This Month At NOPC

Members Present Real-World Problems Solved by Software

Inside this issue:

Congratulations to the New Board of Directors

At the November, 2007 General Membership meeting, the following persons were elected by acclimation to serve as the 2008 Board of Directors.

President—Tom Ford
Vice President— Walt Christensen
Secretary—Ray Paternostro
Treasurer—Don Herrmann
Director At Large-Mike York
Director At Large—Scott Minvielle
Director At Large—Jeanne Okamoto

There are numerous other positions within the club that need members to fill them. Talk to your Board and see how you can support them in 2008.

This Month's Meeting

We have had several different Favorite nights as general meeting themes: ideas, website, software and hardware. At the December meeting, we are going to bring this concept together in another way. Computer applications have allowed us to explore space, navigate without seeing the sun and create letters with not one misspelled word. At this meeting, we want you to talk about how a computer application has solved a real-world problem for you. It can be an application that keeps track of your money, records and stores your favorite CD's or DVD's, edits your pictures, etc. This application could also be web based liked a retirement calculator, photo album, video conferencing with family, etc.

Please email Tom (president@nopc.org) the name of your favorite computer application and how it helped you solve a real problem. He can work out how you can show us the app at the meeting.

Our member with the best solution will win a $50 gift certificate to a local computer store. Our runners up will receive a free one year subscription to Smart Computing.

Mark your calendars, create an entry in your Palm Treo 700wx, update Outlook and join us on Wednesday, December 5, 2007. The monthly meeting of the NOPC Club starts at 6:30pm on the first Wednesday of every month. Location of the meeting is the J.D. Meisler school cafeteria at 3700 Cleary Ave. Metairie. Use the entrance through the breezeway on Pharr Street.

Mashup

In technology, a mashup is a web application that combines data from more than one source into a single integrated tool; an example is the use of cartographic data from Google Maps to add location information to real-estate data from Craigslist, thereby creating a new and distinct web service that was not originally provided by either source.

Mashup originally referred to the practice in pop music (notably hip-hop) of producing a new song by mixing two or more existing pieces.

 A.J. Levy says: Here's a link to a totally useless mashup. (But it is an example of a mashup.) http://www.coverpop.com/wheeloflunch/

DUFFERDOM

Tales from the Kingdom of the Ordinary User
by David D. Uffer,
a Member of the Chicago Computer Society
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Of Avery, CDs, Squaring the Circle, Selected Greek Classics, and Tantalus C Plus a Resolution

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

We have all heard of the name AAvery@, the global leader in assorted office supplies, self-adhesive labels (but probably not yet the US Postal stamps), dividers, markers, and such. You may not have heard of Paxar, whose Monarch Division seems to be the culprit behind those wonderful price and info tags attached to clothing and other goods and hanging by tough, tiny plastic strings you cannot break or pull loose but must cut and then seek the remaining portion which is often inserted out of signt, waiting to annoy you further by scratching your skin if not removed. Well, Avery just acquired Paxar in a deal worth 1.3 billion bucks. Such is the price of the right annoyance. So Avery deserves respect, maybe even reverence if judged by revenue. It is after all the standard index referred to by more reasonably priced packs of blank labels for use in PC printers. But this user may have lost some respect for this global leaderBas if they careBbecause of a wild, redundant search they placed in my path.

In an effort to avoid losing sight of most other users= progress, I tried to catch up to a common prac-

tice in this age of proliferating digital photos. I collected some pictures taken in Greece onto some CDs, learning how to do it by trial, error, and reading instructions when desperate. Results were impressive. Buoyed up by approaching the League of the Big Guys, I wondered why their handwritten CD content titles were so curt and scruffy when labels were available to display more readable and detailed information. A single label might conceivably cause imbalance problems as a CD revved up its speed as the drive=s internal laser moved to the outer tracks. But a pair of properly placed labels could offset each other for a smoother spin. OK, two labels could also display more information than one, fine. But Avery makes these disk-shaped labels with the core hole to cover the entire disk and display anything the user wants to fit in the still larger space, even graphics. Finer, better. Big league catchup.

