

QBITS

Quad-Cities Computer Society
Newsletter for June 2008
Volume 26, number 5

www.qcs.org

Wednesday
June 11, 2008
7:00 PM

**Google
Applications
presented by
Victor Panegos**

QCS Review Custom Build or Ready Made? Which Computer is Best?

presented by **Dale Wells**
www.computer-repair-center.com
dale@computer-repair-center.com
by Joe Durham

The Quad Cities Computer Society gratefully acknowledges



<http://www.soloconnect.com>

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

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The last time Dale Wells visited with our club in December 2004, he shared with us his hobby of collecting music and putting it on computers. On this visit he came to offer us his wisdom and suggestions for purchasing a computer. His insight is based on 30 years of building computer systems for the home and business. Dale's core advise is to plan ahead in purchasing your dream machine. It is not always the best price, big box retail, or the fastest computer that is best.

What do you want to do with your computer? Is it going to be for email, browsing the web, saving family photos, genealogy, or playing online games to name just a few of the myriad possibilities.

A home machine for email, and internet browsing requires a basic system. You don't need a 768 MB video card or a dual core cpu processor? Dale said that a Celeron processor based computer with standard video and hard drive is ample.

An engineering business requires a whole different matrix: a powerful processor and video card to manage the computer design and analysis.

Once you have determined your purpose, Dale suggested that you need examine in detail warranty and customer support for your machine. You want it to last for sometime and if it has hiccups along the way you want to be able get things up and running smoothly and effortlessly with no lost data.

—continued on next page—

The QCS is a member of



**Monthly meetings are open to the
general public.**

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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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You accomplish these goals by seeking a custom computer business like the Computer Repair Center who can offer standard computer parts that are supported by long term warranty coverage, not like the 90 day warranty on major retail systems. The large center computer stores make you pay extra for warranty coverage and often that coverage is long distance, impersonal and unreliable.

For example Dale recommended an Intel motherboard that has good warranty support that can replace you motherboard with the exact system with which you began. In this fashion you can be up and running if something fails without a total reinstall of the operating system and data.

A custom center can tailor their systems to your individual needs and provide local service for your computer. He noted that some large scale computer marketers manipulate the consumer. They built computer equipment that is cheap, but doesn't have enough memory or service support, and is preloaded with what he called "shovel soft-

ware" that makes the system unmanageable for the unaware consumer.

In answer to questions from the audience Dale suggested that Acer and Compaq laptops are a good choices. Vista software had gotten a bad rap to such an extent that he believes that XP support will last until the successor software operating system to Vista from Microsoft will emerges in the near future. He noted that a 19 inch monitor will oftentimes be sufficient for common computing needs rather than the larger 22 inch screens that are described as the latest and greatest.

Don't subscribe to the immediate mass marketing overload of big computer chains. You may end up with a machine that is more powerful and with too many things for you to grasp at once. It may be the cheapest unit you can buy but it will not meet your desires.

By asking the right questions, planning your purchase and seeking good warranty service, and local support, you may find yourself using a machine that meets your needs for years to come. In some cases you may end up with a higher price set, but the end result will be more satisfying and longer lasting. The QCS thanks Dale for his fine presentation. He helped us see that common sense purchasing decisions makes computing more enjoyable for all.

Ralph Drexler was the lucky recipient of the membership attendance raffle of \$25. Cody Wiley, Sue Peterson and Ruth Thompson won raffled prizes from the QCS.

The June meetings of the Microsoft Office SIG and the Internet SIG are Canceled.

MidWest Regional Conference

The Chicago Computer Society will be hosting an APCUG Regional Conference September 19, 20, and 21, 2008. There will be workshops, venter 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://mwug.apcug.org>. Check it often as it is updated as information becomes available.

Wireless Router Setup

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How to change the setup or configuration of your Wireless Router

and PC. First we need to get to your router after the original setup by bringing up Internet Explorer on your direct wired computer (Master) and typing in one of the code addresses in fig. 1.

A login screen will appear, if you used your own login name and password then use them. If you lost them and you wish to reconfigure your router you will have to push the reset button for at least 30 seconds. This sets the router back to its defaults and you can use the default values above.

During your setup you may have seen "Number of DHCP users allowed", reduce this to the number of total computers in your network or that number plus one.

SSID is your wireless network name, for example, Linksys will broadcast "linksys". First, we want to rename your SSID and then hide it later. After changing the name, we need to reconnect with each wireless computer. To reconnect, right click the icon in the System Tray (or task bar-right).

