

# HORIZONS

*The Official Journal of the Computer Users of Erie*



Volume 27 Number 9  
September 2009

**"News and Information to expand your computing Horizons"**

**Founded 1982**

## Next Meeting

*September 17, 2009*

## **Phishing Scams and Security**



With many of us now depending more on the Internet than ever before for news, information and entertainment, the issue of online security has become one of the hot topics.

How do you recognize a potential security threat from a legitimate offer or message? Join us this month at our General Meeting as Tom Kuklinski explores these questions.

**7 pm, Holy Rosary School**

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## Horizons

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## Upcoming CUE Events

### September 2009

Sun Mo Tue We Th Fri Sat

		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

- 1 Genealogy SIG (DH)
- 6 MDA Labor Day Telethon Starts
- 7 Labor Day
- 12 MAC SIG (LC)
- 15 BUG SIG (TK)
- 17 CUE Monthly Meeting (HR)
- 18 Newsletter Deadline

### October 2009

Sun Mo Tue We Th Fri Sat

				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

- 6 Genealogy SIG (DH)
- 7 Digital Photo SIG (LC)
- 10 MAC SIG (LC)
- 15 CUE Monthly Meeting (HR)
- 16 Newsletter Deadline
- 20 BUG SIG (TK)

October 2009 Meeting Topic:

### Snow Leopard

October seems to be the month for new OS releases this time around. Windows 7 is coming from Microsoft, and Apple is releasing its net version of OS-X named Snow Leopard. Come to the October meeting for a peek at the newest version of the Mac OS, and learn how it can help you keep current with the rest of the pack!

### Meeting Location Finder

DH Dave Howell • 3904 Myrtle • 866-7308 • dhowell63@neo.rr.com  
 HR Holy Rosary • 1012 E. 28th (park behind school) • Contact Lou Cioccio • 868-1320 • louiscioccio@verizon.net  
 TK Tom Kuklinski • 3699 Dogleg Trail • 814-746-9165 • tkuklinski@gmail.com  
 LC Lou Cioccio • 5753 Glenview Dr. • 868-1320 • lcioccio@mac.com  
 BE Bill Ellis • 1502 Winslow Dr. • 868-2680 • willardellis8@gmail.com

*All meetings begin at 7 pm, except for Mac SIG, which is 9 AM (UNLESS otherwise noted by SIG leader).*  
**PLEASE RSVP for all SIG meetings, to allow for planning changes or meeting postponements.**

## About CUE

Founded in March 1982, Computer Users of Erie has undergone many changes over the years to keep pace with the ever-changing world of computing.

The computer platforms vary; we have members using Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 95/98, Mac OS, Linux, and others.

Our members are versed in many different hardware backgrounds. In fact, our roots go back to the days of the old Tandy CoCo (Color Computer), which was the basis around which our group was formed.

CUE has always welcomed members from all walks of life, and all levels of expertise, from the novice just buying their first system, to the professionals that work in the computer industry as a way of life.

Visitors are always welcome to attend one or two of our monthly meetings before joining, just to see what is happening.

Benefits our members enjoy are the newsletter, our CUE Website, and a selection of SIG (Special Interest Groups) to give them a chance to concentrate in-depth on subjects

that are of interest to them. CUE also has a general Monthly meeting held on the third Thursday of each month, where all members are welcome to come and join in on the activities there. A demonstration or other presentation follows our business meeting, and questions are welcome...oftentimes in a 'Stump the Experts' session.

### Special Interest Groups

There are several SIGs operating within CUE that our members are welcome to participate in. Current SIGs include:

- Genealogy
- Macintosh
- Digital Photo
- BUG (Beginners User Group)

There is no extra charge to join a SIG. You may join as many as you wish, or even start one focused on a topic not yet covered!

Why not stop at our next meeting and see what's up?

