

Mother Board

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***This Month
“Getting
Your
Household
Ready for
Digital TV”
by
Jerry
Seregni***

Inside this issue:

Concepts and Tools	1—2
Using Crossloop to Troubleshoot Computers	3
Prepare for Hard Drive Recovery	4
Using Vista’s Hidden Disk Cleanup Options	5—6
Smart Computing Offerings	6—7
Advertisements	7
Calendar of Events NOPCC Directory	8

Concepts and Tools

By Elizabeth B. Wright,
Member, Computer Club of Oklahoma City
www.ccokc.org
[wright599new\(at\)sbcglobal.net](mailto:wright599new(at)sbcglobal.net)

One day in the near future there will be no computer “beginners” at the adult level. The children born into the world as it is today are exposed to computers from conception. After they are born, many have very sophisticated hands on use of the machines from the minute they can reach out from their parent’s lap and touch the keyboard. There is no mystery to them.

But while there are still older adults who want computer knowledge, someone has to be available to instruct them. And adults do not learn the same way that babies and children learn. Sometimes, when leading a group or teaching a class, it is difficult to explain to students why they need to understand the difference between how a computer or a program works and how to make it actually do something. In my opinion, concepts are far more useful in the long run than specific techniques, especially when dealing with someone using a computer for the first time or who has gone just beyond the basics. But how do you teach a concept?

First, accept the fact that it will take more time in the beginning to teach concepts, but it will save time later on. The real trick is to make the process interesting and easy to understand

(Continued on page 2)

This Month at the NOPCC

Get Your Household Ready for Digital TV

Jerry Seregni, WWLTV
Caldwell Room - 2nd floor of "Hotel Conference Center"

The presentation will cover the latest developments in the federal government's DTV plan and will include a demonstration of a variety of DTV-related devices, ranging from digital-to-analog converter boxes, to indoor DTV antennas, to USB ATSC TV tuners for laptops. Jerry says the topic usually provokes a lively discussion, so bring your questions.

Entrance is from River Road or Jefferson Highway, at the eastern end of the campus. Go to the second floor of the parking garage (most direct way to meeting room) and head through the double doors to hospital hallway. After about 40 steps, take a right to the "Hotel Conference Center," entrance. We are in the center conference room, the Caldwell Room.

(Continued from page 1)

The simple fact that a computer is basically thousands of off and on switches, the same as a light switch, seems to be information that many people find irrelevant. But once a student gets some idea of the actual simplicity of the machine, much of the mystery is removed from the learning process.

Second, CONCEPTS, once understood, are usually far easier to remember than techniques. Anyone who “gets the idea” of a computer fundamental can usually find the tools later to accomplish the end result, even if the specific steps are not used often enough to remember them in sequence.

Many first session lesson plans skip computer functionality and plunge straight into using software. As an example, the concept of organizing files on a hard drive seems to be much harder for new users to comprehend than teaching them to open the file manager, aka Windows Explore or some similar program. So many teachers go through the cumbersome task of showing people how to open the file system, only to become bogged down in the steps needed to find a particular file, then later to continually have people complain they have lost a file and firmly believe it has disappeared from their machine. Most new users find it difficult to make the connection between finding a file on the computer and why understanding how to find it is important. It is the instructors job to help them make the connection. The CONCEPT of hard drive storage is not easy to absorb, so the instructor must make it easy. Also many new users find it difficult to transfer keystrokes learned on a classroom computer to their own computers at home. The reason for this is that no two computers are exactly alike, so the steps learned on one machine may or may not work on another one. But if the student comprehends the idea behind digital file storage, the actual keystrokes will begin to make sense, regardless of what computer they are using. In my opinion, rote learning is not the best way to become even moderately proficient on a computer. Real understanding of basic computing processes is vital.

