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MEGAPHONE

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President's Message And the Race is On!

from Mike Kerwin

Dear Friends,

I have been keeping you updated on the format wars going on for the next generation of digital media players (Blu-Ray vs HD-DVD) but now I have been surprised to find that the two have reached an agreement for a mutual solution to our old friend – DRM (digital rights management aka copy protection)1. In true inside-the-beltway spirit, the powers that be have given this approach the acronym AACSS (for Advanced Access Content System). This system is similar to the PGP (Pretty Good Privacy) approach to encryption in that two separate keys will be needed – with hardware and software components being implemented separately, and also **billed** separately.

That's right, payment is a special feature of this new nemesis. As I understand the system, the hardware manufacturers pay a one-time fee to build a key into each device they produce. However the software key is another matter. One of the first PCs to have this capability built-in is the Toshiba Qosmio notebook (model GV35-AV60 – a multimedia-oriented, high-end machine). The kicker is in the application notes which read in part: "Occasional renewal of the AACSS key is required, and easily done by connecting to the Internet. Toshiba will provide AACSS key renewal for your new PC for 5 years from the date of purchase by the original purchaser at no charge, after which key renewal will be available pursuant to the software player provider's then current terms and conditions."

Pay attention folks: this is the way we will all be recording and purchasing our HD format videos for the foreseeable future. Think a bit about this with me. The logical end result is that any video one purchases which uses this system will come with a self-destruct or pay-to-play feature. For the Toshiba, the purchaser will probably

Website Problems

As you may have noticed, our website is no longer accessible at www.millkern.com/cmug. For more info, please see the Editor's Note on page 2.

have to pay an annual license fee to continue to watch movies which one owns and presumably purchased. The reality is that we will have moved another step closer to abolishing ownership rights to any digital application, as we will become a nation of renters with continuing fees necessary to use something which we have already paid good money for.

This brings to mind an earlier approach to DRM that the RIAA foisted on the world. That system bore the acronym of CSS (Content Scrambling System) and was designed to limit access to DVD movies to specific regions of the world as well as to prevent unauthorized copying (aka pirating). That system lasted roughly three years until a Linux devotee got frustrated that the industry did not support Linux boxes accessing DVD movies. Exactly how long it took this lone programmer (aka hacker) to defeat the big, bad CSS is unknown, but later the Black Hats held contests to see who could develop the shortest and fastest code to accomplish the goal of free access to information. (These were the infamous DCSS apps.) That feat was motivated by frustration; just think about the motivation ongoing fees might generate.

The licensing agent for this new system



Next General Meeting

Tom Alizio will demonstrate his work as a DJ both with older technology and currently using PCs, and PCDJ and KJ software.
Wednesday, September 20, 7:30 pm.....Florence Bain Senior Center

Next Windows SIG Meeting

Topic: Hacking Your Way Through Windows
Tuesday, September 26, 7:00 pm.....Florence Bain Senior Center

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has indicated awareness of the CSS history and claims that AACCS uses much stronger encryption and has the ability to revoke the licenses for devices found to make use of cloned keys. This sounds remarkably like “Big Brother” staring us in the face by accessing our hardware and software without our explicit permission (other than in the fine print details of the EULA when we first turn on our new devices). This is a bit scary though, like spyware on steroids. If junior downloads a hacker program on the family PC cum entertainment center, AACCS can learn about this through routine checks and deactivate the DVD player itself. That is not a pretty prospect for perfectly pure videophiles.

Realistically, the RIAA recognizes that the fees for hardware licenses are more reliable for collection and this is the fall back position they have assumed with the current DVD distribution system. This agent believes that consumer pressure will force the fees to be paid by the software developers supporting HD format applications. IMHO, this fellow must be high on some psychoactive substance. For the most part software developers have a shorter half-life than the media on which we store the data and hence may not be around to pony up for annual fees. That will be a hard sell for decent folks to have to emulate “poor old Charley who had to pay and pay” (to quote the Kingston Trio about a fare increase on the Boston metro).