Windows XP SP2 - Choose Available Wireless Networks / Change Advanced Settings. Click the Wireless Networks tab, click Add button in the Preferred Network section.

Type in the Network name you have chosen, then click OK twice.

Windows VISTA - Select Network and Sharing Center, then left click on View Status (located middle-right). Click on Wireless Properties button. Put check mark on "connect even if the Network is not broadcasting".

(Or go to START / CONNECT TO / click on your SSID and click the CONNECT button below. Then you can right click on your SSID and select Properties. This will get you to your Wireless Properties window where you can put the "check mark" and enter your Security code.)

Complete this on all of your wireless computers and remember how you got there!

fig. 1

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>CODE</u>	<u>USER</u>	<u>PASSWORD</u>	<u>CHN</u>
Belkin:	192.168.2.1	(No Name)	(Leave Blank)	6
D-Link:	192.168.0.1	admin	(Leave Blank)	6
Linksys:	192.168.1.1	(Leave Blank)	admin	11
Netgear:	192.168.0.1	admin	password	10

Second, now we can choose to stop your Router from broadcasting your SSID by selecting disable to "SSID Broadcasting" in your router setup. All your computers should be reading the wireless connection.

Next step is to select a **Security** type, let us try **WEP** first. This may be slightly different due to different manufactures. Usually you will find it under Security or Wireless tabs of your router setup. Select 64 or 128 bit encryption, then type in a word or phase and let the router do the coding by clicking on Generate. Select #1 and write down this code for your wireless computers. Go to the Wireless Properties window and click on the SECURITY tab. Then set the ENCRYPTION type to WEP and enter the security code you wrote down, click OK and Close. Key Index should remain on one.

Look at the Security Type by clicking the down arrow on the right. Note these are the other types of security allowed: WPA2-Personal, WPA-Personal, WPA2-Enterprise, and WPA-Enterprise. Most newer routers and computer can operate with this type of security and is considered better than WEP.

We completed a simple setup to supply a secured wireless connection. You can go further and use one of the WPAs if all of your computers will accept this. Just disable WEP and enable WPA and roughly go through the same process. You could also assign your MAC addresses, but how far do we have to go?

Following are definitions for MAC, DMZ, WPA, DHCP, and the router FIREWALL:

DHCP – Dynamic Host Configuration Protocol as a server assigns IP addresses to all computers on the network (in this case the router is the DHCP server).

DMZ – Dedicated Multi Zone exposes a computer directly to the internet with a IP address. Some games require this direct access. You could give a false address not used by your computers to send intruders to an address that goes nowhere!

FIREWALL – The router's firewall gives protection on data coming in, but not going out. If you wish full bi-directional protection you will have to use software and replace your windows firewall which is incoming only.

MAC – Media Access Control is a number related to the network adapter in a small network. LAN-MAC address is for your internal network and WAN-MAC address is used for router to modem connection. You can find your Client table (IP and MAC addresses) in your router's configuration utility.

WEP – Wifi Encryption Protection is the old security standard that can be used with either 64 or 128 bit encryption.

WPA – Wifi Protected Access is the latest network security standard, but if your equipment is over two years old you may want to checkout www.wi-fi.org web site for information. For full instructions on activating WPA see PC Magazine's step by step article at <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,1759,1819544,00.asp>

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Moving on to Vista – Part 6

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It's easy to lose track of time when you're playing computer games or cruising the Internet. As our computers have improved we tend to use higher screen resolutions to see more detail and, unfortunately, that can cause eye strain. The solution is not to reduce screen resolution but to increase the size of the text.

Windows Vista offers an easy way to do this. Click on "Start", then "Control Panel" and then type "adjust font size" in the search box in the upper right corner. A menu choice "Personalization" will appear and right under it you will see "Adjust font size (DPI)". Click on it and a window called "DPI scaling" will appear. You'll see three choices: "Default scale (96 DPI), Larger scale (120 DPI), and a button that says "Customize".

The first two choices are pretty clear. In the third choice, if you click "Customize DPI", the "Custom DPI Setting" window will open. Just follow the instruction to increase or decrease the DPI setting to find the setting that works best for you.

One question new Vista users ask me is "What happened to the search command?". People who have used Windows XP and previous versions of Windows are used to clicking on the "Start" button and then clicking on the "Search" label on the right side of the menu.