## Membership News

### New Members

Theresa Rodrigues

### Renewals Received

Paul Wieczorek

### Renewals Due

Bob Huber

Hadley Jones

Patrick Mondì

Rick Cass

David Szymanski

Harold Kelley

Eran Swartzwelder

Carol Blakeslee

Ken Fosco

*Remember, a CUE Membership makes a great gift!!*

## Upcoming CUE Class

# Photoshop Elements Class 2009

**September 1st, 3rd, 8th, 10th, 15th, 22nd,  
24th and 29th**

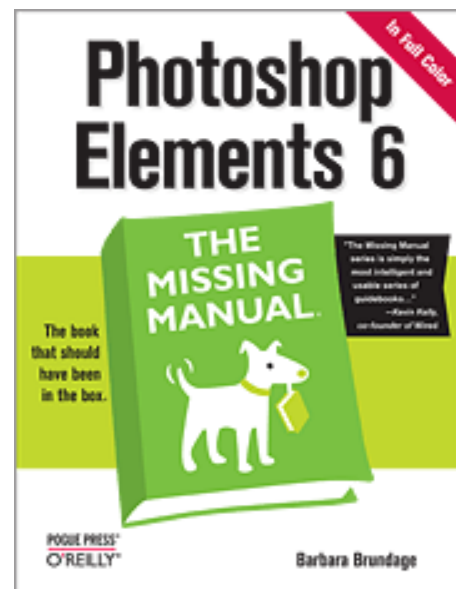
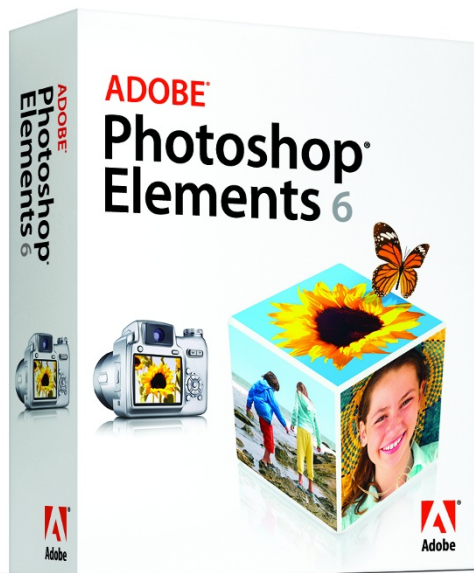
**Time is 7:00PM to 8:30PM**

**Class based on Photoshop Elements 6&7  
Windows and Macintosh**

**Book needed is Photoshop Elements 6: The Missing  
Manual by Barbara Brundage**

**Come join us to learn how to edit and enhance your digital  
photographs for fun and sharing!**

***Classes held at Holy Rosary Computer Lab***



## Secretary Reports

### BOARD MEETING

August 20, 2009  
Thursday  
Holy Rosary School  
6:30 pm

Lee Williams   Lou Cioccio   Don Grim   John Fair  
Gene Meeks   Mark Matson   Dave Howell

Before the meeting was called to order Gene Meeks brought up the fact that he was not getting Board Meeting e-mails and he had talked to Tom Kuklinski about it. This problem would be addressed.

Lee Williams called the meeting to order and announced his major reason for calling the Board Meeting was to clarify how and when he will notify Board members that there would be a Board Meeting. Future business also needed to include the determination of the program schedule for next years General Meeting. Programs for this year were listed as:

September – Pfishing Scams Security by Tom Kuklinski  
October – Snow Leopard by Lou Cioccio  
November – Ask Dave Howell  
December – Holiday Party  
January – Backups/Taxes

Lee showed us magnetic bookmarks made of folded paper with flat magnetics glued to the opposing surfaces inside the fold. When placed over a page and brought together, the magnets were strong enough to keep secure the bookmark to the page. Lee had printed the outside of the bookmarks with CUE logo and information and laminated the paper. He gave a number of them to Gene Meeks to pass out to everyone buying a 50/50 ticket. Lee wondered whether the club should conduct a contest for the best design of the printing on the bookmark, but received lukewarm comments from the Board members.

Lee indicated that from now on there would be no Board meeting if no notice is sent out to the members. When a Board Meeting is to be held, Lee would notify the Board members by email by the Monday before the General Meeting. By Laws require at least four Board Meetings a year.

Meeting Adjourned: 6:52 PM

Respectfully Submitted,  
John Fair

### GENERAL MEETING

August 20, 2009  
Thursday 7:00 PM  
Holy Rosary School

Members in Attendance: 9 plus 1 guest

Lee Williams: Called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM

Lee introduced a visitor, Theresa Rodriguez. She described her job as a computer technician working in many areas of interest to the club. She found CUE through the Photowalk and her membership in the Erie Photography Club.

#### Reports and Readings:

The last minutes to be approved were from the June meeting. John Fair read the minutes as printed in the Newsletter. There were no additions or corrections. Gene Meeks made the motion to approve as published and Lou Cioccio seconded the motion. There was no secretary's report as Scarlett Skarupski was not in attendance.

Tom Kuklinski was also not present so there was no Treasurer's report.

Lee has no current list of the standing committees and their membership with the exception of the Nominating Committee with Sam Fletcher, Scarlett Skarupski as members. He requested committee members provide him with this information.