Since many new users have little idea of what hardware is on their own computers, talking about C:\ drives and other drives in relation to specific files means little to them. But a well developed discussion of what basic hardware CAN be on a computer and how it works is not a waste of time, answering questions along the way. Many new users won't see the value in a technical discussion, so it is im-

portant to present hardware demonstrations using common sense terms rather than obscure technical language. It is never necessary to impress new students with what you know, but rather to make the information as easy for them to understand as possible. With practice, a teacher or presenter can develop the dialog necessary to convey essential information and still keep the listeners engaged. Students appreciate being encouraged in the idea that they may not know much to begin with, but they will leave each session armed with useful information and techniques that will build a good basic foundation for them. Biblically we were taught not to build our houses on sand. Why are the pyramids in Egypt still standing? Because underneath all that sand there are foundations built on bedrock. Good computer skills begin the same way.

Nearly all programs are far too comprehensive to be taught in detail to beginners. But if the most basic use of the program (the program's CONCEPT) can be presented in a way that is useful to students, they will get their feet wet. From there they can then be encouraged to not only attend study groups and advanced classes, but to explore their favorite programs on their own. Again, the difference is between teaching new users the fundamental use of the program itself as opposed to teaching them to use specific program “tools”. Obviously some techniques need to be taught in early sessions, but teaching the use of most tools is best done in intermediate and advanced classes. My experience has been that only when people have a need for or enjoy using any computer software will they continue to explore and expand their knowledge of the program.

How long did it take you to figure out that the “d” in d:\ stands for any non-specific “drive” when dealing with program instructions (often installation procedures) and not specifically for the “d” drive on your personal computer? Admit it, there was a time when you didn't know that. Just think how confusing the term is to new users. There is a concept here if you can find it.

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(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

Using CrossLoop to Troubleshoot and Control Remote Machines

By Vinny LaBash,
Member and Contributing Columnist,
Sarasota PCUG, Florida
www.spcug.org
[vlabash\(at\)comcast.net](mailto:vlabash(at)comcast.net)

Third party Windows applications are rarely examined in this column, but CrossLoop is too good a utility to ignore. Trying to walk someone through a computer problem over the telephone is often an exercise in frustration. There is no substitute for seeing what is actually on a user's screen to find out the root cause of a problem.

Vista has a built-in support tool known as Remote Desktop, but far from making the process easy, it has a tendency to confuse those with no technical background. Remote Desktop makes it rough on those who don't know how to handle the added complications of firewalls and routers. CrossLoop, which is a free remote support utility, could be an excellent solution.

CrossLoop shields users from tricky situations involving communicating through routers, firewalls, and other potential obstacles. Setting up a communications session between two computers physically separated, but connected through the internet, is reduced to a process hardly more complex than turning on your TV. Those concerned about security can relax. CrossLoop uses something called TightVNC which safeguards data with 128 bit encryption.

Crossloop is useful for people who want to train or support others remotely. If you're an experienced web surfer, for example, and need to show someone how to access a disk drive or retrieve a lost document, CrossLoop allows you to take control of their computer screen, and show them exactly how to do it.

Hard core geeks may not be satisfied with CrossLoop. It's not complicated enough. It works better than most similar commercial utilities, and your technically challenged friends and relatives will find it aggravation free.

You can download the program without charge from <http://www.crossloop.com>. The site has a video that demonstrates how to install and use the program

which is very helpful for technophobes.

Once you're up and running, the interface presenting itself is a model of simplicity which effectively masks the complexity behind the scenes. As mentioned earlier, security and remote control is handled by TightVNC. VNC stands for Virtual Network Computing, and is a very well designed software tool that easily allows remote access to Operating Systems with a graphical interface. The technical specifications say you need Windows 98 or higher. A broadband internet connection is also a requirement. Dialup connections won't work. Drive space, processor speed, and memory requirements are negligible given the general power of today's computers.

Another benefit of TightVNC is the built-in 128 bit encrypted security. When you begin a communications session, the program generates a new 12 digit access code. The access code then generates the encryption codes giving you an additional layer of security. Not bad for a free utility.

CrossLoop Graphic Running the program is so easy it's almost boring. As you can see from the illustration, the interface is simple and straightforward. Assuming you started the session, the next step is to communicate the access code to the person you are communicating with. You can do this by email, telephone, screaming into the next room, etc.

After starting the session, your friend types the access code into the box and clicks **Connect**. When the **Connect** button is clicked on both sides the two PCs are linked.