Search is still available but Microsoft apparently thought it was more intuitive for us to click on the "Windows" key plus the "F" key (think "Windows find" to remember this). Look at the upper right corner of the window that opens for the "Search Box" and enter the word or phrase that you are looking

for. Notice in the line below you have a number of options to limit your search to "All", "E-mail", "Document", "Picture", "Music", and "Other". There is also an "Advanced" selection that allows you to select a range of file dates, locations, names and authors. To close the Search Window you have to click on the red "X" in the top right corner.

You might also notice that when you Click on "Computer" (used to be "My Computer") there a search box appears in the top right corner of the window. This feature is universal and appears whenever you open any folder window. It also appears when you click on the "Start" button (the "search line" appears in the menu directly above the Start button).

While I'm on the subject of the "Windows" key, the combination of "Windows key plus the "L" key locks your keyboard. Everything you are working on becomes hidden by the login screen and you need to enter your password to continue to use your computer. This feature may be convenient even if you're not trying to hide your work from anyone. My son's cat seems to be fascinated by computer screens and anything blinking or moving on the screen. She frequently jumps up on the desk next to an unattended computer and walks across the keyboard to touch the screen with a paw or her nose. It's cute but sometimes I return to find a program has been suspended or the computer placed in "sleep" mode. For me, "Windows Lock" is protection from pets.

Do you use the Vista Sidebar? Some people love it, some don't. There have been complaints of people using the Notes Gadget to store web addresses and they've lost them. Other people have set up their home city in the Weather Gadget only to discover that the program reverts back to Redmond Washington. Gadgets are individual programs that store their own preference files on your hard drive.

Anytime you close a "gadget", you lose all the data that you typed into it; addresses, locations, etc. So... either find a better place to store your information or don't click on a gadget's "X" button unless you really want to cease using the gadget.

Windows Vista has been out for a year now and there are rumors that Microsoft will release the long-awaited Service Pack 1 for downloading in March. If they do, I'm sure we'll see enough changes in Vista for another newsletter article.

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Power Supply Tips

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We have all experienced the computer crashing seemingly for no reason. When it does, we blame Windows or a hardware problem or maybe a power surge or undervoltage. All are possible culprits but one often overlooked possibility is the power supply of the computer.

The power supply is the metal box with a cooling fan next to it. Typically it's in a back corner of the case and you plug your power cord into it. When you plug the power cable into the wall, the power supply converts the AC (alternating current) that runs through your home or office into the DC (direct current) that the computer needs.

If you bought your computer from a superstore or discount retailer it may have low-cost, low-capacity power supply installed which may not be enough to handle all the things you do with your PC.

If you have upgraded your PC

with newer or more components (like another CD or DVD player/burner, more RAM or another hard drive) then the power supply that came with your system may not be up to the task.

The physics of power supplies (ambient temperatures, 3.3V vs. 5V vs. 12V, etc) make it so that a power supply rated at certain wattage, say 300W, may not really provide that maximum wattage load. Some experts claim that power supplies are most efficient at 30-70% of their maximum capacity. So if you are nearing that maximum, you can be in for trouble.

Because the power supply gets a rush of AC (alternating current) when the computer is turned on and it heats and cools each time it is used, it is more prone to failure than many other components in your PC. You may notice a slight burning smell before it shuts down. Sometimes the cooling fan stops working and the system overheats.

Newer systems let you monitor the status of the power supply from Windows. Servers and other mission critical computers often have more than one power supply so that when one dies, the other kicks in and the system stays operational.

So what can you do?

Next time you buy a PC, don't just get a cheapo system with a sub-standard power supply unless you never plan on adding memory, drives or other components to the machine.

Take care of your power supply by keeping the cooling fan away from the wall or anything else that might block the air flow and make the fan work harder (and die sooner).

Keep the PC off the carpet or other surfaces where it may suck in particles and clog the fan. Cooler is always better with electronic components.

Periodically, blow out the fan and case with compressed air to get rid of dust and other particles that may

clog up the fan and overheat the system components.

Add up the wattage of the components in your system to see if you are near the maximum of the power supply. E-mail us at dan@greatlakesgeek.com for a list of Estimated Power Requirements of common PC components.

If that is too difficult for you, look to see if most of the slots in the back of your PC are filled and if the drive bays in the front are being used. Those are indications that you may be close to maxing out your power capacity.

If you have a need, you can buy and install (or have someone else install) a new, heavy duty power supply. They come in several standard form factors to fit in most PCs. Warning this may not be a project for beginners though.

