

QBITS

Quad-Cities Computer Society
Newsletter for May 2008
Volume 26, number 3

www.qcs.org

Wednesday
April 9, 2008
7:00 PM

Custom Build or Ready Made? Which Computer is Best? by Dale Wells

QCS Review Smart Computing Magazine

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for providing the site for our Web Page at
<http://www.qcs.org>

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The QCS is a member of



Monthly meetings are open to the general public.

SmartComputing has always been popular with our user group. It is a magazine that speaks plainly and clearly. A link to this fine publication is available on our QCS homepage: qcs.org. In today's complex and fast moving electronic world *Smart Computing* is a reliable aid. Holly Hopkins, a new college graduate and a member of the advertising team at Sandhills publishing came to show us why this is true.

Holly logged onto the *SmartComputing* web site and proceeded to highlight the many subscription benefits and features that reside therein. One of the more notable is that a subscriber has access not only to *SmartComputing*, but can read the other four publications of Sandhill Publishing as well: *PC Today*, *First Glimpse*, *Reference Series* and *Computer Power User*.

We buy our new machines, get the latest gadgets, take them out of the box, setup them and then we hit those "rough patches" in computing. Online access to all of these magazines makes it is easy to find ready and clearly stated help. This site lets you create a personal library of articles that you can reference time and again.

Whether it is an article from the current issue or from one of their other publications, you can print it, place it in your personal library, or email it to a friend. There are 29,000 articles available online. It is certain that you will find answers to your questions. And if you don't *Smart Computing* offers Free Technical Help via phone. They are available M-F , 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. And Saturday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

SmartComputing has created a forum community

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The *QBITS* can now be produced in Acrobat PDF format and sent to your email box. If you desire to have the newsletter sent to you electronically instead of by US Mail, notify:

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The QCS will then arrange to email your next issue to you.



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QBITS

Published monthly by the
Quad Cities Computer Society
Tri-City Jewish Center
2715 30th Street
Rock Island IL 61201
web page • <http://www.qcs.org>

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online that allows you to post problems and answers and retrieve them easily. Answers to your queries will be noted in an email to you.

Tech Support has an excellent category: Error Message Explanations. We have all encounter these hieroglyphic mysteries. Here you will find plain text answers to their meaning and solution.

The online site has available a Database of Common Problems. It is the web extension of the principle that there are no dumb questions in computing. *SmartComputing's* database fulfills this credo.

So if you haven't already done so, click the link at our web site or go to smartcomputing.com. Take some time to navigate through all of the rich content. If you subscribe let them know that you are a member of the Quad-Cities Computer Society. Those who attended the meeting received a free complimentary issue, a mouse pad and a *SmartComputing* pen. Four lucky members won raffled gifts from *SmartComputing*: Marvin Siebke, Vickie Wassenhove, Dale Arnold and Patty Lowry.

The May meetings of the Digital Media SIG and the Windows SIG are canceled. They will resume in June.

Access Point Donated to QCS

The Quad-Cities Computer Society wishes to thank Dale Wells of Computer Repair Center for donating an access point to extend the range of our internet connection.

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The Computer Corner – Spring Clean Your Computer

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While you're cleaning everything else around your home and office at this time of year, don't forget to clean your computer. There is truth to the saying, "A clean computer is a happy computer."

With the time we spend creating and working on our systems, we should do all we can to keep them running smoothly and give them long, healthy lives. So here are some things we can all do to prolong the lives of our systems. As a cautionary note: **backup** all your important items before doing any maintenance on your system. If you don't feel comfortable opening your system or editing the Registry, then don't do it! But what I intend to discuss here is not rocket science. These items are the same ones I perform when I clean my clients' systems.

Blow the Dust Out!

Dust is your computer's enemy! So get rid of it. The electronic components in a system generate heat. Heat is bad for a system. The more dust in a machine, the hotter it will run. When motherboard components get overheated, they "take a powder" and just shut themselves off until they can cool down. By keeping the insides clean your system will run cooler, thus letting it run longer.

Most generic systems have 4 to 6 screws that hold the case cover on. If you have a Dell, HP, Compaq, Gateway or other major brand system, look in the owner's manual or online to find out how to open your case. By removing the sides of the computer you'll gain access to

its guts which is where the cleaning can be done. I use a small hand-held vacuum to suck up the dust balls. I use the crevice tool, that's not the one with the brush. You can also use canned air or air from a compressor to blow the dirt out. Be careful not to bump or touch any components on the motherboard while cleaning. Keeping one hand on the metal case while you clean should discharge any static electricity that might have built up.