This method of troubleshooting a remote PC eliminates all the hassles of trying to interpret what an inexperienced user is attempting to explain. It's difficult to imagine anything less complex than a one button interface. With 128 bit encryption built in, it's tough to beat.

Other applications that make such connections possible have been available for years, but nothing I've seen makes it as simple as CrossLoop.

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(Continued from page 3)

Prepare for Hard Drive Recovery

by Bob Hudak,
Greater South Bay User Group
Hardware SIG Leader (California)
<http://gsbug.apcug.org>
[uags\(at\)aol.com](mailto:uags(at)aol.com)

When you lose control of your computer due to a virus or some sort of malware, or your O.S. becomes corrupted for one reason or another, be ready to fix the problem.

1. Start by setting up your hard drive with 2 partitions at least. Put all programs on 'C:' & all Data on 'D:'

2. When hard drive is clean and all programs are loaded, it is time to make an image file of 'C:.' Use Acronis *True Image* to do this or whatever program you like. Put it on 'D:' drive in the root. Name it using date. Remember you do not have a backup till you have two copies in two different places. So now copy this image file to an external USB drive. The reason is if "C:" goes bad you can reformat it and start over without losing any data. If your computer will not boot and you did not put all your data on another drive or partition, you will want to save your data before reinstalling your operating system. What can you do?

A. Open computer case and remove drive. Install drive as a slave drive in another computer. Now you can copy and paste your data or burn to a CD. This means opening two computers and moving the drive in and out and resetting the jumpers.

B. Hook up the drive you removed from your computer to a second computer using a USB adapter, like the one we have at the Hardware SIG, to another computer and copy and paste or burn the data you want to keep.

C. Here is my first choice in a case like this. Use a Live Linux CD to boot up. Plug in a USB drive before booting. After booting, mount your 'C:' drive and your USB drive. Copy your data from 'C:' drive to the USB drive. With this option there is no case to open and drive to remove.

3. Backup your data as necessary to a CD or an-



other drive. Use a USB drive. This drive can also fail so putting backup on a CD or DVD is better way to go. Also, there is an on-line service at Carbinite.com that will automatically back up your data. This service costs \$50.00 a year for unlimited backups. How important is your data?

Here are a few key folders to have on 'D:.' drive:

Data — In this folder make sub folders for each application you use. Include one called Pictures. Under this folder have another sub folders for different events. Like: Christmas07, Vacation08, Dog, etc.

D/L — Use this folder for all your downloads. Then you will always know where your downloads are. Set it up so the last thing you downloaded is on top.

E-Mail. If possible. You wanted your e-mail off the 'C' drive

My Stuff. Cut and paste from 'My Documents' on 'C' items that were sent there without asking you where to send. Documents that you want to keep.

Using Acronis True Image

Use Acronis *True Image* to backup to your USB drive. Make a full backup the first time.

This is going to be pretty easy because all your data is in one folder on 'D:.' called **DATA**. If you want to backup your downloaded items, back up the 'D/L' folder. E-Mail is not something I backup but you may want to. Once again it should all be in the 'E-MAIL' folder.

You already loaded the Acronis program and made a rescue CD that is bootable. Right?

Now open your CD drive and insert the CD. Do not close the drive. Shut down your computer. Close the CD drive. Wait a minute and then reboot.

If you have your BIOS set to boot from a CD first, you are good to go. If not you will need to enter into your setup screen at boot-up and change the boot order.

After booting up with Acronis, follow the prompts to select what you want backed up. Practice this before you need to use it.

Make notes on how to select each step. Acronis will not do anything until you give it the final OK.

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(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

Using Vista's Hidden Disk Cleanup Options

by Vinny La Bash,
Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer
Users Group, Inc., Florida
www.spcug.org
[vlabash\(at\)comcast.net](mailto:vlabash(at)comcast.net)

There are many things to like about the disk cleanup utility in Windows Vista. It's built into the operating system, it works, and it's free. It's also a tool that removes many potential problems such as corrupt files that may be causing difficulties or could cause computer ills in the future. One of its minor shortcomings is that it doesn't detect and eliminate wasteful duplicate files. This is a very insignificant quibble as Microsoft never claimed it could do that in the first place. That ability is an item on my wish list for the next version. Overall it's a very useful tool that everyone should be familiar with.