Get more tips at www.GreatLakesGeek

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Internet Security: iFrame Attacks

By Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Member and Contributing Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
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I'm sure that most of you reading the title of this article are asking "What is an iFrame?". Well, sit back, get comfortable and I'll tell you about the latest method hackers are using to steal information from you.

First the definition of an iFrame, which is shorthand for inline frame. That clears it up doesn't it? I guess I'd better add some more to that. An inline frame is code within a web page that permits a second page to

be imbedded inside the first page. For example, they can be used to imbed an ad that is located on a different web site. One example is the clickable scrolling ad you frequently find on web sites. iFrames generally load after the main page and may sometimes have their own scroll bar. The iFrame may contain Javascript programming code which can permit interactive content. Some iFrames may be invisible and may contain code which can redirect the user to another page or download trojans or viruses.

Whenever your Internet browser sees an "iFrame tag" in the web page code it sets aside the space requested in the tag. It also goes out to the web page specified in the code to download the requested information.

So is this something new? I thought it was until I read a report in a tech newsletter (Windows Secrets) about an attack on the AskWoody web site. It turns out that iFrame attacks have been recorded since 2004. The first exploit implanted a worm on thousands of computers. The only thing that stopped it was a patch that Microsoft had to apply to Internet Explorer 6. In June 2007 over 10,000 pages were infected in Italy. In November 2007 Monster.com had to shut down as a result of an iFrame attack. Then, this year the AskWoody site had iFrame code added to its main web page. His research indicated that the code originated on a Russian web site, which subsequently disappeared.

The code placed on the AskWoody web page linked to a web site in China and subsequently to the Russian web site. This was all done by a short length of code that setup a single, invisible pixel on the web page. The code was designed to load data from the Chinese web site. Anyone with an unpatched IE 6 that visited the AskWoody web site would probably have been infected. However, it was never determined just what was being

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delivered by the offshore web site.

The worst part of this scenario is that the owner of the AskWoody web site did not find out about the iFrame exploit until he started receiving messages from someone who advised him that their AVG Resident Shield said his site was infected. That was followed by Google advising him that his site was infected and down rating the site. Google also provided a warning to anyone attempting to link to AskWoody warning them that visiting the site might infect their computer.

The question becomes, how did the iFrame code become attached to the web page? The code pages on web sites are generally password protected. Access to these pages for the purpose of making changes is controlled by the web site host and the hosting software. However, there are several programs available which enable hackers to take advantage of holes in web site security. Some of these are described as “kiddie scripts”, indicating their ease of use. Others, such as Mpack, require a more sophisticated knowledge of programming. The problem is that thousands of respectable sites have been infected. The following are only a few that were reported in March 2008 by Dancho Danev’s blog (a security information web site):

eHawaii Portal - **ehawaii.gov** - 992 pages

The World Clock - **timeand-date.com** - 944 pages

Boise State University - **boises-tate.edu** - 471 pages

The U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) - **aoa.gov** - 425 pages

Gustavus Adolphus College - **gustavus.edu** - 312 pages

Internet Archive - **archive.org** - 261 pages

Stanford Business School Alumni Association -

gsbapps.stanford.edu - 157 pages

BushTorrent - **bushtorrent.com** - 147 pages

ChildCareExchange - **ccie.com** -

131 pages

The University of Vermont - **uvm.edu** - 120 pages

Hippodrome State Theatre - Gainesville, FL - **thehipp.org** - 112 pages

Minnesota State University Mankato - **mnsu.edu** - 94 pages

Medicare - **medicare.gov** - 12 pages

In many instances it appears that the hackers were able to “harvest” passwords which gave them access to these sites. Then, if the site did not have current input validation patches, the iFrame could be added to web pages. In some cases, home users may have been the source of the initial password theft. By use of a keylogger a hacker can obtain passwords to any protected site visited by the user. In other cases clicking on a banner ad that attracts you can result in the download of a bot, a trojan or other spyware. This is especially true if you are still running an unpatched Internet Explorer 6. It appears that Firefox is less vulnerable to these types of exploits. Also, clicking on an executable file in IE 6 generally results in running the file. In Firefox you are usually only given the option to download the file. Obviously you should never download or run any file that you don’t know or don’t recognize. This is especially true when the site tells you that you need some kind of add-on or special viewer to see the information you want. This is the type of social engineering being used to tempt users into downloading spyware.