Newsletter Editor Mark Mattson said he is entertaining ideas on changes to the format of the Newsletter and needs articles for upcoming issues.

#### Special Interest Group Reports:

Genealogy SIG: Dave Howell reported there were no meetings in July (not enough RSVP's to hold the meeting) or August (no leader for the meeting). He plans to be back in operation on September 1 at 7:00 pm at Dave's house. He has been circulating articles from magazines

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**COMPUTER USERS of ERIE**  
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to which he subscribes as well as notifying members of new books being published so that if anyone is interested in purchasing the book the group would assemble library of volumes available for group member use. He also described the advantages of the group membership to Ancestry.com.

Basic Users Group (BUG) SIG. There was no meeting in August.

Digital Photography SIG: The August Photo Safari was to the Thermal G Model Airplane Show. Following the air show Lou contacted the Thermal G club president and gave him access to the pictures Lou shot which were posted on the web.

The class on Photoshop Elements 6 & 7 will be given at Holy Rosary in the Conway Room every Tuesday and Thursday in September from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm with the exception of September 17, 2009 which is CUE's General Meeting. The book to be used for the class is Photoshop Elements 7 (or 6): The Missing Manual by Barbara Brundage. Lou also passed around two copies of Rangefinder, a magazine to which he subscribes, which illustrated on the front cover a new printing process developed by Kodak which gave a texture to the photograph on the cover of one issue. The process gave the picture a 3D effect. He also passed around a book titled Photographer's Markets which is an aid to selling photographic work.

Mac SIG: There was no meeting in August.

Old Business: None

New Business: None

Questions: From Dave Howell. He recently got a new laptop with a Vista operating system. What is the best way of transferring files and programs from his old SP machine? He was cautioned that some of his 32 bit XP programs may not run on the 64 bit Vista operating system. Each program would have to be tested. Thumb drives were suggested for file transfer if he did not have an external hard drive. Vista also has a file and settings transfer capability built in. It was suggested he consult the manual that Dell provides on the C drive.

A 50/50 Drawing was held for half of a \$19 pot. Gene Meeks won with the winning ticket picked by Theresa Rodriguez. The club got \$10 and Gene \$9 since there was no change available.

The program to follow the meeting was Inkjet Essentials presented by Lou Cioccio using materials provided by Red River Paper in a Meeting in a Box. Lou raffled off two packets of Red River Paper products using the 50/50 tickets. Gene Meeks and Theresa Rodriguez won with tickets selected by Deborah Cole.

At 7:29 PM a motion to adjourn was made by Dave Howell, seconded by Gene Meeks.

Respectfully submitted,  
John Fair

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## Editor's Notebook

It's September, and school is back in session. Just a reminder to everyone to obey all school zone regulations and speed limits...make everyone safe.

Along with the return of school days, it means fall is not far off. There is not a better time of the year to capture images showing off the colors of nature than this. Living in the area of the country that we do, it's a matter of only a short drive to get into scenic territory and capture some amazing photos.

When you're out with your camera, don't forget to try some of the newer techniques available to the digital photographer, such as HDR and multi-part panoramas. In fact, for a truly unique image, why not combine the two methods and create HDR panoramas? The resulting images are amazing in the amount of detail they hold.

We are now only a short time away from the release of Windows 7, the next generation of the popular operating system from Microsoft. The expected release date is around the end of October, and seems to be holding firm

at that point.

Windows 7 is a replacement for Vista, which has had its share of problems since its release. I tried it on a machine here during the Beta test phase, and found it to look and behave a lot like Vista. But some major differences were in the system requirements needed to run it. It was a bit more forgiving on system specs, and actually ran fairly well on my now 9 year old primary system (AMD 1.3GHz with 1 Gb RAM).

Win7 is supposedly more reliable and stable than Vista. From most testers reports, it seems to be. Only time will tell. Stay tuned for more...

In case any of you have been wondering about the choice in names for this newsletter when it changed a few years back, check out the front cover of this issue... I've put in the explanation line for the change. Hopefully this clears it up once and for all...

# Clean Up Your Room/Desktop - Part 2

By Ron Hirsch, Contributing Editor, Boca Raton Computer Society, FL [www.brccs.org](http://www.brccs.org) [ronhirsch1439@comcast.com](mailto:ronhirsch1439@comcast.com)

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## INTRODUCTION

Last month we started on managing your icons. In this issue, we'll be continuing the saga of the icons. When you have completed the exercises below and learned the various activities involved, you will be on the road to becoming an "expert" to your friends. You can then play the role of teacher rather than student.