Beset by pride and hope of grandeur, I bought a set of holey Avery disk labels. Swallowing my pride, I looked at the instructions. Those that came with the labels explained the technique for correctly applying the label to the disk, center holes exactly aligned. Neat. The package and online directions, showing an imprinted disk, said to use an indexed template, Avery=s # 8931 or 5931, in *Word* or *WordPerfect*. Each had 2 variants, CD face and CD case. All I wanted at the time was the round disk face, maybe later for the almost square disk case label if I wanted to venture further. But, in actual use, all the templates allowed was an image without a central hole. Worse still, all the patterns for the circular disk were square.

OK, so maybe Avery wants users to use Avery=s printing software. It is available online, for free. So they claimed. A slightly larger version with more graphics is also offered for sale. Both would do at least some graphics as well as a blank face for imprinting just text. So they claimed. I=ll spare you the details of repeated and finally successful attempts to secure the software. Guess what. It was the same as what I found earlier online. I could print text all over a solid square to go onto a holey disk. A square on top of a circle. Not right. No help.

Now, squaring a circle is one of three classical problems in the early development of Greek ge-

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ometry. (The other two were doubling the cube and trisecting an angle.) It was known to be difficult and proved impossible in precision in 1882 because it involved the imprecise term, pi, though a near approximation could get the job done for those who were interested. One of the sites referenced in Google for Asquaring the circle@ delivers a 7-page article replete with a barrage of real and legended ancient Greek names. [If you enjoy their rich pronunciation, you may be amused by the names pun near the end of this tale.]

So it would seem that Avery has squared the circle, at least to their own satisfaction. Now if they could only work it in the other direction, circling the square to the users= satisfaction and punching a hole in the center, it might increase my respect for this global leader. Indeed, in consideration of my pain and suffering, if Avery were to send some workable softwareBor a minute share of 1.3 billionBin this direction, that wavering respect just might become a bit reverential. That upgrade in regard seems unlikely since it appears they think a square is the working equivalent to a circle with a center hole. There may be some hidden transformation formula there. If so I consider it well concealed. It does offer Options, which merely present other Avery patterns, none applicable to the problem at hand. For that matter, Avery=s CD/DVD patterns weren=t either so one could say the others were no worse.

<<<   Tantalus pic   >>>

But yet all their promotional illustrations show attractive disks with text and graphics plus a range of alternates, all just out of reach. This user is reminded of the mythical Greek god Tantalus, a son of Zeus, who must have messed up pretty badly since he was later doomed to the Underworld, up to his chin in water with delicious fruits just out of reach. That=s the origin of Atantalize@, which also applies to Avery=s promo pictures of decorated, circular disksBin your dreams. However one thing becomes clearer, why I had seen the hand-written CD title inscriptions. We are not alone, as they say, just ignored.

[There is this two-word pun on classic Greek names which has a man showing his torn pants to a tailor who asks, AEuripides?@. The customer nods and replies, AEumenides?@]

As it usually happens in children=s booksBand sometimes in real lifeBthere is a happy ending to this tale of corporate woe. It comes from Brøderbund (a Aband of brothers@ in a loose translation of mixed Swedish, Danish, and German). Now spelled more simply as Broderbund and part of Riverdeep, they have over 20 years developed and offered *The Print Shop* software, now in version 22. It is now substantially more than the basic graphic printing application it was originally but remains readily available and reasonably priced. In the last few years they began enabling printing your choice of graphics and text on CD and DVD labels. No hype, no fanfare, just competent performance, good to know, and a pleasure to use. So, you can buy your blank CD and DVD labels from Avery but print them with software from the brethren.