There is also a danger related to the firewall you are using on your computer. A keylogger or other trojan needs to be able to report “home” without the user being aware that information is being sent out. This is done by opening a “back door” to the Internet; an outgoing port in one the thousands on every computer. If your firewall doesn’t check on all outgoing data and requests permission for new unknown activity, then you will not be able to block the trojans back door

connection. So it is very important that your firewall check both incoming and outgoing data. Then, anytime your firewall requests permission for a program, one you don’t recognize, to connect to the Internet, just say NO.

There is one other recognized method for obtaining the information needed to get into web page code. Hackers can purchase web site administrator information on the black market. One software application used to hack web sites, Mpack, sells for about \$1,000 US. The person behind this software is known as \$ash in the Russian underground. The software exploits six flaws in Windows and Internet Explorer. Thus for not a lot of money, hackers can obtain everything they need to exploit weaknesses in web pages.

As you can see, the iFrame attack is a real danger for those who surf the Internet. If you want to read more about these attacks, a Google search will provide you with tons of information. If you want to protect yourself from these attacks, your ability is limited. It is really up to your ISP and the web hosts to provide the security needed to prevent the web page intrusion of an iFrame. So what can a home user do? The following will help, but are no guarantee of protection.

1. Beware of pages that require software installation. Do not allow new software installation from your browser unless you absolutely trust both the Web page and the provider of the software.

2. Scan with an updated antivirus and anti-spyware software any program downloaded through the Internet. This includes any downloads from P2P networks, through the Web and any FTP server regardless of the source.

3. Use only a firewall that checks both incoming and outgoing data.

4. Beware of unexpected strange-looking emails, regardless of their sender.

5. Never open attachments or

click on links contained in these email messages.

6. Enable the "Automatic Update" feature in your Windows operating system and apply new updates as soon as they are available

7. Always have an antivirus real-time scan service. Monitor regularly that it is being updated and that the service is running.

8. OR another option would be to verify that the address is safe before going to it. You can do this by checking it at:

<http://linkscanner.explabs.com/linkscanner/default.asp>

As you can see, for Windows users, the Internet is becoming more of a hazard to navigation. You, as a user, must always be cautious about clicking on links or accepting downloads. If in doubt, don't do it! If everyone practiced safe-surfing, it would be harder for the hackers to succeed.

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years; teaching, developing software and assembling systems. He can be reached at bwsail@yahoo.com.

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The Electronic Edition of the Chicago Tribune

by Joe Durham
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Rising fuel costs, have pushed me into the electronic newspaper age. Recently the Chicago Tribune has ceased home delivery of the newspaper in the Quad Cities and other areas as a means of cutting costs and obtaining greater operating efficiencies. I was lost. No paper at the doorstep! The Chicago Tribune has a wonderful web page, but I am still bound by my 20th century roots. I

prefer a morning that begins with the tactile feel of reading the news in paper form. The Tribune sent me an email suggesting that I try out a subscription of their electronic edition.

chicagotribune.il.newsmemory.com. There is a demo of the electronic edition if you want to look it over.

So I decided to subscribe to the electronic edition for \$2.50 / week. You pay by credit card. The Tribune issues you a password with your email address. The password can be changed from your account if you prefer.

Two frames appear. On the right hand side help and indexes initially are displayed. On the left is your log on screen. At the top of the screen are tools to help you navigate through the paper each day.

Once you log in, the front page of the printed version appears in the left frame. With your mouse you click an article to read and it appears initially in text form in the right hand frame.

I usually go to the Visual mode dialogue at the top of the right frame and select Graphic. Low and behold the article appears in the font style and formatting of the original printed version. Depending on your screen resolution and preferences you can re-size the frame by placing your mouse cursor on the left hand side of the frame and re-size.

It took a while to get used to this method. But each day as you use the tools of advancing the page at the top and clicking the index icon at the top of the screen the flow of the paper becomes familiar once again.

The interface should work well on all computers as I use a Linux box and Seamonkey browser. If the electronic Chicago Tribune can satisfy that slice of computing it will yours also.

The electronic edition has some nice enhancements. In the right hand frame you can print out an individual article, or email an article to a friend. With these tools, one

can readily index the paper, goto your favorite puzzle, or business news and print it out for reference.

Chicago Tribune customer support has been very good throughout this process. Their webmasters state that they are fashioning the electronic edition to be compatible with more mobile devices. It works on the iPhone already. My hope is that it will be formatted to work on the Amazon Kindle hand held in the future.