There is more to Disk Cleanup than removing junk files and recovering gigabytes of disk space. It's amazing how 'temporary' files can hang around for months in the little used crannies of a disk drive. Poorly written install and uninstall routines are largely responsible, but software glitches and power hiccups leave their own share of digital detritus laying about.

Systems with more than a terabyte of storage are becoming common, and it's easy to lose track of even the largest files. Try locating a suitcase sized patch of land in an area with the dimensions of a football field and you'll have an idea of what I'm talking about. Aside from taking up space, these useless files can slow down searches, bloat your backups, and make Vista's slow defrag process even slower.

If you're not familiar with how Disk Cleanup works, you can access a good tutorial by clicking the Start icon, and then Help and Support. In the search box type Disk Cleanup, and you will get a list of items directly and indirectly related to the subject. You want the first three or four items in the list.

Let's access the normal version of Disk Cleanup by opening up the Computer icon on the Desktop, right-clicking the C: drive, and choosing Properties.

On the General tab locate the Disk Cleanup button

just below and to the right of the disk graphic. You might want to make a note of how much used and unused disk space you have for a before and after comparison. Left-click on the Disk Cleanup button and you will get a message that Windows is doing some calculations. Eventually, you get a dialog box which displays various categories of files you can remove. Windows will let you peek at many of these files, but it's largely a waste of time. I've never found anything worth examining. Make a note of how many types of files Windows can remove, and then close all the dialog boxes.

You've just seen the standard way to access Disk Cleanup. Let's now examine Disk Cleanup with its deep cleaning options exposed. Vista's official file name for the Disk Cleanup utility is **cleanmgr**. Open the Start globe again and type **cleanmgr** on the Start Search box at the bottom of the menu. Press Enter and The Drive Selection dialog box appears. This is a great way to eliminate mouse clicks if we want a fast way of getting to a specific drive. However, this method doesn't display the extra functions we're looking for so close the dialog box down.

To access the enhanced options we need to use something called the System Agent or **sage** in conjunction with **cleanmgr**. Click the Start globe again and in the Start Search box type

```
Cleanmgr /sageset:1
```

Notice the space between **cleanmgr** and the forward slash. **Sageset** is a variation of the System Agent utility, and the number 1 allows you to select different cleaning options. You can use any number you want, even zero or negative numbers.

Disk Cleanup will now be running in a special setup mode that offers more cleaning options than the standard default. In addition, the System Agent will remember whatever cleanup options you select. When you run Cleanup again you don't have to make the same selections as long as you use the same number. That's what the System Agent set part does.

Press Enter to run the utility and wait for the **Disk Cleanup Settings** dialog box to appear. Highlight the individual cleanup options and in some cases there is additional information that is missing from

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

the default dialog box. You also have more cleanup options.

You can select any number of options from just one to all of them. For maximum cleaning, select everything. When you're satisfied with the options you've selected, click the OK button and run the utility. When the job is done, go back and see how much disk space you've recovered. You could be in for a pleasant surprise.

We used the sageset command to set the cleanup options. The system keeps track of what you've done, and it will run the utility according to your specification in the future, but you can't use the sageset command for that. You need to ignore sageset and run the sagerun command instead. From the desktop click the Start globe, and in the Search box type:

```
Cleanmge /sagerun:1
```

Press Enter and the system will automatically run in enhanced mode with the preference previously recorded. Run this command anytime you wish from now on. You can always change preferences by rerunning the sageset command with the cleanmgr utility.

Chances are good that a lot of clutter will be removed from your system, and you will see an increase in free space on your system. If you wish to automate the process, you can use the Task Scheduler to run the tool automatically at your convenience.

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Smart Computing Offerings...

Awww . . .

Need some uplifting images to brighten your day? Look no further than Let's Be Friends (letsbefriends.blogspot.com/). It's a charming blog featuring, as the site puts it, "touching photos of unusual animal friendships." Some of the photos are funny, some are cute, and some are downright odd. Whatever the case, you'll enjoy browsing.