Other software industry spokespersons have established an informal betting pool on how long hackers will take to subvert this new system; guesses range from 6 weeks to 3 years. In the interim since the last big breakthrough another system has achieved wide spread use in multiplying the power of the humble PC - that is distributed processing. If the AACCS has such powerful encryption that a supercomputer would be needed to crack it, then such a computer can be assembled by linking desktops around the world as in the SETI project (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence). I can see the banner ads now: PCs of the World Unite, You Have Nothing to Lose but Your Fees (to paraphrase Marx).

Hence the theme of this month’s article, Who will win the Race? Who will be the new cult hero to reap the fame from freeing the HD videos from evil fee collectors?

On to business: Thanks to Bob Culver for giving us an in-depth history of digital broadcast research and development. Who knew that Winnebagos were so intimately connected to the development of digital radio?

This month, CMUG member Tom Alizio will be discussing work he does as a DJ, and how computers have changed that. He’ll be demonstrating both the old method and the new using a program called PCDJ.

I hope to see you at the meeting.

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1. This editorial is based on an ExtremeTech article of 5 Sept 2006.

Editor’s Note

from Paul Van Bloem

A few brief notes from your Editor.

Website Woes

As you may have noticed, the CMUG website at www.millkern.com/cmug is no longer accessible. We have been receiving free space and bandwidth from Millkern for years, which has been very nice. We have not received any support, which is occasionally a problem.

Apparently, Millkern has decided to get out of the web hosting business, as of September 1. I don’t know whether they tried to notify us and were unsuccessful, or just didn’t bother; either way, I only learned of this after Labor Day. Since Millkern’s own homepage was also missing, I thought it might be due to a server failure. But now their page is back up, with information about how they’ve scaled back their service and have transferred their commercial web hosting to Pair Networks.

The CMUG board has not decided what direction to go in at this time. We have backups of everything that was on our site, so recreating the site at a new location will not be a problem.

We plan to send out an email to all members when we have a new website up and running.

Spammer Sentenced

Mike Hayes wanted me to be sure and point out the 7.25 year sentence given Nathan Peterson recently. Peterson ran a website selling pirated software, and of course sent out a lot of spam to support it.

Actually, he’s going to prison for copyright infringement, not because he’s been spamming us all. He pleaded guilty to two counts of copyright infringement at the end of 2005. The judge in the case has now sentenced him to 7 years in prison and \$5.4 million in restitution. He also has to “forfeit the proceeds of his scheme, which included homes, cars, and a boat,” according to MSNBC.

(www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14752611/).

I’m glad this guy is being put away for a while, but I can’t get all that excited. After all, pirated software is just one of three or four products that are advertised in spam. (The categories that leap to mind: drugs, especially those related to sex; stocks, mostly penny stocks; and financial deals, notably mortgages and Nigerian scams.) Hopefully this stiff sentence will discourage other software piracy sites, but that still leaves a lot of spam!



Deals from the DealsGuy

by Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

I wanted to change to a new cardiologist, but finding one who does not make me see a nurse practitioner (NP) to do the normal routine office visits is difficult. I have talked about this before and the situation is getting more common. I visited one cardiologist who told me point blank that I would have to see his NP most of the time since that was their policy, so I am trying another one. This doctor also uses a NP but I don't know yet if they have the same policy and will discuss it on my next visit.

I am not trying to discredit nurse practitioners or physician assistants (PA), but if I am paying for a doctor, I think I should see one. The response to my complaint is that "there is a doctor on the premises." However, when I saw an NP in the past, they did not consult a doctor, but gave me their instructions after they asked me some questions. While NPs and PAs are probably very competent in what they are qualified to do, the NP or PA has nowhere near the training the doctor has and I want the benefit of that since the office call is no cheaper when you see the NP rather than the doctor.

I read where there will soon even be clinics that will be run by NPs. They will be cheaper and claim these offices will only be for minor medical conditions. On the other hand, I have no doubt that there are some NPs and PAs who might be better for an office call than a poorly trained doctor, and I have been to a few bad doctors. In fact, that's why I'm looking for a new cardiologist. Since I'm not a doctor, why am I not happy with the doctor? Even my MD agrees with me after hearing my complaints.