It works well with a broadband connection, though it has a text interface to accommodate 56K dialup speeds as well. You can download individual pages or the entire paper to read off line if you choose. I downloaded one edition in its entirety. It was 187 MB in size zipped. The pages are created in PDF format. I have found the online experience satisfactory.

Is this a part of the Brave New World. Time will tell? Will I remain an electronic Tribune subscriber? Of course.

With a wi-fi laptop my daily newspaper is accessible everywhere and I don't have newspapers to recycle as I once did.

Google Releases Updated Version of "Google Earth"

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, Texas; Radio & TV Show Host

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WEBSITES:

<http://earth.google.com>

<http://earth.google.com/download-earth.html> - FREE Version

<http://earth.google.com/tour.html>

http://earth.google.com/enterprise/earth_plus.html - \$20 Plus Version

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http://earth.google.com/enterprise/earth_pro.html - \$400 Pro Version

It has been nearly two years since I first (and last) discussed Google Earth in this column. In the ensuing time since the last review, Google has been busy updating and improving the product, adding new features, and improving the graphics. For those who may not be aware, Google Earth is a program that allows the immense Google database of terrestrial and satellite images of the earth, along with amazing images of space, to be utilized and manipulated on the computer.

What is new and improved in the recently released Google Earth 4.3 (beta) is demonstrated in an interactive video tour online at earth.google.com/tour.html. One of the new features in version 4.3 include what Google calls “Photo-realistic Buildings”, where hundreds of buildings in many of the world’s major cities are shown in three dimensions (3D). If a building that is displayed “turns purple” when cursoring over it, clicking anywhere on the building will open up a smaller window giving details of the building, and the moniker of the person who created or updated the digital image. The images displayed can be manipulated to zoom in or around them from any angle, effectively creating a dynamic 360 degree panoramic view. These 3D views are not just of cities and buildings, but there are also spectacular images of natural beauties such as mountains, rivers, waterfalls, and canyons. Another new feature on this version is what Google calls “Swoop Navigation” where the user can virtually “Fly seamlessly through the landscape with new navigation controls. Swoop from outer space to street level and leap from one building top to another. Use the look joystick to view buildings as if you were standing right in front of them.”

Another aspect of the new version is the “Light and Shadow” feature where many of the images can be shown in selected or sequential times of the day, such as displaying a mountain top from sunrise to sunset. On the top of the screen is an optional slider which can be moved with the mouse to display the simulated or realistic image at any chosen time. In some of the more scenic images it appears to show the path of the sun across the sky with the corresponding light and shadows. The new and improved “Street View” that has been previously available online with Google Maps (maps.google.com) is now integrated into Google earth. Google has a fleet of vehicles which cruise major cities taking high resolution 360 degree digital photos as they drive down the streets. With “Street View” the user can virtually visit a city and virtually walk or drive the streets using the mouse instead of a vehicle. Views are literally from the street level showing cars, people, store fronts, intersections, and any other features visible from street level. Using the mouse, the user can cruise the streets just as if he was navigating the city for real. While not yet available for every city, a camera icon, when displayed on a map, will zoom in to a 360 degree panoramic image from street level. Many street level images contain additional camera icons which allow the user to travel seamlessly up a selected street, and the mouse can be used to turn in any direction.

The popular features that were in earlier versions of Google Earth have been retained. One that I periodically use is the “Directions” feature, which does not just give traditional driving directions and maps, but also animates the drive by clicking on the play button at the bottom of the driving directions listing. When animated, a detailed sequential zoomed-in satellite image is displayed, with the directions overlaid on the image. For example, when I requested driving directions from the Examiner offices on Wil-

low Street in Beaumont, to the Bush Airport (IAH) in Houston, the seamless animation in Google Earth showed the street images including real pictures of the highway showing which lane to be in, detailed images of each turn or exit, and high resolution images of the airport. The images are actual photographs, not computer generated images. By seeing the route in exquisite detail prior to a journey may help ease the anxieties of the drive.

Once at a destination, it may be helpful to find nearby “points of interest”, such as restaurants. By simply entering the word “restaurants” in the “What?” box, and the current address in the “Where?” box, restaurants will be displayed on the Google map. By clicking on the icon displayed for each restaurant, details will be displayed for the selected restaurant in a window overlay. Typical information displayed included the name, address, phone, a hyperlink (if any) to the restaurant website, any reviews that may be available and driving directions “to” and “from” the restaurant.