Currently, there are many different Windows versions in use so the material which follows may bring up a slightly different listing of choices on your machine, when one right-clicks on the desktop. With all these varying situations, it is very difficult to present the many fine points exactly.

In general, the differences will be obvious by simple inspection. When they are not, the most direct approach is just to experiment to see what is produced when a choice is made. Generally, all such choices are reversible. In the process, you will get to better understand what is happening. To me, the aspect of experimenting is usually the best approach to understanding and learning.

Remember what I have been preaching for years in my articles. As you become more conversant with using your computer, you will gain more confidence in expanding your horizons with the most amazing machine that mankind has produced. But, it is only a "machine," and you should be in charge of it, even though Microsoft tends to try and make it in charge of you. You are the boss, and the sooner you let your computer know that, the sooner you will stop feeling intimidated by it.

## DESKTOP

In the latest Window's XP and Vista, MS has made a lot of changes, including the default desktop displayed.

I personally don't like it, but that's a matter of my taste. However, MS did leave the door open to go back to the older style of desktop, which you may prefer. If you right click on the desktop, there should be a choice to have a classic Windows desktop. Try selecting this and see which you'd rather have. You can always revert back to the new style if you choose.

## ARRANGE THE ICONS

Right click on an empty space on the desktop and a menu will come up. The first item on the XP listing is "Arrange Icons by." Put the focus on "Arrange Icons by," and you will get a list with lots of choices on how you want them arranged.

If you have carefully positioned all your desktop icons in the various areas where you want them and you use the "Arrange" feature, they will all line up like soldiers, starting at the upper left part of your screen. Then you will have to manually reposition them to where they were before you started. Again, this is a good area in which to experiment.

## AUTO ARRANGE

In the window that pops up when you click on "Arrange Icons by", you will see an entry named "Auto Arrange." If you check this, your icons will always stay arranged, but not in any groups that you have established.

They will all line up like soldiers and stay that way even if you move them. They will jump right back into line. I personally don't like using this. But, you can try it to see if you'd like it. "Auto arrange" is the equivalent of constantly invoking the "Arrange" command.

## ALIGN TO GRID

I personally use the "Align to Grid," which auto aligns all icons so that rows and columns are straight. With this checked, sometimes when you move an icon, it snaps to a different point on the grid.

It will always snap to the nearest point. When this happens, just click and drag it to where you want.

In the early days of XP when one had temporarily booted into safe mode, and then returned to normal mode, the desktop layout was totally garbled up. Microsoft apparently improved things in recent times, the original desktop layout does return now.

## ICON ARRANGING UTILITIES

There are also a variety of simple programs available free on the Internet to save and then restore your desktop layout. This can come in handy when something/ someone has messed up your desktop layout. The one

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I used is called "iconlayout.zip" but the page for this appears to be gone now. This link appears to have a similar free program at ZDNET.

<http://downloads.zdnet.com/abstract.aspx?kw=Save+desktop+icon+layout&docid=185169>

What these utilities generally do is add two items into the dropdown list when you right-click on your desktop - "Save desktop icon layout" and "Restore desktop icon Layout." Browse around for something similar, if you'd like to have this handy utility, or try this ZDNET link.

## CHANGING ICONS

Except for a few Icons, of which Windows is very possessive, the icon images that display for the shortcuts on your desktop can be changed to suit your desires. When you right click on an icon, and select properties from the window which shows, a small window will come up; near the bottom right of that window is a button marked "Change Icon." If you click on it, another window will open, with other Windows-supplied icons which are available. The selection is somewhat limited, but there is a "Browse" button.

If you have any icon library files on your computer, click on the "browse", and navigate around to find these libraries. When you find one, double click on it, and a whole bunch of icons will appear, find one you like, then double click on it, click OK, then when you close the window, you'll have a new icon for that shortcut.

## ICON LIBRARIES

If you'd like to get some icon libraries, one of the best places to go is [www.zdnet.com](http://www.zdnet.com). Once you get there, just navigate around to their download area, and then do a search for "icons." You should get lots of results. These are generally free files and there are lots available, so have fun.

Google is also a good hunting ground for icons. Do a search for "icons for Windows XP." You'll get lots of hits, most of which are free downloads.

The spacing of icons, color, and many other properties of the desktop layout can also be changed. But, that's outside of this area for now.

In a future article, we'll go over the ways to change your desktop colors, the sizes of things, the display resolution, and many other elements that can make your display "better", and easier to use.