<http://letsbefriends.blogspot.com/>

Missing Network Icon

The icon on the Windows XP taskbar for accessing network settings sometimes goes missing. It's one of the most common, yet frustrating, problems that can occur in WinXP. The reason it's common is that the icon you can use to access network settings is not enabled by default. So, if you normally see the icon—which looks like two small computers next to each other—at work, and then on a home network you can't see the icon, you might wonder if something is wrong. It's also frustrating because it's difficult to figure out how to enable the icon for easy access. To find the option, go to Start, then Connect To, then Show All Connections. All the icons for your network connections will appear, including any wired or wireless connections. Right-click the Local Area Connection icon and select Properties. Now, place a check in the Show Icon In Notification Area checkbox and click OK. The icon will now appear.

CooksRecipes.com

www.cooksrecipes.com

This massive online recipe warehouse has an easy-to-browse layout and tons of recipes. You'll find plenty of main dishes, of course, but the site also offers several unusual recipes, including instructions for making your own sauces and condiments. That's right—if you're tired of the store-bought stuff, you can dabble in the art of mustard-making. The Web site also features a large selection of cat and dog food recipes with fun names, such as Bulldog Banana Bites and Gotta Have Sole.

Cooking Light

www.cookinglight.com

Whether or not you're a subscriber to Cooking Light, you can enjoy the magazine's first-class Web site. Unlike many other recipe Web sites, Cooking Light looks beyond great recipes to issues that will interest anyone who enjoys a healthy lifestyle. The Healthy Life section boasts daily tips and articles on nutrition and fitness, as well as an Ask The Experts feature. Travelers should check out the Travel area in the Healthy Life section; it explores some of the healthiest cities in America. Cooking Light's Menus & Planning section comes to the rescue when you're having a hard time planning meals for the week.

(Continued on page 7)

CLUB SUPPORTERS

THE SECRET GUIDE TO COMPUTERS

The Secret Guide is available at every New Orleans Personal Computer Club General Meeting. The latest printing is available for only \$15.00. Or contact Ray Paternostro either at: secretary@nopc.org or (504) 737-9099.

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Servers . Workstations . Networking . Maintenance



(Continued from page 6)

Everything-About-Scrapbooking.com
www.everything-about-scrapbooking.com

At Everything-About-Scrapbooking.com, the motto "simple scrapbooking for beginners" is right on the mark. This site includes plenty of resources if you want to try scrapbooking but don't know where to start. The Getting Started link provides steps to begin putting together a scrapbook page, while the Ideas, Layouts, and Techniques pages help you continue your creative hobby. On the Submit Your Layout page, you can showcase your scrapbook pages for fellow scrappers and cultivate ideas from the pages they share.

My Bad....

The Editor wishes to apologize for not publishing the September *Motherboard* NOPCC newsletter. The only excuse is the two hurricanes, Gustavo and Ike, which passed over the area. Your Editor lost electricity, phone, and internet access, which put everything on hold. We hope you understand....



October 2008

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 NOPC Gen Mtg Ochsner Hospital Hotel Conf Center 6:30p-8:30p	2	3	4
5	6	7	8 NOPC BOD @ TBD 6:30p-8:30p	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16 New & Inter- mediate User SIG Old Metairie Library 6:30p-8:30p	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

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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President	Tom Ford	president@nopc.org	985-643-3172
Vice President	Walt Christensen	vp@nopc.org	456-2509
Secretary	Ray Paternostro	secretary@nopc.org	737-9099
Treasurer		treasurer@nopc.org	
Director At Large	Mike York	director1@nopc.org	738-5997
Director At Large		director2@nopc.org	
Director At Large	Jeanne Okamoto	director3@nopc.org	455-0977

Standing Committees

Newsletter Editor	Edward Jahncke	editor@nopc.org	985-892-4797
Public Relations	Jeanne Okamoto	pr@nopc.org	455-0977
Publicity	Jeanne Okamoto	pr@nopc.org	455-0977
Webmaster	Sherrie Henne	webmaster@nopc.org	504-913-5638

Special Interest Groups

Computer Programming	Elliot Mike York	mike@gnonug.org	738-5997
Digital Media	Ray Paternostro	dm@nopc.org	737-9099
Genealogy	Vincent Haupt	hauptv@aol.com	985-785-6288
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