While the doctors started this trend to bolster their financial bottom line in the office, perhaps it will start a trend of people shopping for cheap medical attention by forgoing the expensive doctors for the NP because there are an increasing number of people who no longer have health insurance.

Upcoming Meetings

Here's is what we have planned for the next few meetings. To suggest a meeting topic (especially if you can suggest a possible speaker for the topic), please talk to me at the meeting, or via email at cdlots@yahoo.com.

- Andrew Rein

October 18: Hank Volpe will be back with us to discuss HDTV and digital TV over the Internet.

November 15: To be determined.

Caution

Remember that I have not tried any of the following products in this column, so be sure to do your homework.

Need More Windows Maintenance?

Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal:

A Click a Day Keeps All PC Threats Away!

IObit.Com announced the release of the newest version of Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal. It is a multi-purpose Windows care tool that is intended for solving an entire list of computer problems: removing spyware and adware, preventing security threats, providing privacy protection, fixing Windows registry errors, temporary files cleanup, startup cleanup, repairing Windows, speeding up system, etc. The program is 100% free.

The newest version has a multitude of improvements and is easy to use. There is an updated database, online search function is added to "Startup Manager" and "Help" is linked to "Support" page. One click and the program is ready to start a comprehensive examination of your OS.

Secondly, the program features a special restore center, which is always ready to undo all of your changes automatically. Just one click in the RestoreCenter and a user can undo all of his/her changes. Thirdly, Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal contains the Auto-Update option, which helps you keep abreast of new threats. Apart from that, the program has a built-in module, which is always ready to give you a preliminary assessment of your computer configuration. You can save this assessment as a text file.



Windows SIG

September 26:

Hacking Your Way Thru Windows

The Windows Special Interest Group (SIG) meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month. 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's topic will be "Hacking Your Way Thru Windows." If you have a suggestion or a topic for a future SIG meeting, please email me at mikes_line@hotmail.com.

Remember that the meetings are now at the Florence Bain Senior Center, and begin at 7 pm. See the CMUG website at www.millkern.com/cmug for maps and directions.

Hope to see you there.

- Mike Hayes



IObit says the program is the only one capable of challenging Microsoft's new service—OneCare. Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal is compatible with all major anti-virus and firewall solutions. Apart from doing very hard work to keep all intruders out of your files and keep your Windows safe and sound, the program has some artistic merits. For example, the interface allows you to switch between varieties of themes. Advanced WindowsCare v2 Personal runs under Windows 2000 and XP and is available as a free download at www.iobit.com/BetaDownload.html (4.1 mb).

- ↳ Product page link: www.iobit.com/AdvancedWindowsCarePersonal/index.html
- ↳ E-mail: support@iobit.com
- ↳ Web: www.iobit.com

Don't Let Your Printer Control You, You Control It!

Regulate Printer Usage with O&K Print Watch Version 4.00. It allows users to specify printing "budgets" for users, groups, and printers, and limit document printing by pages, cost or keywords used in the name of a document. Combining the features of a network print spooler and a print job register, this program lets users control print jobs, paper usage and collects statistics from the print servers. The latter is helpful in creating a company-wide chargeback plan that ensures that all users pay their fair share of the printing budget.



Unlike the standard print manager in Windows, O&K Print Watch correctly counts the number of printed pages and offers an excellent mechanism to set limits on printer usage. O&K Print Watch creates a wide array of reports, which are available for viewing even from a web browser. New to version 4.00 is a radically improved mechanism that enables users to set limits on printer usage and an ability to view printed jobs as images. Users will also discover an ability to organize users into groups and set up printing rules for each group individually.

You can set up a rule to limit printing based on the number of pages in a document. Or, you can specify keywords and no document with these keywords in its name will ever be printed.

