting to switch back to the previous Windows Menu look and feel.)

Another Explorer change was the Address bar. In Vista the default address bar is a text representation of your current location. It looks like this:

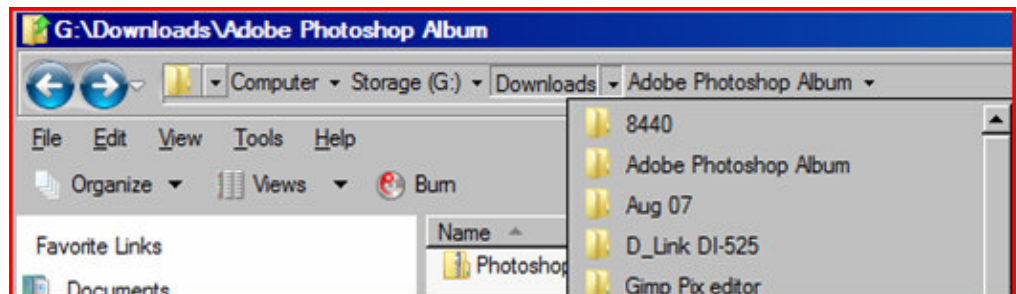


In this example I'm in the Adobe Photoshop Album folder. If I want to go up one level to the Download folder there is no menu bar icon. So by trial and error I found that clicking in the Address bar area changes the display to:



At least that allowed me to manually delete off the folders to access higher lever folders. It took me more than a month of use to realize the little “down arrow” (in the first picture) symbols in the Address bar are actually navigation tools. Click on the symbol and it opens a drop down allowing you to click on where you want to go.

You can also click on Computer to change drives. Before you go “well duh!” I am running the monitor in 1680 x 1050 mode and those little symbols just looked like separators.



I have used too much space already, but let me add that Vista SP1 (Service Pack 1) is available now and we were hoping for a number of fixes. Early reports are negative on file xfer improvement. Also, MS has released a KnowledgeBase Article that lists the applications the no longer run after Vista SP1. Do your research. More on my Vista experience next time.



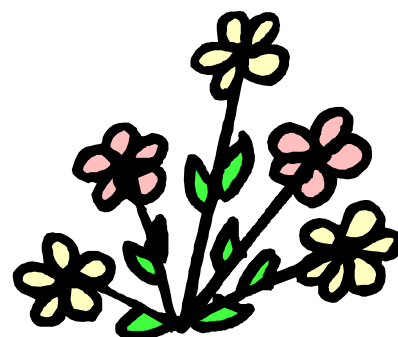
CMUG MEGAPHONE

George Coffin
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Meeting:

Wednesday, April 16, 7:30 pm

Dave Methvin of PC Pitstop.com will
speak on Windows Vista and Beyond



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General meetings are held the third Wednesday of every month at 7:30 pm at the Florence Bain Senior Center, near the Harpers Choice Village Center in Columbia MD. The number there is 410-313-7213.

Membership in the user group is currently \$30 (cheap!). Membership includes a monthly subscription to the CMUG Megaphone, occasional drawings for free and review software at meetings, and the sure and certain knowledge that you are helping to keep CMUG up and running.

<http://myCMUG.org>