This Month At NOPC

Best Idea Contest by Gerri McCann

Inside this issue:

President's Message

Hello everyone, hope you're having a good year so far. I don't know about you, but this feels like one of the warmest winters we've had in recent memory!

This year the Carnival season is happening a bit early and as such, our monthly membership meeting is going to fall right in the middle of the parades on Wednesday night. When you are journeying to Meisler, be sure to come in from the West Esplanade side and you'll be able to get to the meeting much easier since Veterans at Cleary is very likely to be blocked off.

We are starting another raffle again this month, and it will be for another copy of Microsoft Office Professional 2003. Help the club out and purchase many tickets!

I would also like to remind everyone to recycle those printer inks and toners; both can be brought to the meetings and individual postage-paid mailers are available for the ink cartridges. The bags are free and visitors are encouraged to use them as well.

That's all for now, see you l8r…

Ray

Raffle for Microsoft Office 2003

The New Orleans Personal Computer Club will be starting a new raffle for another of Microsoft Office Professional 2003.

This is the full (not upgrade) retail box version. It includes the 2003 editions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, Outlook with Business Contact Manager, and Publisher and retails for well over $400. The ticket prices will remain the same as previous raffles: $1 per ticket, 6 for $5.

Some lucky NOPC member will leave at the end of the March meeting with this in hand. Wouldn't you like for it to be you?

February Presentation

For the February 2, 2005 NOPCC meeting, we are going to have a "best idea contest". The purpose of this contest is to share computer related ideas. Gerry McCann (McCann Electronics) will lead this meeting. Each member should come prepared with his best computer idea. For example:

my best Digital Family Photo
my best Computer Rig
my best Screen Saver
my best Original Corel Drawing
my best crazy Computer Question
my best Utility Software
my best Label Printer
my best Ink Jet Printer
my best Method to Refill Inks
my best story about Exploding Batteries
my best Nightmare Computer Customer
my best Techy TV Show
my best Computer Answer WebSite
my best Digital Camera
my best DVD Burner
my best experience with a Computer Salesman
my best NOPC SIG Meeting
my best cheap Computer Sound System
my best Software Firewall
my best Search Engine
my best Scanner
my best Camera Card Reader
my best IDE RAID Controller
my best Mouse
my best Computer Gadget
my best Photo Paper
my best Battery Backup
my best Wireless LAN
my best Keyboard
my best Remote Control
my best ....

If possible, bring your idea for a show and tell. The contest will last about forty minutes.

Once you are recognized by Gerry, we will pass you the wireless microphone. State your name and idea. Speak clearly because we will be writing down your name and idea. Limit your time to one minute. Hand outs and pictures are encouraged. Quick questions are allowed but will be limited.

Only one idea on the first round; we should have time for a second round.

In addition, each member who presents a best idea will have their name entered for a special drawing. At the end of the meeting, we will draw one name from the members who shared with us their best idea. The winner will receive a $50 gift certificate. We will learn from each other at the Best Idea Contest - come share your computer experiences, have fun and pick up some new ideas!

Gmail

by Dr. Herbert A. Goldstein,
Editor, Sarasota PC Monitor
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Gmail is a new, free, web based email service from Google, the people who brought us that remarkable search engine. Gmail, as offered today, is an experiment in a new kind of email. Similar to Hotmail, it has some important differences. Its foundation is the concept that emails need never be deleted, and you should always be able to find any message at any time by searching for it.

There are several major reasons why Google's concept of how email should work is suspect. You get one gigabyte of storage space for your Gmails. No other Internet Service Provider offers even one-tenth of this amount. With this quantity of space available, deleting mail seems less urgent.

In Outlook, when you delete an email message, it really isn't deleted. You're simply transferring it to another folder. Deleting it permanently from that folder requires confirmation on your part. Outlook doesn't make you go to the Recycle Bin to finish the job, but some Internet Service Providers aren't so considerate.