O&K Print Watch 4.00 runs under Windows NT4/2000/XP/Server 2003. The company offers a flexible licensing policy based on the number of printers that can be monitored by the program. Discounts are available to educational institutions, and a 20% discount is provided to all DealsGuy readers by using any order link from the buy page www.prnwatch.com/registration.html and insert the coupon code "REGJY". Additional information on O&K Print Watch, as well as a free 15-day evaluation

version, is available from www.prnwatch.com.

- ↳ DealsGuy note: It appears the printer(s) are required to be connected to a print server to work properly.
- ↳ Product website: www.prnwatch.com/okpw.html
- ↳ E-mail: info@prnwatch.com

How Good Is Your Link Collection?

Free Link-Popularity Checker!

This tool allows you to instantly check the Link Popularity of your Website as well as all of your competitors. It is said that Google heavily favors Websites with many links. Now you can instantly compare yourself to the competition and see how many more links you need to climb to the top of Google's rankings. Save countless hours with this and many other useful tools available for free at: www.monthlyreport.org.

What's Hiding on Your Disk?

How about discovering everything that's hidden on your hard drive? "Disk Investigator" will do just that. It can also help you recover lost data. Display the true drive contents by bypassing the operating system and directly read the raw drive sectors. You can view and search raw directories, files, clusters and system sectors; verify the effectiveness of file and disk wiping programs and undelete previously deleted files. This free software is available at www.theabsolute.net/sware/dskinv.html.

Thanks to Robert Lewis who pointed out this item in The DataBus (newsletter of The Dayton Microcomputer Association) some time back.

Are You Missing Any Money?

It's doubtful you would know about this kind of missing money or assets. The website www.missingmoney.com is where you can find a record of the missing assets for 26 states and DC. It's doubtful you will find anything for yourself there, but it wouldn't hurt to take a look, just in case. States do eventually liquidate some assets such as stocks, but even then, you could later recover the value at that time.

Sorry but I didn't make a note of which newsletter I found this one in.

That's it for this month

Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. Visit my Web site at www.dealsguy.com. 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 Cheap-kate) Click

bobclick@mindspring.com



Quality Freeware

by Brian K. Lewis, via APCUG

I found the article in the July Monitor on "Cost Efficient" software by Joseph Moran to be quite interesting, but noticed that much of the software had a price associated with it. So I thought I'd let you in on the absolutely free software I have been using for the past 2-5 years. In every case I have used it as my standard application for the purpose and, in many cases, totally removed any commercial software that carried out the same function. I have also upgraded the free software when the upgrades became available. All of the software in this article can be obtained without charge by downloading from the various Internet sites I have listed. In every case there is no "trial" period involved.

Free Office Programs

The foremost item on my list is OpenOffice. I am currently using version 2.0. This version includes word processing, spreadsheet, drawing, database, and presentation software. All of these applications produce documents that are interchangeable with their equivalents in Microsoft Office. OpenOffice will also export documents in either PDF or HTML format. You don't need any PDF software to produce documents that are readable by Adobe Reader (formerly known as Acrobat Reader). Unfortunately it can not open or edit PDF documents. It can open and edit documents in over 25 different formats including HTML, Word Perfect, Word, Adobe PhotoShop, etc. You can obtain your free copy of this software from www.openoffice.org.

Free Browser and Email Handler

I also recommend Firefox and Thunderbird as free replacements for Internet Explorer and Microsoft's Outlook Express. With the latest versions of Firefox I have not run across any websites that it can not render correctly. That's not to say that some may exist, I just haven't found them. Firefox will transfer your favorites (bookmarks) from Internet Explorer.

As for Thunderbird, it is similar in many ways to Outlook Express, but it includes an RSS Reader that I have found useful. It also filters junk mail and places it in a special folder where you can review it if needed. Otherwise it will be automatically deleted at an interval that you can set. It doesn't remove 100% of the spam, but it does detect about 99% of what comes into my computer. One of the latest additions to Thunderbird is anti-phishing protection. Thunderbird warns you if it suspects that the message might be a scam. Thunderbird can import your address book from Outlook Express.

Both Firefox and Thunderbird can be downloaded from www.download.com or if you prefer, from www.mozilla.com/firefox/ and

www.mozilla.com/thunderbird.