With the vacuum, don't forget to suck out the dust that has accumulated in the power supply. There are usually vents on the side opposite the circular fan. I vacuum out from both the fan-side and the vent side. Note: if you are blowing rather than vacuuming, don't blow air into the floppy drive or cdrom/dvd units. Unless they are filthy and already don't work, you don't want to risk getting dust on the optics inside. And remember, blowing air into a computer really just moves the dust from the computer to somewhere else! I suggest you do it outside, if possible.

If you have a mouse that has a ball, think about getting a mouse that uses laser light instead. But if you want to clean the mouse, open it up, wash the ball with warm, soapy water, and gently scrape the gunk off the three rollers inside. Your mouse will act like new after a good cleaning.

You can also vacuum your keyboard. You'd be amazed at how much junk you'll find if you just turn it over and shake it up a bit. I have even gone so far as to wash the keyboard to get rid of spilled soda. An hour or two in the Phoenix sun and the keyboard is ready to go!

Cleaning the Software

Before running software cleaners such as Ad-aware, Spybot Search & Destroy and a good antivirus program (I like the free AVG), it makes sense to delete unneeded files and programs. Might as well

not clean any more than you have to! This might be the time to use System Restore to create a Restore Point before you eliminate something you shouldn't. Better safe than sorry.

In the Documents and Settings area, look for the Local Settings folder for each user. If you can't find it, you may need to turn on the "Show Hidden Files and Folders" option on your system. To do this, open up Explorer, from the menu bar at the top go to **Tools-Folder Options-View-Show Hidden Files and Folders**.

Under Local Settings, I delete everything in the Temp folder. I also delete everything in the Temporary Internet Files folder also. Once that's done, I go to the Windows folder, and delete everything in the TEMP folder. Caution: some of you create your own Temp folders into which you may put things you might not want to delete. Check that out before doing a mass deletion.

Open the Registry

Again, if you're not comfortable editing the Registry, don't. You can back up the Registry (entirely or just specific keys) before proceeding. I mention this item in order to delete the "Compress Old Files" key before proceeding to the next step. You can either search for this key using the Find feature, or go to:

HKEY_Local_Machine\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\VolumeCaches .

The second key down should be the CompressOldFiles key, if it hasn't already been removed. If it's there, RIGHT click on it and delete it. You don't need it. Close the Registry and proceed.

Clean Up Drive

To clean up your drive further, go to My Computer. For each hard drive, RIGHT click on the drive, left click on Properties, and then click on Disk Cleanup. If you didn't remove the CompressOldFiles key

earlier, it may take a long time before the system responds. If you did, shortly you'll see files which may be deleted from your system so you can recover space. After cleaning these up you may see an increase in available disk space.

Clean Up Internet Explorer and Firefox

One of the easiest things you can do to keep your computer clean is to get rid of Temporary Internet Files that are stored on your computer. Here's how to do this for immediate relief:

- *Internet Explorer* - delete Temporary Internet Files:
 1. Open Internet Explorer.
 2. Select the Tools menu.
 3. Select Internet Options.
 4. Select the General tab.
 5. In the Temporary Internet Files section, click the Delete Files button.
 6. Do not check the clear Offline Content box. Click Ok.
 7. Click Ok to close the Tools window.
- *Firefox (Mozilla)* - clear browser cache
 1. Open FireFox (Mozilla).
 2. Click the Tools menu.
 3. Click Options.
 4. Click Privacy.
 5. Click the Clear button for Cache.

If you use Internet Explorer, go to **Tools-Internet Options-Advanced** and almost at the end, put a check mark in the box that says "Empty Temporary Internet Files folder when Browser is closed" and IE will automatically delete the files when you close the browser.

Add/Remove Programs

In the Control Panel, you can add and remove programs you no longer need or use. If you are not sure, Google the program in question and then decide. You might want to opt to leave in any program you are not sure about. But if you still have games or programs you have not used in years,

—continued on next page—

toolbars you don't want or need, or other items of no significance to you, clear them out. As I've said before, Google first, then if you're still not sure, leave them in. Often programs will have their own Uninstall feature. If you decide to remove a program, first go to **Start-Programs** and find the menu item of the program you want to delete. If it is there, check to see if there is an Uninstall menu choice and if so, I'd start with that before using the Add/Remove programs feature.

Spybot Search & Destroy and Ad-Aware

These are two FREE programs that do a great job cleaning up malware, spies, and other things that slow your system down. You can find them on the Internet at www.download.com, or just Google them. After installing them, make sure you use the update feature before doing a scan. These programs are updated almost daily, so it pays to take advantage of the latest updates.