Google Earth does not just provide maps and images of terrestrial and earthly locations, but also includes celestial maps and images. Clicking on the Saturn-looking icon on the top of the screen will open a “Search the Sky” search box. By entering a celestial body or location, such as “Mars”, Google Earth will display a sky map with an image of the heavenly body, and also display the current geometric coordinates for those using sophisticated telescopes.

The basic version of Google Earth 4.3 (beta) is a free download from earth.google.com. For those desiring more features, Google offers Google Earth Plus for \$20, which adds support for a variety of GPS devices (verified support for Magellan and Garmin GPS devices, but can not upload to those devices), improved network performance, and improved high resolution printing. For professional and commer-

cial use Google offers the Pro version for \$400.

Google Earth is a fascinating utility, and will run on Windows 2000 or XP (Vista is not mentioned), and requires a minimum of 400MB hard drive space, and a video card capable of 1024x768 resolution with a 16bit color depth. An internet connection of at least 128Kb/sec is required. I suggest that readers of this column at least download the free version of Google Earth and simply play with it. Click on the icons at the top of the page, and check and uncheck some of the boxes on the left margin, and experiment with it; do not worry, you can not hurt anything by experimenting with it. Google Earth is one of my favorite "fun" programs.

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Botnet-The Evil Network

by Grant Fuller, a member of Big Blue & Cousins, Canada
www.bbc.org
[newsletter\(at\)bbc.org](mailto:newsletter(at)bbc.org)

This one might even be too much for Webman. There is a community of evil geeks who own a number of computers that are used exclusively for delivering viruses.

Usually backdoor Trojans, the virus is designed to infect the average computer users machine when launched periodically from the evil geeks' "Zombie" machines. The virus does not necessarily cause problems on the targeted computers but it uses these average users' machines to deliver spam. With this chain reaction method, huge quantities of spam can be spread with very little chance of tracing it to the source. ISP's have admitted they spend more of their resources on combating these

"Botnets" than the old-fashioned crackers and hackers.

"If you suspect you are being used as a pigeon for a botnet operator, it is worthwhile downloading a good, tested anti-virus application that has a tracking firewall. The usual symptom that suggests there is a botnet present is a dramatic slowdown in performance. Aside from cluttering up the internet with spam, the botnet can deliver "denial of service" attacks. This is a serious financial concern for companies trying to establish themselves on the internet as well as institutions that provide important community services. The usual routine is, the spammer, who wants to get a message out to the world, pays the botnet operator, who then sends the file to his zombies which in turn launches the spam to the innocent distributors. Sometimes, banks of computers in offices and institutions are commandeered by the botnet operator for this criminal activity.

In preparing this article, I could not find proof as to how the original virus is delivered to the unsuspecting so I am assuming it is the usual method. Either the user clicks on a deceptive button while surfing the net and triggers a download, or an email attachment is opened unwittingly. The culprits often use a harvesting program that goes to the ISP server and gathers all their email addresses. Some mass mail programs actually send email to the addresses on the server at the same time they are collecting the addresses for future use.

Botnet applications are cleverly designed so they often escape detection by anti-virus software. However, some firewalls such as ZoneAlarm will track incoming and outgoing calls so if the user is patient enough to investigate each of the unidentified communiqués going on between the hard drive and the internet, the botnet may be found.

Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

DVD ROM Installed in QCS Computer

Larry Stone, QCS Windows SIG leader, installed a DVD Rom in the QCS Club computer. It will be a good asset for presenters who bring DVD video with their presentations. Thanks, Larry for your help!

How To Find Podcasts

by Mike Lyons, President Orange County IBM PC Users' Group, CA
www.orcopug.org
[president\(at\)orcopug.org](mailto:president(at)orcopug.org)

Download the free 7.3 iTunes program from www.apple.com/itunes/ and install. Now, all you need is an mp3 player, and you're all set to download podcasts and listen to them on the go.

When you first open iTunes, click on the "Podcast Directory" at the bottom next to "Report a Concern." That actually takes you to the Apple Store. In the upper left corner is a magnifying glass and a space to search for a word or phrase. Type in "computer." The Apple logo in the top center area changes to a candy cane-striped bar as it searches. The bar will turn solid and display the results: Name, Time, Artist, Album, Price, Popularity and Genre.

Next to the name is a grayed-out circle with an arrow in it. This leads to more information about the podcast. It includes a description, user reviews, a list of the last 20 podcasts and a list of 5 "Listeners also subscribed to."