Free Anti-Virus and Firewall

As for anti-virus software, you can't beat Avast for ease of use and automatic updating. After downloading and installing the software it asks you to register. That simply includes giving up your email address, name and postal address. You receive a license to use the software for a year for personal use. At the end of the year you re-register and get another year's free use. Avast is free for personal use, not for businesses or other organizations. However, non-profit organizations can buy Avast at a greatly reduced price.

I have used Avast for several years and have installed it on more than 100 other personal computers. In no case have the users had any problems with this software. In addition, Avast does not sell your email or postal address so you get no spam from this registration. Avast quietly updates itself frequently in the background while you continue to work. Then it simply reports that an update has taken place. I have seen days when I have had 3-4 updates in the same day. If you use a dial-up connection instead of cable/DSL, Avast will attempt to update whenever you go online. Since the downloads are usually less than 100 KB, they occur rapidly, even on a dial-up connection. The Home edition of Avast can be downloaded from www.avast.com/eng/avast_4_home.html. I recommend using this site instead of download.com, as your anti-virus database will be more current.

For a good, reliable firewall I recommend ZoneAlarm. It is also free for personal use. I admit they will try to sell the Pro version when you install it, but the free version is really all you need. That is, assuming you have anti-virus and anti-parasite software installed on your computer. It used to be that dial-up users didn't really have much need for a firewall. However, in today's Internet world, I wouldn't want to connect to the Internet without a good software firewall. While traveling with my laptop, I kept both my anti-virus and firewall updated and running for every connection. ZoneAlarm can be downloaded from www.zonealarm.com. Click on the download link and then the ZoneAlarm tab.

Free Anti-Parasite Software

As for anti-parasite software, I have to agree with Mr. Moran. Ad-Aware SE and Spybot S&D are two that I keep on both my computers. But that isn't enough. You have to run them regularly to insure you are not infected. I run mine a minimum of once each week. Both of these can be downloaded from download.com.

Spybot also has an immunization function that can prevent some parasites from installing themselves on your system. Another immunization application that I use is Spyware Blaster. It makes changes to your registry that prevents





parasites from installing. At the present their database lists more than 5,000 items. Using these three anti-parasite/anti-trojan products will certainly upgrade your security and they are all free. Spyware Blaster can be downloaded from **download.com** or **www.javacoolsoftware.com**.

Free Graphics and Screen-Capture

For general photo editing, I use Google's Picasa. It is not just a photo organizer. I use it to download photos from my camera and organize them into folders. It can also be used to edit photos, print photos and email them. You can make CDs, add captions or post photos on web sites. The advantage of Picasa over other photo software is that it is free. It can be downloaded from **download.com** or **http://picasa.google.com**. It does not have all the bells and whistles of applications like Photoshop or ULEAD's PhotoImpact, but it is more than adequate for most nonprofessional purposes.

You may not need screen capture software very often, but when you do, you really need it. I use MWSnap. It allows you to capture an entire screen or part of it. What you capture can be saved to a file, printed, or edited. It may take you a little time to get accustomed to the interface. But you can't damage anything by playing with it. Once you are familiar with all the controls, it really does copy any part of your screen. Again, this is freeware and can be downloaded from **www.mirekw.com/ winfreeware**.

Other Free Programs

Have you ever considered that you might need an inventory of the items in your home for the purposes of making an insurance claim? Considering that we live in Florida where there are many electrical storms, to say nothing of hurricanes, damage to your home could occur at any time. Can you list the contents of every room and the value of each item? Well, the Insurance Information Institute provides free software to assist you in making an inventory and a photographic record of the contents of your house. This software is very easy to use and very important to any homeowner. The software also includes typical lists of things in each type of room. You don't have to use these as you can enter anything you have. You can include place of purchase, date and price, if you have that info. Pictures of items or general pictures of a room can also be added. This software can be downloaded from **www.knowyourstuff.org**.