Get Rid of the Language Bar Control Panel, Regional Settings, Languages, Details, Languages, Uncheck the "Show Language Bar" box to get rid of the Language Bar at the bottom of your screen. If you use the Language Bar, by all means don't get rid of it.

Keep Your Antivirus Updated!

Whichever AV program you use, if it is not updated you're not getting full protection! *Security suites slow systems down!* I don't use them. Google "AVG Free" to get a free antivirus that does a good job, and then configure it to have it updated and run it daily.

Task Manager

Quite often slow performance is directly related to the programs that are running. RIGHT click on the Taskbar to open and look at duplicate program entries under Processes – click on the title of the Processes tab to sort alphabetically.

If you see multiple instances of the same program running, for example, outlook.exe, odds are you're having some kind of problem. If you're not sure about what a process is, Google it to find out or leave it alone. If you click on the CPU tab twice, you'll see which programs are using the most memory. Find the memory hogs, check them at Google, and then begin to end processes you don't need. If a process is critical, Windows won't let you close it.

MSCONFIG

Go to **Start – Run** and type in "msconfig" (don't type the quotes) and click on "OK" and look in the Startup and Services areas to check to see what programs might not need to start. If you know they are not needed, uncheck them. If you have a problem after restarting, then re-check them. If you're uncertain . . . Google the file names and learn about them.

Defrag Your System Regularly

Go to www.auslogics.com/en/software to find free software to defrag your hard drives. I recommend defragging at least monthly to keep your system running smoothly. This is a nice program, FREE, and it's pleasant to watch. Keeping your hard drives defragmented will add life to your system and speed up performance when saving and retrieving files.

The suggestions above are based upon a system running Windows XP Pro. With Vista things may be in different places. The operation should be very similar, however, so doing a search in the Help & Support area may provide the answers you're looking for.

For a PowerPoint slide presentation with screen shots of locations referred to in this article, please visit

www.phoenixpcug.org/articles and look for the link.

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Hulu Offers Free TV and Movies over the Net

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; Radio and TV Show Host
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WEBSITES:

<http://www.hulu.com>

TV Shows Alphabetically

<http://www.hulu.com/browse/alphabetical/tv>

TV shows by Genre

<http://www.hulu.com/browse/genre/tv>

HD Videos

<http://www.hulu.com/hd>

Movies by Studio

<http://www.hulu.com/browse/network/movies>

Movies by Genre

<http://www.hulu.com/browse/genre/movies>

Adobe Flash Player (Free)

<http://www.adobe.com>

One of my readers recently emailed me about an offer he received via email (probably a spam email) about a \$50 program that will allow him to view what was described as satellite TV over the internet, without paying a monthly fee. According to the email, with this program, he could discontinue his cable or satellite service, and watch over 3000 channels on his computer. I researched the product he referenced and found that it was a multilevel marketed

program that was, in my opinion, deceptive in that it did not offer real satellite TV, but instead only offered a software utility that could receive the thousands of streaming videos already available for anyone to view for free, and that often required no special software to view. I strongly recommended to the reader that he not purchase the product, and instead just search for streaming video, and to keep his current TV provider.

In researching this service I came upon a recently released and legitimate way to view thousands of TV programs and movies over the internet, for free, and only using any of the common internet browsers. This free service (registration required) is the Hulu service available online at www.hulu.com. Hulu was founded in March of 2007, and is a joint venture owned by NBC Universal, and News Corp, and financed by \$100 million of venture capital. As I type this, Hulu is offering advertising supported content from over 50 sources, such as Fox TV, NBC, MGM, Sony Pictures, Warner Brothers, Lionsgate, 20th Century Fox, and other providers. The content available for viewing includes TV shows, full length feature films, and clips. Several full length, prime time shows are available on Hulu the morning after they air, and include such popular shows as The Simpsons, and The Office. There are also dozens of classical TV shows, available as full length episodes, including such favorites as Miami Vice and Buffy the Vampire Slayer. If users are willing to put up with unobtrusive ads, often in the lower right corner of the image, or standard TV type commercials, they can watch for free such full length feature films as Ice Age, Three Amigos!, and many others. Hulu is headquartered in Los Angeles, with research and development being done in China.

Hulu will play on almost all current browsers as they are currently configured, and require no special

software or add-ons to utilize the service, and requires a broadband connection to view the videos. Almost all computers already have Adobe's Flash Player installed, but if not, Flash Player is a free download from Adobe at www.adobe.com.