With Gmail it seems much easier to let the messages accumulate, and use the search feature to find what you want when you need it. Even if you decide to delete the message, it may not be gone. Google says that deleted messages will remain on the system, and they will be accessible at the company's web site for as long as Google cares to keep the information.

Because of a new law in California, Google was forced to admit that the company will be pooling any information you give them from any of their services. They will keep this information not only as long as they wish, but they reserve the right to give it to whomever they wish. Don't worry, however. Google probably has confidence that its intentions are good. Its corporate motto is "Don't be evil". It says so in their corporate IPO filing to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Upon close examination, Google's privacy policies aren't any different from Amazon, Microsoft, and others. Their good guy image derives from their unconventional cor-

porate culture coupled with their astonishingly successful search engine.

Most people have no idea what's in the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, and why should they? Most people aren't legal scholars. One of the Act's provisions says that after 180 days, emails are no longer protected. Their status reverts to just another record in a database. Any level of government, from local to national, can force Google to release your records armed with nothing more than a subpoena.

Google has never issued any statements about its relationships with other countries, and this should give you cause for concern. Check out the language in the agreement you have to make with Google when you sign up for Gmail. You are giving permission for Google to release your Gmail records to any official from any government, U.S. or otherwise, who requests it for any reason. Would you even want to send an email to someone who has a Gmail account, knowing that your email may be examined by a foreign government?

Google has also stated that your email will be scanned so that you can receive advertising and links to relevant web sites. This applies to both incoming and outgoing email. Nothing in any of Google's policies or public statements applies to those of us who don't have Gmail accounts. There is nothing in Google's privacy policy that would prevent them from storing a list of keywords scanned from incoming email, and associating these keywords with the incoming email address in their database. Google has promised their advertisers won't receive any information that would allow personal identification, but what's to stop Google from keeping this information for some other future use? No one except Google knows if the company has deleted any of the data they've collected since going online. The cookie they dropped on your hard drive doesn't expire until 2038, and it's kept track of every search term you've ever used. How's that for scary?

We don't know for certain if Google will build a colossal database derived from keywords associated with email addresses. If that does turn out to be the case however, there is incredible potential for abuse. The RIAA has sent out thousands of "John Doe" and "Jane Doe" subpoenas to Universities and Internet Service Providers to identify people who download MP3 files illegally. If the RIAA can force AOL to comply, they can do it with Google.

Would an intelligence agency make anything sinister of keywords like "Send us the secret Martha, it's only a recipe, not a nuclear launch code"? Much more ominous

would be combinations like jihad coupled with assassination. All kinds of patterns can be generated from keyword combinations. We're beginning to sound like paranoid conspiracy theorists, but the potential for abuse is real and should not be ignored. What makes Gmail appear so suspicious, sinister, and frightening is the enormous storage capacity that Google offers, combined with its super efficient search engine.

There is also the problem of inappropriate ad matching. Stories abound about online merchants who send themselves email for testing, and discover that something in their emails generates ads for their competitors. The "Backspace" section of the October 5, 2004 issue of PC Magazine shows a juxtaposition of an advertisement for an all-inclusive vacation in the Caribbean along with an ad that says "Just say no to all-inclusive".

Gmail was launched presumably as a response from Google users complaining about the poor quality of their current email services. Be careful what you wish for.

New Year's Resolutions for Computer Users
By Ira Wilsker,
APCUG Board of Directors

This is the season when we are often asked about our New Year's resolutions. We may want to lose weight, be a better worker, better family member, or other virtuous improvements, but we should also resolve to be better cybercitizens and practice "Safe HEX".