Dave Uffer is a member of some standing in the Chicago Computer Society. Originating in Colorado deep in the last century, he arrived in the Midwest and settled in the Chicago area where he has held a variety of honorable but not especially honored positions in computer-related fields. He and his wife are now retired, children grown and away; he sometimes writes about the often neglected concerns of real PC users.

Make Vista Work Better

by Vinny La Bash,
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No matter how good an operating system may be, someone will complain that it could have been better. Vista is a very good operating system that some people find wanting. Some people are never satisfied, but that is not the issue here. Of course Vista should have been better, but Microsoft has only so much time and resources to develop a system, and Vista was late to market in addition to being less than perfect.

In this article we'll show how to make Vista work better for you, and that's all we can reasonably ask of any operating system. Let's take care of the power users first. Power users are too impatient for menus. They think menus are for wimps. After encountering Vista User Account Control they may have a point.

Left-click the orb at the bottom left side of the

screen.
In the Search box type cmd.exe.
Right-click on cmd.exe and choose Properties from the popup menu.
Select Pin to the Start Menu.
The Command Prompt is now always available from the Start menu. If you would like to make additional tweaks to the prompt, right-click the shortcut from the Start menu and choose Properties.

The blinking cursor, otherwise known as the insertion point, tells you where you can type or insert text. The cursor can be difficult to locate because it's so thin, but Vista has a way to fatten it up.

Open Control Panel.
A dialog box appears. In the upper right corner, type "Optimize visual display."
The Ease of Access Center icon will appear. Select the link below the icon.
Locate the Make the focus rectangle thicker box and put a checkmark in it.
Set the thickness to whatever you like. Don't get carried away with some ridiculous number. Bumping up the thickness by one or two points should be sufficient.
When you install a large high resolution monitor, you quickly become aware of the relationship between high resolution and eyestrain. Vista provides a way to make text easier to read without having to sacrifice resolution.

From the Start Menu open Control Panel.
In the Search box at the upper right corner of the dialog box, type adjust font size.
The resulting list will probably consist of one item, Adjust font size.
Select it and you can choose to accept the larger text option or click on the Custom DPL button and experiment.

Vista comes equipped with an excellent Snipping Tool that was originally designed for a different version of Windows. In its generosity, Microsoft chose to include the tool in every version of Vista except Vista Home Basic, which is fine because nobody should buy Vista Home Basic. Snippy lets you capture any portion of a screen, either rectangular or free form. You can then paste it into a document, email or save it as a graphic. Don't use it to copy and paste text for editing because a graphic image can't be edited like text. Here's how to get it:

From the Start Menu type snip in the search box.
The Snipping Tool should be at the top of the list. Right-click on it and select Pin to the Start Menu. You can also add it to the Quick Launch Bar if you like.
Vista has added several new wrinkles to the Quick Launch bar. It's been around since Windows 95, but it's never been more useful. If you hold the shift key down while right-clicking on a shortcut, you will see an expanded popup window with additional options. One option is to put the shortcut icon on the Quick Launch bar. You can still use the traditional drag and drop method, but having another alternative when the desktop isn't visible is always helpful.

When the Quick Launch bar is active, that means you can see it on the Task bar. If you need to activate Quick Launch right-click on a clean area of the Task bar. Drag your mouse to the Toolbars option, and select Quick Launch.

Each of the first ten shortcuts on the Quick Launch bar has its own custom keyboard shortcut. If the Calculator is the third icon from the left, press the Windows key and the number 3 and you activate the calculator. Limiting the number of built-in keyboard shortcuts may be Microsoft's way of telling you that more then ten items on the Quick Launch bar is too many.

Vista keyboard shortcuts are a great way of performing little tasks more easily. Instead of having to reach for your mouse, you can press two or three keystrokes. There are those keyboard shortcuts that are common to all versions of Windows and now there are some new ones. Among the new features introduced in Windows Vista, is a new set of shortcut keys that are used to launch various programs or perform different tasks. These new keyboard shortcuts are listed below.