Once registered at hulu.com (free registration), a broad selection of videos becomes available for viewing at will. As I type this, there are about 11,200 full length TV episodes and feature clips available, with more being added daily. Currently available for viewing are almost all of the episodes of The Simpsons, 30 Rock, The Office, Knight Rider, House, Medium, Bionic Woman, American Dad!, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, 24, Prison Break, Heroes, about 160 full length children's cartoons (Woody Woodpecker, Spiderman, Astro Boy, and many others), and other TV shows of all genres. For those partial to Saturday Night Live skits, there are about nearly 500 available, including such contemporary issues as presidential politics. TV wrestling fans would appreciate the over 300 matches available for viewing, while NBA fans can view over 140 clips from professional basketball games. A collection of recent (2008) full length college football games, including many of the bowl games are available for viewing, including the 2007 and 2008 Sugar Bowl, Cotton Bowl, Fiesta Bowl, and others, enough to satiate college football fans, and keep them glued to the computer screen for days on end. Soap opera addicts will appreciate the well over 100 clips from Days of Our Lives. In total, Hulu lists 25 different TV genres for every taste, making something available for everyone. The large assortment of TV shows (and movies as well) can be displayed by clicking on "Type" (TV or Movie), and then "Genre"; this will display only those selections that meet both criteria. Simply clicking on the image of the selection will play that

selection. All of the TV shows can be displayed in one window alphabetically at www.hulu.com/browse/alphabetical/tv, and can be run by clicking on their titles. All of the TV shows can also be displayed in one window, sorted by genre at www.hulu.com/browse/genre/tv.

Hulu is not just about TV, but also full length feature films, clips, and trailers. As I type this, there are 760 movies available, of which 80 are full length feature films, the remainder being shorts, clips and trailers. According to Hulu, the most popular full length films viewed by members are Ice Age, Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World, The Girl Next Door, The Jerk, Usual Suspects, Planet of the Apes, Weekend at Bernie's, Dragon – The Bruce Lee Story, Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea, Three Amigos!, All Dogs Go to Heaven, and dozens more. Movies are divided into 10 genres, including action and adventure, animation, comedy, crime and mystery, documentary and biography, drama, family and kids, horror and thriller, music, and sci-fi and fantasy. Movies can be selected by genre, or by studio. Opening www.hulu.com/browse/network/movies will display movies alphabetically by studio, with full length features being clearly indicated. Each of the movies shown is hyperlinked (click on the title) directly to the movie. Similarly, all of the movies can be sorted by genre, and displayed in one window at www.hulu.com/browse/genre/movies.

Hulu is about to roll out "HD" (High Definition) videos, and currently has 20 HD movie trailers available to demonstrate the service at www.hulu.com/hd. Since HD video carries more data than conventional video, the system requirements are higher to view HD. In order to view the HD videos, the computer must have a minimum of Flash Player 9.0.115.0 (a free

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download from Adobe, available for most operating systems), a 2.5Mbs or faster broadband connection (many of the basic broadband services are incapable of operating at this speed, and a premium or upgraded broadband may be required to view HD), a fast processor (3Ghz minimum for Windows or Linux, or a 1.83Ghz Intel Core Duo for Mac). Almost all modern computers of recent manufacturer meet the minimum RAM and video requirements to view HD videos.

While not a substitute for cable or satellite TV, Hulu can provide countless hours of entertainment for free. Since new content is frequently added, and additional providers are being solicited, Hulu has the potential for becoming a major entertainment resource.

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Converting CD-based Music to Compressed Audio Files

By Mike Moore, Editor, Bowling Green Area Microcomputer User Group, Kentucky
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I spent the equivalent of two or three days in January, working a few minutes at a time, converting all of our CDs to MP3 format. I had been dreading this project, thinking that it would take too much time, but it really was not that bad and the results are going to be worth it.

A few years ago I purchased a 400-CD jukebox type CD player. This device does has the capability of displaying a short line containing the album's title, using a standard PC keyboard, but the process is complicated with problems. It's easy to get CDs in the wrong slot

and of course, you can only play them in the room where you've physically situated the jukebox unit.

In the past few years, we've been getting away from the album and becoming more focused on individual songs. This lamentable trend has been fueled by the 99 cent price point associated with downloading music by the song. Artists and producers alike have vilified this process, claiming that the artistic sum worth of songs on an album is greater than the tunes taken as individual songs.

I can buy into this sadness, to a point. I remember the smell of vinyl LPs, unwrapping the cellophane outer wrap, and the incredible detail the producers went into in packing artistic value into the finished product, right down to the order the songs appear on the album. These days, you just Google the album or artist title and download the Jpeg, that's about it. For a fee, a program called iTunes will do this for you automatically.