Here are some suggested resolutions:

1. Update antivirus software at least daily – new viruses, worms, and Trojans are appearing at a rapid pace, with an estimated 12,000 new ones appearing in 2004 alone. New viruses can spread around the world literally in minutes, so antivirus software that has not been updated at least daily may be worse than no antivirus software at all. We may have a false sense of security using non-updated software, believing that we are protected from the current crop of viruses, so we click on any interesting email attachments, and insert that questionable floppy in our computers, a dangerous practice. Considering that there are a variety of free antivirus products available, and commercial antivirus software is reasonably priced (especially after rebates), there is absolutely no reason why not to have current antivirus

software that is updated at least daily.

2. Spam mail – Delete them without opening them, period. As 2004 came to a close, estimates are that up to 80% of all email is spam. Never purchase anything that is advertised by spam email. Never click on a link in spam email, as many links may load Trojans on your computer, or result in identity theft. Never disclose any personal information such as account numbers, passwords, social security numbers, PIN numbers, etc. in response to an email, even if it says that your account will be threatened if you do not click on the link. This illicit and criminal practice is a method of
identity theft called "phishing". Many who market via spam mail are scammers and thieves who make unverifiable claims about their products, sell pirated software, or who will take your hard earned money and send nothing useful back in return.

3. Never click on a popup ad. While many are legitimate sellers, many are also scams. As long as we click on them, and sometimes make purchases, the popup purveyors will continue to plague us with their material.

4. Practice good email etiquette, also called "netiquette" – If forwarding emails to others, do not simply hit "forward" and enter names from your address book. Having a lot of headers, those lines of others' email addresses and routing information, as well as a lot of ">" (greater-than) symbols makes email difficult to read. Strip off any useless header by highlighting and deleting them, and delete the ">".

Another beneficial piece of netiquette is to be sure that attachments are reasonable in size. Since many newer digital cameras can take poster-sized images; users should reduce the size of emailed images to a reasonable size, such that they can be easily viewed. It would also be a good idea to save the image in the universal JPG or GIF formats, rather than the sometimes-default BMP format, as the JPG and GIF formats greatly compress the file, making it a much smaller download. I sometimes resent
receiving a digital photo taken at 2560x1720 or larger, when trying to view it. Recently, someone proudly sent me a 4 megapixel photo of his new grandchild to view on my 800x600 monitor. When I first loaded the image, all I saw was a huge eye, and with red-eye at that. Not just was the file size huge, and slow to download, but the image was
several times the size of my screen, requiring me to scroll to see the image.

5. Do not forward Hoaxes and Urban Legends – These may be cute, or we may feel that we are really warning others about some perceived threat, but please check out any email which says "forward this to everyone you know" as it will most likely be a hoax or urban legend. Sites such as www.snopes.com are excellent resources to debunk hoaxes and urban legends. Be aware that you can not get rich, or get gift certificates by forwarding emails, and that the poor dying kid in Georgia wanting postcards has long since recovered. Save yourself some potential embarrassment and email bandwidth,
and refuse to forward these messages without first verifying their authenticity. Smart people can be duped too, so do not automatically trust the sender.

6. Kill Spyware – According to many cyber security experts, spyware, software that can gather and send information of the users' activities, may be a greater threat than computer viruses. Spyware is used to steal passwords, account numbers, and other personal information, as well as generate obscene popup ads, redirect purchases and searches, and several other undesirable acts. Also referred to as "malware" spyware is dangerous.

Microsoft, never first on the bandwagon, is now in the process of attempting to purchase one of the anti-spyware software companies. While there are several decent commercial anti-spyware products on the market, there are also some excellent free ones, such as Spybot Search and Destroy (www.safer-networking.org) and Ad-Aware SE (www.lavasoftusa.com). Never respond to the scam popup ads that tell you that your computer is infested, and click here … many of those supposed anti-spyware products are scams themselves.

Install legitimate anti spyware software, update it

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and run it at least weekly.

7. Participate in National Cyber Security Awareness Month - October 2005. Put it on your calendar and go to http://www.staysafeonline.info/ to find out how you and your User Group can participate in this important event.

All of the resolutions above are necessary, and easier to keep than losing weight.