Windows Key + G (cycles through the Gadgets)

Windows Key + L (locks the computer)

Windows Key + U (activates the Ease Of Use Center)

Windows Key + X (cycles through the Mobility Center)

Windows Key + Spacebar (moves the focus to the Sidebar)

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Windows Key + Pause (opens the System Properties portion of Control Panel)

CTRL + + Tab (opens persistent Flip 3D) :
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The Phenomenon of Facebook-Redefining Social Networking

By Courtney Jewett,
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What do Hillary Clinton, Tony the Tiger, and millions of college students have in common? They all have profiles on the contemporary social network known as Facebook.

As a college student, and avid Facebooker, I intend to share my knowledge and experiences with the site in order to uncover the reasons behind Facebook's widespread success.

As Facebook.com explains, the purpose of this "social utility" is to keep friends connected and help people network in a safe online environment.

Mark Zuckerberg, an extremely intelligent student of Harvard University, created Facebook three years ago. At the age of 19, Mark and his college friends launched the site, which began as a place to connect Harvard students.

Today, Facebook has connections to universities across the globe, with over 25 million registered users. If you have a high school or college age child, chances are they're very familiar with this popular site.

Once a fixation only among college students, Facebook is quickly expanding in the hope of connecting a diversity of users. Anyone with a valid e-mail address can register and create a free Facebook profile.

The site is successful because it is changing the ways in which the world can communicate.

Through Facebook, users create a profile where they can express their interests, activities, favorite movies, shows, books, quotes, and basic contact information. They can search for their friends and co-workers, and then click to add them as their 'Facebook friend'.

There are countless ways to participate on Facebook, such as uploading pictures, 'tagging' or identifying 'facebook friends' that appear in your pics, sending messages, writing on friends' walls, customizing your profile, writing notes to publish on Facebook, and updating your status to allow your friends to know exactly what you're up to at any given time.

With all of these opportunities to connect, it's no wonder people (especially students) are spending hours on this site, and visiting it repeatedly in order to stay updated with what's happening in the lives of their Facebook friends.

Through Facebook, I am connected with 73 different networks, and hundreds of people, from the U.S to Australia. I can see what my friends who are currently studying abroad are up to, and view pictures of their adventures.

Some of my favorite professors are now Facebook users. The site is an excellent tool for professors to get to know their students on a more personal level. It's not uncommon for students to ask academic questions through Facebook messaging instead of e-mail, or to write friendly comments on their professor's wall.

Employers are also discovering the benefits of Facebook, and can search for the profiles of potential employees. Therefore, it's smart to keep a clean profile, and to be aware of who you are associating with through the site. Many sororities, fraternities, and campus organizations monitor the profiles of their members and discourage pictures of drinking, and inappropriate behavior.

Facebook's privacy settings and methods of connectivity separate it from Myspace, and all other internet social networks. Myspace, which has similar features to Facebook, emphasizes individuality and expression through more personalized profiles. Facebook focuses on simple, safe connectivity.

Facebook corresponds more with real life than Myspace, as users typically add people they already know as their 'Facebook friends'. Myspace,

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users are often contacted by random locals.

In upcoming articles, I'd like to further examine the role Facebook plays in the life of the student, as well as the advantages (and maybe one or two disadvantages) of the site. Lastly, we'll uncover how Facebook is affecting the dating world, and improving the love lives of college students everywhere.

Courtney Jewett is a Senior English major at Baylor University, and is pursuing a career in Journalism.

The Phenomenon of Facebook- Part II
Facebook and the college student

By Courtney Jewett, Member of HAL-PC, TX and a Senior English major at Baylor University is pursuing a career in Journalism
www.alamopc.org/
Courtney_Jewett(at)baylor.edu

Today's college student is as familiar with Facebook as they are to types of Starbucks coffee, episodes of Grey's Anatomy, and the rising cost of their university tuition.

Students, who comprise the majority of Facebookers, are obsessing over the popular social networking site. In order to gain a clearer understanding of how students are utilizing the site, let's examine the role Facebook plays in the life of the typical college student.