So why would a guy spend the time to rip (compress) the tracks of a CD or other ancient audio product to MP3 files? There are a few good reasons to do this.

For one thing, the devices that play music have become decentralized. What I mean by that is if you can imagine your computer as the "record player," then it's not much of a stretch to think of playing music anywhere in the house, car or workplace.

Doing this in the past meant locating the song you want (which may or may not be an easy task), finding the CD (or tape, or LP) it's recorded on, and hoping that it's not damaged.

Then once you've got it, you carry it to where ever you want to hear it. For me, this was often the car, and a car is a great place to scratch or otherwise ruin a CD, and I've also known friends whose entire CD collections have been stolen from vehicles. Physically moving music and other files from player to player is sometimes humorously referred to

as "Sneaker Net"

But once you begin to think of your songs and other media in terms of compressed MP3 files, they become at once more searchable, more replaceable, and more portable.

Compressed audio files, though the wonder of a shared internet database called Gracenote (formerly CDDDB), contain informational tidbits that can searched. On the other hand, ordinary music tracks on a Compact Disc have no information associated with them at all, not even the name of the song. By converting CD-ROM music to MP3 files, your database can pull up a playlist for you using information encoded in the MP3 file. Most rip-ping software (such as C-Dex, available at

<http://cdexos.sourceforge.net/>) will query the CDDDB so that you won't have to manually type in the names of the songs or the name of the CD.

Compressed audio files can be stored on any hard drive in the house and can be made available on inexpensive MP3 players, iPods, and Multimedia computers that attach directly to your sound system. There is usually no special hardware to buy - you can just feed the stereo output from your computer's sound card to the audio input on your TV or stereo amplifier.

Most of the MP3 player devices out there do not require a lot in the way of software - you generally plug them into a computer, they assign themselves a drive letter, and you can just copy your songs to the devices as if they were another hard drive. There are even self-contained wireless hard drives (see:

<http://www.apple.com/airportexpress>) that will broadcast your music wirelessly to any networked computer in the house!

Compressed audio files cannot get scratched like CDs do, and if your iPod or MP3 player is stolen or accidentally formatted (happens all the time!), or even if your entire

CD collection is stolen, it's no longer the end of the world. You just re-copy the files back to another device and you're good to go.

Though not exactly small, compressed audio files do lend themselves much better to e-mail. A typical MP3 music file is around 3 to 6 megabytes, which is just under the threshold of being too large to send to someone using dial-up internet. If both ends of the connection have high-speed, it's no problem at all, as this amount of data can be transmitted by most DSL and cable internet services in about 10 or 20 seconds. The MP3 compressed format is "lossy" in the sense that some of the music data is lost during compression, compared to the original recording, however I've never been able to tell the difference between a compressed song and a non-compressed track on a CD. The data you lose is not data that manifests as part of the music.

By the way, the songs as recorded on CDs you buy are very large - 50 to 80 megabytes would not be uncommon. For those of you audiophiles who need compression but don't want any data loss, consider using the FLAC mode of compression (See

<http://flac.sourceforge.net> for information). FLAC stands for "Free Lossless Audio Codec"

So, there are a host of reasons why we would want to compress our audio collection, but what is the downside? The only problem I can think of is that most automotive and older CD players cannot recognize the MP3 or any computer generated music format. Some of the newer CD players can, but it's not something that people generally know. So, for example, when I transferred an audio book selection to CD for my wife, she found that the CD player in her car refused to play the media, even though her car is not that old. My car, a Chevy Monte Carlo, played the disk without a problem even though it's an older car than hers. So in this situation

you may want to take advantage of software that does the reverse of ripping - it would take MP3 files and lay them down on the CD as if they were ordinary Audio CD tracks. iTunes and many CD-writing utilities such as Nero will do this for you.

Now does anyone wanna buy a used 400-CD jukebox player?

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Moving on to Vista – Part 5

by Neil Stahfest, Librarian,
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As most PC users know, after you've used your computer for a while the data on your hard drive starts to get fragmented. This affects your computer's performance and causes programs to run more slowly. With Windows XP, as well as all previous versions, you had three ways to defragment your hard drive. You could do it manually (click Start --> All Programs --> Accessories --> System Tools --> Disk Defragmenter). You could do it manually (click Start --> All Programs --> Accessories --> System Tools --> Disk Cleanup). Or you could create a scheduled task to do it for you automatically (click Start --> All Programs --> Accessories --> System Tools --> Scheduled Task and the click on "Add Scheduled Task" and follow the wizard instructions).