Screen Capture Tools Put Windows Data At Your Beck and Call

By Gabe Goldberg
<gabe@gabegold.com>

When you have a problem with your car, you bring it to the repair shop. When you're sick, you visit the doctor. But computer problems sometimes show up as nasty messages plopped in the middle of the screen. So it's hard to capture information needed to research and fix the problem. And someone trying to help you via email or phone may ask questions about system settings or application options which may be tedious to record and communicate. A previous article describes information that's useful for solving problems.
[http://www.aarp.org/computers-howto/Articles/a2004-07-12-getanswers]
But sometimes the best information is a picture of what happens or what's wrong.

The good news is that all Windows versions provide basic tools to capture the entire screen or just the active application window.

You may have tried to use the PrintScreen (or PrtScr on some keyboards) key and not seen anything happen. This is because that key doesn't really *print* anything, it simply copies the entire screen (or just the active window if you press Alt-then-PrintScreen keys) to the Windows clipboard (an invisible Windows area for storing temporary data). Here's a tip: if you're capturing the entire screen and you'd like to datestamp the image, move the mouse cursor over the time shown at the right side of the Windows taskbar. That will pop up the date, which

will be included in the captured image.

While you can't see the clipboard, you can paste the captured image from it into a word processing or graphics program from which you can print or save it. Open an application you like -- Microsoft Paint or its equivalent (included with Windows), Microsoft Word, or any graphics program. Position the cursor where you want to place the image and press Ctrl-V (Ctrl and V keys simultaneously). The image will appear. If you like, you can add descriptive information such as the date, the nature of your problem, your Windows version, applications which were running, etc.

You can now print the image from the application (click File and Print); you're also close to being able to save or email the captured image! To save it, within the application click File and Save As. Specify a location (hard drive, floppy disk, USB key, etc.). Programs may offer different choices of filetype for saving. Common choices are JPG (good for photographs, can be compressed), PNG (new/free standard format, good for non-photos), GIF (commonly used, produces relatively small files, limited to 256 colors), and BMP (produces large files, Windows-only format, usable if files won't be transmitted). Once the file is saved you can attach it to an e-mail.

But Windows' built-in screen capture is primitive and inflexible. That's led many people and companies to develop tools providing more functions. Searching Google for "screen capture" produced about 227,000 choices! Many of these are free, available for download. You can find good choices at Web sites such as Tucows Downloads [www.tucows.com]. Some are shareware -- free to try, priced to continue using. A modestly priced choice that is powerful and easy to use is CaptureWizPro from PixelMetrics [www.pixelmetrics.com].

Costing $30 and requiring a one-megabyte download, it provides a small toolbar that allows capturing any part of the screen, not just the full screen or the active window. The toolbar can be docked anywhere on the screen edge. It will hide

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until you mouse near it, then several selection tools (area, frame, scroll, etc.) allow precisely selecting what to copy.

Area selection allows simple selection of a rectangular section to copy. Frame selection displays rulers that show the selected area's size in pixels and inches; the frame border opens fast, remembers its position, and lets you interactively prepare applications below it. Scrolling selection tools solve a nasty problem: how to capture an image that doesn't fit on the screen. You can select a scrollable area, energize Full AutoScroll, and the image will scroll before your eyes as CaptureWizPro collects it.

Once an image is captured, you can copy it to the clipboard for saving as described above, or you can do many more fun things with it: save it directly to a disk file, print it directly, make an on-screen PostIt-style note out of it (to keep visible something needed for reference), e-mail it directly, manipulate it with a built-in editor, etc.

CaptureWizPro installation offers a friendly list of tips for use. It also does something I wish more applications did: allows printing a one-page guide including capture basics, Q&A, and suggested uses. The tool is handy for recording configuration changes, comparing results of testing applications, sending information to people who don't have the same applications as you, creating paper checklists from screen lists, etc. A little imagination will suggest many more uses for the friendly fly-out capture tool bar.