There is one more significant software package that I use that is freeware. That is NVu, web-authoring software. Linspire, the company that produces the Linspire Linux software, publishes it. It has a WYSIWYG editor (What You See Is What You Get) as well as direct editing of the HTML language. It includes the tools for publishing the pages to a website. You can test the pages against a browser on your computer to insure that everything works

properly. It also allows you to add Javascript either directly or in a separate file to your pages. There is a complete tutorial for NVu included on the web that can be downloaded and printed. There is also an NVu users forum which can be quite helpful. If you have never created a web page before, I think you would find NVu to be just what you need. If you want to see a website created with NVu, check out **www.sandpiperchorus.org**. NVu can be downloaded from **download.com**.

There is one other specialized software package that I have used that some may be interested in trying. This is the Personal Ancestral File (PAF). This is free genealogy recording software provided by the LDS Church (Church of Latter-day Saints, or the Mormons). Their website also allows users to search online files from the family history archives in Salt Lake City. Although I am not currently using PAF, I did use it for a few years before switching to a commercial package. PAF is certainly quite useful for beginning family historians and it can be expanded by purchasing the PAF Companion. If you are interested in trying PAF, download it from **www.familysearch.org**.

Now that you have all this downloaded freeware, you should make backup copies on either a CD or DVD. Well, for that we have another freeware package, CDBurnerXP Pro. This software will burn CD-R, CD-RW, DVD+R/RW and DVD-R/RW. It will burn and create ISO files. It will burn audio discs from mp3, wav, ogg and wma files. It will convert (rip) files on audio discs to wav, mp3, ogg or wma files. It also works with most IDE, USB, Firewire and SCSI burners. It can be downloaded from **download.com** or **www.cdburnerxp.se/download.php**. This software does not have a trial period. It is yours for however long you wish to use it. I have been using mine for over two years and have obtained several updates, one of which added the DVD burner capability.

Conclusion

As you can see from this, there is a lot of quality freeware available. If you are interested in finding more, check out the listings at **download.com**. Just be cautious because many of their listings are trial packages only. You are expected to purchase the total package before the end of your trial period. But there are many "nuggets" on their very extensive web site. So if you are interested in saving money, try some of these quality freeware items.

*This article comes to us via APCUG, the Association of Personal Computer User Groups, of which CMUG is a member. Dr. Brian Lewis is a former university & medical school professor who has worked with personal computers for more than thirty years. He is a member of the Sarasota (Florida) PC Users Group (**www.spcug.org**), and can be reached at **bwsail@yahoo.com**.*



XP or Vista?

by Elaine Drain via APCUG

From talking with our members, it seems that quite a number of you with older computers running Win98 or ME are in a quandary as to whether to go ahead and buy a new computer now with XP or try to hold out until Vista arrives on the scene. As Jim and I tell our members when asking for buying advice, it's a personal choice you have to make depending on your needs and your budget. We can, however, provide some general information to help you choose, so read on.

XP certainly is superior to Windows 98 or ME, especially now that 98 and ME are no longer supported. Microsoft will probably continue to support XP for four or five more years (but no one can say for certain on that one). XP, even with its vulnerabilities, is a very stable operating system. Jim and I are both running XP Pro and have been satisfied with its performance overall. I have been doing a lot of reading on Vista and, from the information available, feel that it will be superior to XP, but not everyone will require all of the features that will be included in the full version of Vista.

Upgrade Choices

So given that information, here are some choices:

Current computer with 98 or ME: if you are currently running Windows 98 or ME and don't want to spend a lot of money next year for a new computer with Vista, you may want to go ahead and buy a new computer with XP soon. The back-to-school prices for computers right now are very enticing. Certainly, the newer computers next year running Vista will cost substantially more because of the increased hardware requirements.

If you would like to upgrade to a new computer with XP now and have minimum needs, for example only using your computer for email and surfing the Internet, then a budget-priced computer may suit you fine. If you're not planning to upgrade to the Vista operating system down the road, look for a computer with a Celeron or Sempron processor. Keep in mind, though, that you will have fewer upgrade options in the future.