Windows Vista automatically defragments your hard disk for you. Not only does it defragment your hard disk, but it does it in the background mode. This allows you to do other things on your computer while the defragmenting program is

being run. The down side of this is that programs will run more slowly while the defragmenting process goes on. On the other hand, because automatic defragmenting runs fairly frequently it should not take too long to complete.

Of course you still have the ability to defragment manually. Right-click on the "Computer" icon on your desktop and select properties. In the window that appears, click on "Performance" (lower left corner), then "Advanced Tools" (upper left corner) and then "Open Disk Defragmenter". Notice that at this point you have the options of scheduling when the defragmenter runs or running it immediately. At this point Vista will defragment ALL hard drives that it finds on your computer. Previous versions of Windows allow you to select which hard drive to defragment. Windows Vista SP1 (when it is released) is supposed to add this capability to Windows Vista.

While we are on the topic of computer performance, lets go back to the "Performance Information and Tools" screen (right click on the "Computer" icon, click on "Properties" and click on "Performance" in the lower left corner of the screen). Note that this screen provides you with some general information about the performance of your computer. It numerically scores processor, memory, graphics and hard disk performance. You'll find links on this screen that explain what the numbers mean and how to improve your computer's performance. Many of the suggestions do not require changes to you hardware but recommend changes to the programs that you run or do not run.

On the upper left side of the "Performance Information and Tools" screen you'll find a number of tasks which control how your computer performs. If your PC is a laptop, click on "Adjust power settings". On the new screen, examine the "Power Plan". The decision you

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make here effects the length of time that your laptop will run between battery charges and its speed. Most laptops come configured to balance performance against battery endurance. There are many options available. If you normally operate your laptop plugged into an external power source, you'll want to change the setting to maximize performance.

Before we leave the "Performance Information and Tools" screen, you should also look at "Adjust visual effects" (in the upper left corner under "Tasks"). When you click on this item you'll see three tabs. We are only going to address the "Visual effects" tab for now. The first button, "Let Windows choose what is best for my computer" is probably selected. This gives you the maximized "eye candy" on your computer but may have a negative effect on performance when resource intensive programs are running (i.e. Video editors). Notice that you have additional choices to "Adjust for best appearance" and "Adjust for best performance" as well as a "Custom" button that lets you choose what features to turn on and off. If your computer performance appears to be sluggish, try selecting "Best performance".

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How to Forward Email

By Vinny La Bash, a member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida
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Let's examine a typical email scenario. After opening your email, you find a message that you simply

must share with all your friends. You press the "Forward" button and one way or another get all their email addresses in the "To:" box. Feeling quite satisfied after pressing the "Send" button, you sit back and take satisfaction in the joy you are sending to others.

You should be ashamed of yourself. You have just exposed everyone on your mailing list plus any people who received the email ahead of you to unending streams of spam, spyware, viruses, and other assorted electronic junk and mischief that hackers are prone to these days. What you have done is prove conclusively that you don't have a clue about the proper way to forward email. Your license to compute should be revoked immediately.

As messages get forwarded in this way they move along the internet, and the list of email addresses embedded in the note gets longer and longer. All it takes is for just one of these folks to get a virus or some other kind of malware, and everyone who has their email address in that list can be infected.

Anyone can take those email addresses, sell them or send out their own junk mail. Assuming you are a mature responsible adult, you most likely would not want to harm anyone, even inadvertently. What does a conscientious person do to stop or better yet, prevent damage?

When you click the "Forward" button you enter the edit mode of your email client. Before you do anything else DELETE all the other email addresses appearing at the top of the message. Let me repeat. DELETE them by highlighting them and THEN pressing the Delete button on your keyboard. It doesn't take long. When you've finished, delete any other junk that isn't actually part of the message, such as information about the original sender. Delete anything that is not part of what you want to send.

If you're sending the message to more than one person, do not use the To: or Cc: fields for adding

email addresses. Always, always use the **BCC:** (blind carbon copy) field for listing the email addresses. The people receiving the message will see only their own address.

Some email clients don't automatically show the blind carbon copy option. If that's the case, click on where it says To: and your address list will appear. Highlight the email address and choose the BCC: option. It's not much effort, and it eliminates the possibility of someone using the email addresses inappropriately. When you send using the blind carbon copy, everyone receiving the message will see "Undisclosed Recipients" in the heading information.

If your email client requires that something be in the To: field, send the message to yourself and use the BCC: field for everyone else.