—continued on next page—

Headings are sortable by clicking on them, so if you click on Price, all the free ones appear at the top. Some of the stuff is pretty explicit, that's why they call it the "wild, wild web." Podcasts are labeled "clean," "explicit," or blank which means the rating hasn't been determined. I look to see how often and consistently the podcast occurs (some really good ones haven't been updated since 2006), check customer comments, and the "Also subscribed to" list.

If you want to subscribe, simply click on the "subscribe" button. To go back where you were, under the Apple logo on the left is a small button with a left pointing twirly. Click on this to get back.

After downloading podcasts, connect your mp3 player to a USB cable and right click on the file. Select "Send to" and click on the drive letter of the mp3 player to transfer podcasts to it from your computer.

Besides the iTunes Podcast Directory, you can find podcasts of Computer America shows at www.businessstalkradio.net/weekday_host/Archives/cc.shtml and National Public Radio at www.npr.org/rss/podcast/podcast_directory.php.

There are even locally-produced user group podcasts. The Los Angeles Computer Society has podcasts of their main meetings at www.lacspc.org/podcast/Archive.html

You don't have to have an mp3 player to listen to podcasts, though. If you left-click on the mp3 title, it plays right in your browser. Or, if you right-click on the title, select "Save Link As," and you can save it to a directory on your computer. Besides playing podcasts in mp3 players and browsers, mp3 files on your hard drive can be burned to a CD.

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Officers 2008 - 2009

Elected Officers

President.....	Judi McDowell.....	(309) 314-1780	jmcdowell@mchsi.com
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Special Events Director..	Open		
Volunteer Events Dir	Open		
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Mailing	Patty Lowry.....	(563) 332-8679	heidih@revealed.net

Other

Resource Center Mgr.....Judi McDowell.....(309) 314-1780 jmcdowell@mchsi.com



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

QCS Member Raffle

Ralph Drexler was the winner of the May General Meeting Member Attendance raffle. Next months drawing worth \$10.

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

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.

Computer Repair Center

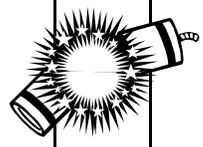
872 Middle Road
Bettendorf IA 52722
PH: 563-359-0042
Fax: 563-359-3411

www.computer-repair-center.com
dale@computer-repair-center.com

... QCS Meeting Dates

Sun	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Fri	Sat
1 Jun	2 Jun 7:00 PM Microsoft Office SIG CANCELED jmcdowell@mchsi.com	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
8 Jun	9 Jun 7:00 PM Internet SIG CANCELED slowhand54@sbcglobal.net	10 Jun	11 Jun 5:45 PM Beginners SIG * 7:00 PM Google Applications	12 Jun	13 Jun	14 Jun
15 Jun	16 Jun 7:00 PM Genealogy SIG Len Stevens 563-359-9672 judylenstevens@msn.com	17 Jun	18 Jun 7:00 PM Digital Media SIG Norm Dunlap 309-798-2304 normdun@gmail.com	19 Jun	20 Jun	21 Jun
22 Jun	23 Jun 7:00 PM Windows SIG Larry Stone 309-787-5574 lstone521@mchsi.com	24 Jun	25 Jun	26 Jun	27 Jun	28 Jun
29 Jun	30 Jun	1 Jul	2 Jul 6:30 PM QCS Board Meeting Judi McDowell 309-314-1780 jmcdowell@mchsi.com	3 Jul	4 Jul	5 Jul
6 Jul	7 Jul 7:00 PM Microsoft Office SIG CANCELED jmcdowell@mchsi.com	8 Jul July 2008	9 Jul 5:45 PM Beginners SIG * 7:00 PM TBA	10 Jul	11 Jul	12 Jul

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**

**ALL QCS MEETINGS NOW HELD AT
TRI-CITY JEWISH CENTER
2715 30TH
ROCK ISLAND, IL 61201
ALWAYS CALL AS INDICATED ON THE
CALENDAR
TO VERIFY MEETING TIME, LOCATION, AND
TOPIC INFORMATION
ALL QCS MEETING FACILITIES ARE
HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE.**

QCS officers

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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.!



Moving? Send an address change to:
felspaw@sbcglobal.net

QCS Home Page URL
<http://www.qcs.org>

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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"/>

Wednesday
June 11, 2008
7:00 PM

Google
Applications
presented by
Victor Panegos