Anson Jablinski, a sophomore of Baylor University, believes Facebook is extremely useful as a "place to keep track of friends as they spread out and attend various colleges." After keeping a tally of how often he logs on to the site, Anson realized he visits it approximately 16 times a day.

Another Baylor sophomore, Elizabeth Lawrence admits that she lives on Facebook. "I check it practically every thirty minutes to every hour that I am on the computer (which is 9 hours a day)," said Elizabeth. She considers Facebook to be part of her daily routine.

Like many students, Anson and Elizabeth check the 'newsfeed' portion of Facebook that provides any updates that occur on their friends' profiles, as well as notifications of new messages. This feature allows users to stay informed in the lives of their Facebook friends.

While visiting the site numerous times a day may seem obsessive, being an active member of Facebook has its benefits.

It's an excellent resource, as it provides the contact information (cell phone, address, personal websites, e-mail, hometown) of the user's Facebook friends.

Students can use the site as a tool to connect with classmates, form study groups, or ask questions concerning coursework. Facebook provides ultimate connectivity, free of charge and available wherever one can find internet connectivity.

Junior Baylor student, Helena Sung, appreciates the social benefits of being a member of the networking site. "The 'about me' section gives you some insight into what kind of person he/she is," says Helena, "if you want to get to know someone better and have a better relationship with others, Facebook can be the start of connection."

Student artists, writers, and musicians often use the site to showcase their talent. They can easily inform their friends about upcoming events, and ask for feedback on their work.

Users can add extra 'applications' to their profile that are simply for fun and entertainment. For instance, students will send virtual gifts to their friends, or can buy a virtual drink for someone using the Happy Hour application. Petlovers can even create profiles for their animals through the dogbook/catbook applications. With all of the available applications, Facebook offers a great temporary escape from the stress of school.

In college, balancing one's social life with one's academics can be tricky, and certainly, this social networking site has the potential to add further complications. However, if students are able to reasonably limit their usage of Facebook, they can benefit from its advantages without allowing it to distract from their studies.

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Happy Holidays

CLUB SUPPORTERS

December 2007

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1 Living with Home Electronics WIST 690AM 10a-11a
2	3	4	**5 NOPC Gen Mtg** J.D. Meisler School 6:30p-8:30p	6	7	**8 Living with Home Electronics** WIST 690AM 10a-11a
9	10	**11 Genealogy SIG** 7:00 pm Call 887.5746 for meeting location	**12 NOPC BOD** @ McCann's 6:30p-8:30p	13	14	**15 Living with Home Electronics** WIST 690AM 10a-11a
16	17	18	19	**20 New & Intermediate User SIG** Old Metairie Library 6:30p-8:30p	21	**22 Living with Home Electronics** WIST 690AM 10a-11a
23	24	25	26	27	28	**29 Living with Home Electronics** WIST 690AM 10a-11a
30	31		*Dec 12—PMI GNO Monthly Meeting*			

The New Orleans Personal Computer Club (NOPCC) is a private non-profit organization chartered under the State of Louisiana. Its purpose is to provide an open forum for discussion and education of the membership in the use and application of PCs, peripheral equipment and software. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author (s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the NOPCC, its members or its officers. The club does not verify for accuracy the articles in this newsletter and leaves verification of accuracy to its readers. Articles in this newsletter may be duplicated as long as credit is given to the author (s) and the NOPCC. Annual Dues Schedule: Regular Member, $40/yr.; Family Membership, $60/yr.;

NOPCC Directory

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Internet	Ray Paternostro	internet-m@nopc.org	737-9099
New Users	Tom Ford	new-user@nopc.org	985-643-3172

Other Important Numbers / Addresses

Club Hotline	Recorded messages. Meeting Information. Open 24 Hours	887-5746
NOPCC Web Site	On the World Wide Web. Our own home page and club information.	*www.nopc.org*