## STARTING PROGRAMS

Left click on the START button on the lower left of your desktop. On the menu which comes up, left click on "All Programs." This should bring up a large window that lists all the programs installed on your computer. This is probably where you have been to run a specific program. You would move the cursor over the desired program and click; the program would then run.

Some of these items are links to start the program, and others are folders, which you must click to display the links that are within the folder. How about making copies of the startup links for the programs you use often. Doing this is simple. Put your cursor on a program shortcut, and then right click.

There should be a listed item "Create Shortcut." Clicking on this will create another shortcut, with a (2) showing that it is the a duplicate of the original shortcut. Then, drag this onto the desktop. You can now edit the name to remove the (2), or make it any name you would like.

## CONCLUSION

At this point, take a break, and make sure that you are now well versed in the icon activities presented above. It would also be a good idea to play with the capabilities you have just learned, in preparation for the next venture. This will be a major step for many of you, as we'll be making new folders, adding icons to the desktop, and storing all the icons we don't need in a folder which we'll call "Icons in Storage."

Next month, we'll pick up where we left off, and go through a variety of procedures that you should understand relative to controlling and manipulating windows. We'll also "play" with icons, setting up a storage folder for the excess icons that are presently on display. And, we'll go through the process of getting some new icons on the desktop to save searching for them when we want to use them.

Remember, if you learn a little bit each day, your new skills will make using your computer much easier.

If you find this material useful, you may want to download this article in PDF format, from our web site [www.brcs.org](http://www.brcs.org). This allows readers to keep the material either as a PDF file, and/or Ron Hirsch print it out, and place it in a loose leaf notebook, for future reference.

## Book Review: The HDRI Handbook

By Mark Mattson, *Computer Users of Erie*

HDRI, or High Dynamic Range Imaging, is one of the hottest areas in digital imaging today. Shooting photos in HDR allows you to do what has been a hindrance to analog (film) photographers for practically as long as photography has existed: you now have the ability to capture the entire range of contrast in an image without sacrificing details. In other words, you no longer need to worry about over-exposed or under-exposed images. By simply shooting a sequence of images, you can capture details in the darkest areas all the way to the brightest areas and not worry about lost details.

Sounds somewhat simple, doesn't it? Before you go off thinking it really is not, it actually IS. And this book has been written to show you exactly how easy it is to produce HDR images.

Author Christian Bloch explains HDRI to the reader in clear terms, giving plenty of sample images and explanations throughout the volume, as well as tutorials on how the images were produced.

The book opens with chapters dealing with the basics of how dynamic range works in photos, with examples of exposure, both normal and under and over exposed images. It then moves on to tell you how to produce HDR images yourself, from the shooting techniques to the image processing techniques.

Even though there are only seven chapters to this book, it is a hefty 344 pages in size, all filled with the most current information needed by those wishing to produce HDR images. The chapters deal with:

- Background Story
- New Tools
- Capturing HDR Images
- Tone Mapping
- HDR Image Processing
- Shooting HDR Panoramic Images
- Application in CGI (computer generated imaging)

There is also a companion DVD included with the book, containing HDR software demo versions, tutorials, sample HDR images, bracketed exposures to allow you to practice right away...and many other useful files and information sources. With this DVD, you can drop it into your system (it works with both PC and Mac), and get going immediately on finding out how easy it is to make your own HDR photos.

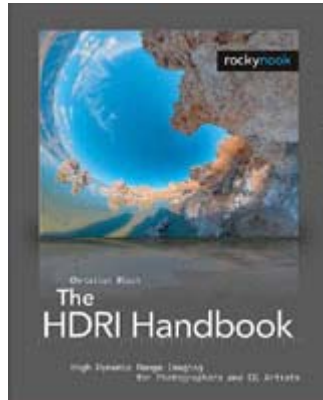
The final chapter, Applications in CGI, is for those interested in using HDRI techniques as relating to computer graphics and animation. Author Bloch has used these procedures to produce effects for such TV shows as *Lost*, *24*, *Star Trek: Enterprise*, and others, as well as several motion pictures.

One use of HDRI I had not thought of until reading this book was using it when photographing panoramic images. Panos have always been impressive in their own right...but combining them with HDR imagery, they bring a depth to life that you have to see to believe. As soon as we get some fall color going in the area, you can be sure I will be out with the camera shooting some trials just to see how they turn out for myself!