If you would like to upgrade to a new computer with XP now, but think you might want to upgrade to Vista later on, you should consider spending a little more. This is also true if you have higher needs now, such as working with digital photos and editing programs, spreadsheets, databases, powershows, etc. Plan on getting a Pentium or Athlon processor. I would recommend a bare minimum of 512 MB of memory (RAM) if you are working with multimedia (photos/music/video/audio) for now but you should plan to add another 512 MB of memory when you upgrade to Vista.

If you are wondering about the minimum requirements for upgrading your current computer to

Vista, the following information was taken from the Microsoft website.

Windows Vista Minimum Supported System Requirements

PCs that meet the minimum supported system requirements will be able to run the core features of Windows Vista with the basic user experience.

- ↳ Processor: 800 MHz 32-bit (x86) or 64-bit (x64) processor
- ↳ System Memory: 512 MB
- ↳ GPU (Graphics Processing Unit): SVGA (800x600)
- ↳ Graphics Memory: ?? (not stated, although I have heard a minimum of 128 MB)
- ↳ HD space: 15 GB
- ↳ Optical Drive: CD-ROM drive

Keep in mind that the above specs are for running the **basic** version of Vista and not the fully functional version that has a multitude of new features. Although Microsoft is currently saying Vista will run with 512 MB of RAM, I would make certain the computer could be upgraded to 1 GB of RAM. Minimum requirements are just that – bare bones minimum – and I would recommend that your computer exceed these minimums, or at least be capable of doing so. Vista is currently in the Beta2 stage and (they say) is nearing finalization before debut, but that does not mean that the system requirements stated here won't change by the time the system is ready to sell, so stay tuned on that.

Personally, if your current computer came with Windows 98 or ME, I would not recommend attempting to upgrade your old computer to Vista unless you originally purchased a very high end computer, and it has the capability for 1 GB of RAM. Even then, it may not be worth the time, effort and money to upgrade. The cost to purchase the Vista operating system, plus any installation charges, plus the cost of the memory upgrade, not to mention the graphics card requirements, would add up to a tidy sum. In the end you would still have a very old computer (that may or may not work well with Vista).

Current Computer Came With XP: If your current computer came with XP already installed, you may want to hold out and wait to see what Vista offers and how it operates before you take the plunge.

Excellent Comparison – Vista vs XP: If you would like to take a peek and see how Vista compares with XP side by side, follow this link: www.bentuser.com/article.aspx?ID=332&page=1. If you're wondering how the Apple operating system, Tiger, compares with Vista, this article may be of interest to you: www.eweek.com/article2/0,1895,1842175,00.asp

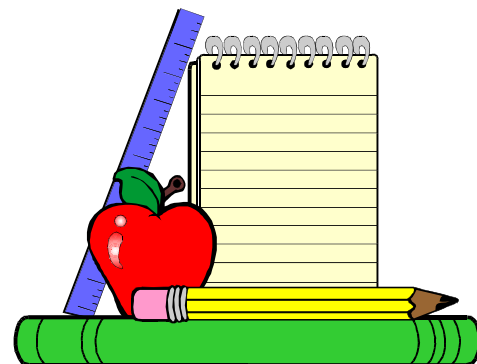
This article comes to us via APCUG, the Association of Personal Computer User Groups, of which CMUG is a member. Elaine Drain is the president of the Senior Surfers Computer Club in Delaware; their website is www.nscseniorsurfers.com.



CMUG MEGAPHONE

George Coffin
8652 Open Meadow Way
Columbia, MD 21045

Meeting:
Wednesday, September 20, 7:30 pm
Topic: CMUG member Tom Alizio will be
Talk about how he uses PCs and various
software in his work as a DJ.



CENTRAL MARYLAND USER GROUP

Membership and Change of Address

Send renewals and address changes to:
George Coffin
CMUG Membership
8652 Open Meadow Way
Columbia, MD 21045
gcoffin3@comcast.net

Reviews

Send review software, hardware, books,
and info to:
CMUG Reviews
Att: Art Silverglate
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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, a membership directory, full access privileges to the Website, and drawings for free and review software at meetings.

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