No matter how you capture information -- with Windows' built-in PrintScreen handling or any of the many add-in tools -- you'll never have to describe what you saw on the screen; you'll be able to show it. You'll never laboriously transcribe option settings to report to a help desk; you'll send a picture. You'll wonder how you did without this powerful and simple tool.

This article appeared originally on AARP's Computers and Technology Web site, <www.aarp.org/computers>. (c) AARP 2004. Permission is granted for reprinting and distribution by non-profit organizations with text reproduced unchanged and this paragraph included.

Jeanne's Jokes

ADULT: A person who has stopped growing at both ends and is now growing in the middle.

BEAUTY PARLOR: A place where women curl up and dye.

CANNIBAL: Someone who is fed up with people.

CHICKENS: The only animals you eat before they are born and after they are dead.

COMMITTEE: A body that keeps minutes and wastes hours.

DUST: Mud with the juice squeezed out.

EGOTIST:
Someone who is usually me-deep in conversation.

HANDKERCHIEF: Cold Storage.

INFLATION: Cutting money in half without damaging the paper.

MOSQUITO: An insect that makes you like flies better.

RAISIN: Grape with a sunburn.

Submitted by Jeanne Okomato,
Member NOPCC

NOPCC Directory

Elected Officers

President	Ray Paternostro	president@nopc.org	737-9099
Vice President	Clarke Kissel .	vp@nopc.org	828-5678
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Treasurer	Don Herrmann	treasurer@nopc.org	831-1284
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Director At Large	Mary Prinz	director2@nopc.org	455-1412
Director At Large	Tom Ford	director3@nopc.org	985-643-3172

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Publicity	Jackie Elliott	publicity@nopc.org	455-6203
Webmaster	Sherrie Henne	webmaster@nopc.org	504-913-5638

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Internet	Ray Paternostro	internet-m@nopc.org	737-9099
New Users	Tom Ford	new-user@nopc.org	985-643-3172
VBLG	Manuel Dennis III	vblg-owner@listbot.com	835-7656
WADSIG	Manuel Dennis III	wadsig-owner@listbot.com	835-7656
Web Lab	Edward Jahncke	editor@nopc.org	897-1205

Other Important Numbers / Addresses

Club Hotline	Recorded messages. Meeting Information. Open 24 Hours	887-5746
NOPCC BBS	Bulletin Board System for members. The original way to PC communicate.	486-7249
NOPCC Web Site	On the World Wide Web. Our own home page and club information.	***www.nopc.org***

February 2005

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	**2** NOPC Gen Mtg J.D. Meisler School 6:30p-8:30p	**3**	**4**	**5** *Living with Home Electronics WTIX 890AM 10-11a*
6 *Computer Solutions WSMB 1350AM*	**7** *GNONUG* **6:30p-8:30p**	**8**	**9** NOPC BOD @ McCann's 6:30p-8:30p	**10** *WebLab SIG @McCann's 6:30p-8:30p*	**11**	**12** *Living with Home Electronics WTIX 890AM 10-11a*
13 *Computer Solutions WSMB 1350AM*	**14** *GNONUG* 6:30p-8:30p	**15** *Genealogy SIG @ McCann's 6:30p-830p*	**16**	**17** *New Users SIG @McCann's 6:30p-8:30p*	**18**	**19** *Living with Home Electronics WTIX 890AM 10-11a*
20 *Computer Solutions WSMB 1350AM*	**21** *GNONUG 6:30p-8:30p*	**22**	**23** *Digital MediaSIG @McCann's 7:00p-9:00p*	**24** *Internet SIG @McCann's 7:00p-9:00p*	**25**	**26** *Living with Home Electronics WTIX 890AM 10-11a*
27 *Computer Solutions WSMB 1350AM*	**28** *GNONUG 6:30p-8:30p*					

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