The HDRI Handbook is published by Rocky Nook, and distributed by our friends at O'Reilly ([www.oreilly.com](http://www.oreilly.com)). It carries a list price from O'Reilly of \$49.95, but you can find it at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) for \$32.97.

Even though this is the first edition of this book and was published in 2007, it is by no means out of date. What you find in its pages is what you would find at any number of training seminars on HDRI, or in any other books on the subject.

A **MUST-READ** book for anyone truly interested in producing HDR images.



**Remember to check the CUE Website at [www.cuerie.com](http://www.cuerie.com)  
for a listing of Review Software.**

**Contact the Editor to request a book or software title to review; test it,  
write a review for the newsletter, and it's yours to keep...for FREE!!!**

## Change the Margin of a PDF File

By Don Grim, Computer Users of Erie grimcyber@yahoo.com

There are times that it can be helpful to adjust margins for a PDF file. Sometimes, you just want to print pages further to the right so there is room for binding on the left side of a report.

Sometimes the margins change on you. For example, in some programs, if I print directly to the printer, the margins are fine. However, if I print to a PDF file (using the free program called DoPDF), for a convenient record, and then print that PDF file to a printer, the left margin is shifted to the left.

So, how do you adjust the margins on a PDF file? I had a tough time searching for an answer. I finally found a suggestion on the Internet, with the words of "if you feel like fiddling" ([www.mobileread.com/forums/showthread.php?t=25331](http://www.mobileread.com/forums/showthread.php?t=25331)). I found by automating it, with a batch file, there was very little fiddling on my part, just some quick fiddling by the computer! I guess you could call it Appalachian Fiddling!

Before you say "oh no, not a batch file", batch files are not just DOS antiques. They continue to be used and they can be powerful for automating tasks.

The technique for margin adjustment, described here, involves uncompressing a PDF file, adjusting settings, and then compressing back to a normal PDF file. I welcome your comments if you know of another way to adjust PDF margins.

To compress or uncompress a PDF file, I used the free "PDF Tool Kit" by Sid Stewart ([www.accesspdf.com/pdftk/](http://www.accesspdf.com/pdftk/)). I copied the pdftk.exe file to a working folder. I copied my PDF file to the working folder, renamed it as 1.pdf, and ran a batch file that I called uncomp.bat. Inside the batch file I included this line:

```
pdftk 1.pdf output out.pdf uncompress
```

The above line created a text file called out.pdf which is the uncompressed version of the 1.pdf file. I right-clicked the out.pdf file and opened it with WordPad. I looked for a line that showed MediaBox and it said "MediaBox [0 0 612 792]". The four numbers tell where the corners of each page are located for the PDF file. "0 0" is the location of the top right corner while "612 792" is the location of the left bottom corner. A web link of "<http://itext.ugent.be/library/question.php?id=588>" gives more information on MediaBox settings.

For my PDF file, I wanted to move the left margin just a little over four sixteenths of an inch to the right. Since one inch is approximately 72 points, I adjusted by 20 points to move a little over four sixteenths of an inch to the right. So, I changed MediaBox [0 0 612 792] to MediaBox [-20 0 592 792] and saved the file, which adjusted the first and

third numbers. I could have adjusted the top margin by adjusting the second and fourth numbers but I didn't need a top margin adjustment for this PDF file.

Now, all I needed was to compress the out.pdf file. I ran a batch file called comp.bat. Inside the batch file I included this line:

```
pdftk out.pdf output final.pdf compress
```

The above line created a file called final.pdf which is the compressed version of the out.pdf file. I opened the final.pdf file and could see on the screen that the margin was moved to the right, just like I wanted it to do! I printed it to a printer and the margin was good too! Success is nice!

Since this is a type of file that I will often want to change for the margin, I automated it even more with one quick batch file run. I ran a batch file called change.bat with the following lines:

```
@echo off
pdftk 1.pdf output out.pdf uncompress
xchange /i out.pdf "MediaBox [0 0 612 792]" "MediaBox [-20 0 592 792]"
pdftk out.pdf output final.pdf compress
echo finished
pause
```

Here is an explanation of the six lines above. The first line just nicely disguises the commands when the batch file is run each time. The second line uncompresses 1.pdf to out.pdf. The third line replaces the MediaBox settings for the out.pdf file. The fourth line compresses out.pdf to final.pdf. The fifth line just gives a message of "finished". The sixth line pauses the operation and asks you to press any key to continue (so you can see everything on the screen before it closes).