Remove any FW in the subject line. Better yet, clean up the subject line completely by fixing any spelling or grammatical mistakes. Why let someone else's errors appear as your own?

Sometimes you will receive an email that is a petition. It states a position and directs you to add your name, address, and sometimes other information. Then you're supposed to send it to as many people as possible. If enough people do this, an email can contain hundreds if not thousands of names and addresses.

The longer the list gets the more valuable it becomes to a spammer or hacker because the names and email addresses are valid. If you really want to support the idea behind the petition, a personal letter to the eventual recipient carries a lot more weight than a piece of paper with a long list of names. When you think about it, lists like these can be generated from telephone books. Do you really think that a member of congress is going to pay attention to something that could be so easily faked?

Sometimes these petitions come with statements or warnings that the emails are being traced. Don't believe it. While technology is con-

stantly improving, there is still no way to trace emails through the internet.

One kind of really annoying email is the one that promises that something wonderful is going to happen, but only if I forward the message to at least ten people in the next ten minutes. However, if I fail to do so, some unspeakable evil will surely befall me. I always fail to do so, and nothing bad has happened yet, but I wonder if this could be the reason I haven't won the lottery.

Before forwarding some version of an Amber Alert, take a little time to check out the story behind the message. Most of these messages have been circulating around the internet for years. Some of them have been around for a decade. Almost all of them are much less than they seem.

Some sites that will help:
www.hoaxbusters.com
http://urbanlegends.about.com/od/internet/a/current_netlore.htm
<http://ciac.llnl.gov/ciac/bulletins/h-05.shtml>
<http://www.snopes.com/snopes.asp>
<http://www.vmyths.com/>
You may not be able to stop this stuff on your own, but you can stop contributing to it.

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CyberNews

by Gary Stanley
gary.stanley.net

Service Pack 1 for Vista was released last month and you can download and install it by clicking the Start button, All Programs, and Windows Update. Note that SP1 may not appear after it scans your computer and that means that you have not installed all of the previous critical updates, or it doesn't like some of the drivers in your computer. I'm one of those people. I

have checked numerous times and it's not available for my new HP laptop. From what I have read on the net there are issues with SP1 that will render some programs unusable, so proceed with caution. Just another reason why I dislike Vista. Although Vista has been out for some 15 months, only 10% of Cyber News readers are using it.

Service Pack 3 for XP is still in the final testing stages and no final date has been set for release, although it sounds like it's not too far off. I'm looking forward to that one.

Remember, the best way to fix a lot of computer problems is to turn off your machine, wait 20 seconds, then turn it back on. If something is really messed up you can use the system restore. Click the Start Button, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, then System Restore, and follow the prompts. Don't confuse that function with the "System Restore" CDs that you may have received when you bought your computer. Using those will restore everything back to the day you bought it, and you will have to reinstall any programs that you added between then and now. This is a last resort when having computer problems.

Want to find someone? A site that we have used often is Switchboard:
<http://switchboard.intelius.com/index.php>. It features different ways to find a person or business. You can even type in a phone number and come up with a name, address, and a location on a map. It also features area and zip code finders.

Another place of reference that I use from time to time is God's Yellow Pages:
<http://web2.iadfwnwt/dpelc/yellow>. If you are experiencing a certain mood, it's easy to find a place in the Bible that will explain that feeling. It's a great place to find words to help a friend. What feeling do you have right now?

Do you need a sound or clip art for a project? Microsoft offers more than 150,000 free images and sounds. Clip art can be used for hundreds of applications, from business cards to greeting cards. They're yours for the asking: of-

office.microsoft.com/en_us/clipart/default.aspx.

Your computer is loaded with fonts, enough for most of your projects, but occasionally you may need a special one. Fear not. Here's a site that offers thousands of Free Fonts:

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

Here's a valuable hint for any computer project that you're working on. Let's say you are typing a letter in Microsoft's Word. The first thing you should do when starting is to name and save the document. You're probably thinking, "I thought we did that last?" Let me explain. Open Word and you will have a blank page. Click File, and Save As. Type in a name and be sure you are saving it in "My Documents." Now begin your typing. After each paragraph click the save button on the toolbar. This method will protect you in case your computer freezes up. There have been many horror stories about people typing a long manuscript only to lose the whole thing because of some malfunction. I will click Save after each paragraph while creating Cyber News.