The xchange line is a nice free utility that is handy for searching and replacing text in a text file without opening the text file or even typing the stipulations (like the before and after MediaBox lines). I only needed to include the xchange.exe file in the working folder. It is from "Clay's Utilities for MS-DOS", by Clay Ruth, which can be found at the <http://clayruth.com/claysutl.html> website.

So, as a final thought, the next time someone says "if you feel like fiddling", you can always try. It may not be as tough of a tune as you think!

## Is It Time To Switch To 64 Bit Windows?

By Brian K. Lewis, PhD, a Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida [www.spcug.org](http://www.spcug.org) [bwsail@yahoo.com](mailto:bwsail@yahoo.com)

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In my February 2008 article in the Monitor comparing 32 bit and 64 bit computing, I was still advising caution for those wishing to upgrade. Today every new computer is capable of running a 64 bit operating system. As a result there are many voices saying if you have the capability to run a 64 bit operating system, you should take advantage of it. Microsoft had previously indicated that Windows 7 would be available only in a 64 bit version. However, they now say both 32 & 64 bit versions will be sold. There some speculation in the computer industry that Windows 8 may only be 64 bit. So it appears to be time to reconsider the move to a 64 bit operating system (OS). There are many advantages for 64 bit over 32 bit, but in order to better understand them, we need to take a brief look at how these will affect your decision.

To start with we should recall a little history. In the early days of personal computing the processors instruction sets were designed for 8 bit "words". This was the data size that could be used to express a single character. A bit is either a "1" or a "0". Eight bits were then referred to as a "byte" and that was considered a computer "word". In those days the CPUs we had were the Intel 8080, the Zilog Z80, Motorola 6800, and the MOS Tech 6502. These were all 8 bit processors with 8 bit data paths. The Apple I/II/IIe and Commodore Pet all used the 6502. IBM designed the first x86 CPU which was called the 8086 and it was a 16 bit processor. However, when IBM produced their first personal computer in 1981 it used their 8088 processor which was an 8 bit version of the 8086. The next step was to the 16 bit processor with the 80286 processor in 1984. The software changes rapidly followed this advance. The change to 16 bit processing allowed the central processor and the data bus to transfer data in increasingly larger sizes, referred to as double words. The 32 bit processor arrived in 1989 followed by the 64 bit in 2005. As this history shows, the 64 bit computer is just one more generational step in processing power. In addition, a computer "word" is now considered to be 16 bits, not 8 bits. So a 64 bit processor can handle a quadruple word (4x16). Naturally, the increase in the width of the CPU/data path does increase processing speed.

Every time the hardware has changed, there has been a delay while the software manufacturers play catchup. Applications have to be rewritten to take ad-

vantage of the hardware changes including the new instructions in the CPU instruction set. Only then can the application take advantage of the added processing power. Although Windows has been available in a 64 bit form since XP was released, its adoption has been quite slow. Many software manufacturers did not make 64 bit versions of their applications. This coupled with the limited acceptance of Vista has markedly slowed the shift from 32 bit to 64 bit. Another factor in this process is the development of 64 bit drivers for peripherals such as printers, scanners, graphics cards, wireless modems, network cards, etc. Microsoft has also indicated that Windows 7 will not install 64 bit drivers unless the software is "Microsoft Certified". Some manufacturers have obtained certification for some of their 64 bit drivers. For example, my Brother multi-function machine has a certified driver for 64 bit Windows. If you don't have a 64 bit certified driver, your peripheral will not work under Windows 7. Neither Vista64 nor Win7-64 will accept 32 bit drivers. Something to check out before you pop for a 64 bit OS. However, if you are buying an upgrade version of Windows 7, several of them are supposed to come with both the 64 bit and 32 bit versions in the box, but not in the OEM versions. This specifically applies to the Home Premium, Professional and Ultimate versions (as of this writing and may be subject to change by Microsoft.).

Another advantage of a 64 bit processor is in its memory management. By now I would hope that everyone understands that the 32 bit generation of computers can address a maximum of 4 gigabytes of RAM. This is the maximum number of addresses that can be handled and is calculated from  $2^{32}$  or two to the thirty-second power. This includes addresses needed by the system as well as the data. A 64 bit processor can address  $2^{64}$  addresses or roughly ten billion more than the 32 bit processor. The catch here is that both the hardware manufacturers and Microsoft have imposed limitations on the addressable memory. Generally, new personal computer's are limited to 128 GB of memory or less. Some manufacturers configure their laptops for a maximum of 4 GB of RAM. Windows OS software is also highly variable in its limits. Some versions of Vista limit addressing to as little as 8 GB (Home Basic & Premium). It is expected that these limits will be raised in Windows 7. For the present, these levels should be more than adequate for most people. If not keep in mind that it is the Ultimate versions of Vista and Windows 7 that have the maximum addressing ability.

The next thing to consider is the software compatibility. Just because you have a new operating system, no

*(Continued on page 13)*

(Continued from page 12)

one really wants to have to upgrade all their software from 32 bit to 64 bit. For that reason both Intel CPU's and AMD CPU's are not true native 64 bit processors. They are, in fact, hybrids. By this I mean that they allow 32 bit code to run in an emulation mode. Consequently, 64 bit Windows has an emulation mode, Windows on Windows, which allows 32 bit software to be run. WOW intercepts system calls to the operating system made by a 32-bit application and switches the CPU to 32 bit mode. It can switch the CPU between 32 bit and 64 bit as needed. This also allows the 64 bit AMD/Intel CPU's to run a 32 bit OS. The only true 64 bit, non-hybrid operating systems for PC's are found in Intel's Itanium processor (IA64) and the various 64 bit versions of Linux. Systems using these CPUs will give you all the benefits of 64 bit computing, but require all 64 bit software. Windows WOW64 also allows for some 32 bit software to run on the IA64 CPU by converting 32 bit calls to 64 bit.

Windows XP, Vista and Win7 contain large numbers of dll files. These are system libraries, many of which are loaded into memory when the computer is booted. In the 64 bit OS, these libraries can not be used by 32 bit software so instead, there are duplicate libraries written in 32 bit code included in Windows. Microsoft has devised a system so that these libraries can co-exist on the hard drive and in RAM without overwriting the files or accessing the wrong file so that 32 bit code can be run under the 64 bit OS. Sounds good, doesn't it? Yes, it does work, but with some caveats. Adding an emulation layer does slow the overall processing of software instructions. Also, there is an increase in the amount of memory (virtual memory included) needed for the additional 32 bit libraries that are loaded along with the 64 bit dlls at boot time.

There are other problems, but to a somewhat lesser extent as it affects fewer software applications. Some 32 bit applications still use 16 bit loaders. Since Windows 64 does not support **ANY** 16 bit code, these applications will not run, unless Windows can transparently substitute an installer with 32 bit code. Hopefully, all 32 bit software will eventually have 32 bit loaders or be replaced with 64 bit code. Additionally, some 32 bit software requires the use of 32 bit drivers. These drivers will not run on any 64 bit Windows platform. So until the drivers are available in a 64 bit form, these applications can't be used with Windows 64.

Another consideration is that any utility software that works at the hardware level must be 64 bit. This generally includes anti-virus software and other anti-malware products. Those few manufacturers I have checked do have 64 bit versions of their applications available. This includes some which provide free utility applications. This is just one more item that should be checked before you decide to move to a 64 bit OS.

If you decide you want to upgrade to the 64 bit version of Windows 7 when it is available, then you have several more things to consider. No matter which 32 bit Windows version you are currently using, you will have to do a "clean" install of the 64 bit version. That means backing up your data to an external medium and formatting your hard drive or at least a part of it (one partition). You can install Windows 7 in a new partition and dual boot with it and your current Windows version. Or you can install the new version in the space reclaimed from your old version. Either way you will have to reinstall software and drivers. Then you can restore your data. Only if you upgrade to the Windows 7 32 bit version from Vista can you do an "in-place" upgrade. If you are still running XP you have no choice but to do a clean install to convert to the 64 bit version. Of course, if you buy a new computer with the 64 bit Windows 7 installed that reduces your problem to just installing applications and data from your old computer.

I have already pre-ordered a 64 bit version of Windows 7. So, you see, I have answered the question I posed in the title of this article. When it arrives, in October, I will be installing it, then testing drivers and applications. You probably won't see any of my experience until the December Monitor. In the meantime, I have obtained a 64 bit version of the Linux OS, Ubuntu. Over the next few months I will be installing and testing it on my computer. So you will be seeing more about 64 bit computing. I hope it will help you as the entire industry continues to move into a fully 64 bit era. Just think, the next move, in a few years, will probably be to 128 bit computing!

*Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years, developing software and assembling systems.*

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Park anywhere near the ramp and steps. Enter through that doorway, the meeting room is to your **LEFT**.

**\*\*If the chain is up at the rear of the drive, go around the corner and into the lot from 27th Street\*\***

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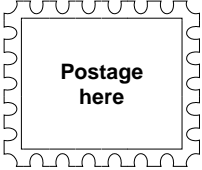
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