<Click>

Ever wonder what the world would be like without music? Music really adds joy to our lives. I spent 12 years on the radio (as a part timer) and loved "Spinning the Hits!" What's your request? Would you like to hear a song from the 50's, 60's, 70's, or 80's? Here's a site where you can be the disc jockey. <http://tropicalglen.com/>

We all have gifts and talents. It's amazing to watch someone practice their talent. A few months ago we witnessed a famous glass blower in Venice, Italy and the things that he created were breathtaking. Here's a young lady that will show you her talent on rollerblades. Be patient the first few seconds as she contemplates and imagines what she is going to do. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KMRwLfaj4>

Make a mistake on your computer? Hold down the CTRL key then tap the Z key. Mistake is gone, and that will work in almost all programs! Believe me, I use this often.

—continued on next page—

It's no mistake that it's spring-time! The hills are alive with spring flowers, the birds are singing, and it's a wonderful time of the year. The other day we traveled to Bartlett Lake, about an hour's drive from our house here in Phoenix, and the purpose was just to enjoy the look and smell of the season. You can see a photo I took www.pbase.com/image/66041880 and a painted version : www.pbase.com/gary_stanley/image/94924083.

Photo tip of the month. In my travels I see lots of photographers standing way too far from their subject. Don't be afraid of getting up close and personal. A good rule is to fill your frame with your subject.

Gary's Photos. In March we revisited the Antelope Slot Canyons in Northern Arizona. The final 12 photos were added from our recent trip and were shot in different lighting conditions and with a better camera. You can view them in the "Slot Canyon" Gallery. There also have been additions to the Las Vegas, Photos Effects, Portraits, Digital Art, and Windows Galleries. http://www.pbase.com/gary_stanley for a visit to my Photo Web Site. We have had over 124,000 viewers!

Cyber News is a free service of Stanley Computing and is published here each month, originating from Stanley's Studio in Phoenix, Arizona.

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MidWest Regional Conference

The Chicago Computer Society will be hosting an APCUG Regional Conference September 19, 20, and 21, 2008. There will be workshops, vander presentation, and door prizes. Each attendee will receive a Welcome Bag filled with goodies. All computer user are encouraged to attend.

The web site for the Regional Conference is: <http://mweg.apcug.org>. Check it often as it is updated as information becomes available.



Be sure to check you mailing label for your member expiration date.

QCS Member Raffle

The winner was not present at the February meeting for the member raffle. Next months drawing worth \$25.

You too can win by attending the main meeting each month!

QCS Recycles!

Save your empty ink jet and laser toner cartridges and bring them to the General Meetings. The QCS will receive a refund check for returned cartridges. Another plus, this will keep them out of landfills

The QCS is also recycling your old CD's. Please bring your extra CD's to the Main Meeting. Thanks.!

QCS Meeting Dates

Sun	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Fri	Sat
	May 2008			1 May	2 May	3 May
4 May	5 May 7:00 PM Microsoft Office SIG Judi McDowell 309-314-1780 jmcdowell@mchsi.com	6 May	7 May 6:30 PM QCS Board Meeting Judi McDowell 309-314-1780 jmcdowell@mchsi.com	8 May	9 May	10 May
11 May	12 May 7:00 PM Internet SIG Ted Huberts 309-792-9470 slowhand54@sbcglobal.net	13 May	14 May 5:45 PM Beginners SIG * 7:00 PM Custom or Ready Made Computer?	15 May	16 May	17 May
18 May	19 May 7:00 PM Genealogy SIG Len Stevens 563-359-9672 judylenstevens@msn.com	20 May	21 May 7:00 PM Digital Media SIG CANCELED normdun@gmail.com	22 May	23 May	24 May
25 May	26 May 7:00 PM Windows SIG CANCELED lstone521@mchsi.com	27 May	28 May	29 May	30 May	31 May
1 Jun	2 Jun	3 Jun June 2008	4 Jun 6:30 PM QCS Board Meeting Judi McDowell 309-314-1780 jmcdowell@mchsi.com	5 Jun	6 Jun	7 Jun

Deadline
for QBITS
articles

Deadline
for QBITS
articles

***Beginner's SIG meets at Tri-City
Jewish Center
before the QCS program
Jim Kristan
309-755-8277
jmkris@gmail.com**

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ALWAYS CALL AS INDICATED ON THE
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TO VERIFY MEETING TIME, LOCATION, AND
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ALL QCS MEETING FACILITIES ARE
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Membership Level

		New	Renewal
Full Time Student	\$20	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual	\$30	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family	\$40	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Quad-Cities Computer Society
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Rock Island IL 61201

Wednesday
May 14, 2008
7:00 PM

**Custom Build or
Ready Made?
Which Computer
is Best?**