

Horizons



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The Official Journal of the Computer Users of Erie

Founded 1982

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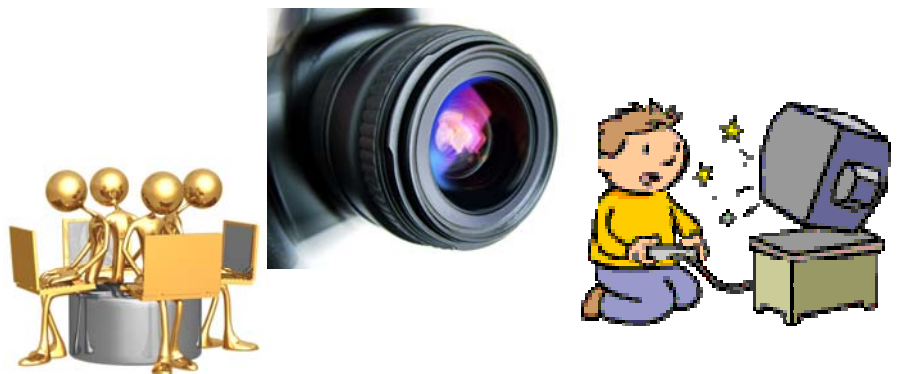
Next Meeting

October 16, 2008

Equipment Demos

This month, CUE members will have a chance to show off their 'latest and greatest' pieve(s) of technology hardware.

Whether a new scanner, a new digital camera, or even a new game console such as the Wii or Xbox, you are welcome to bring it in and show it off to your fellow members. Tell us about it, how you like it, what could be better... all helpful information for those that may be considering the purchase of the same or similar item.



7 pm, Holy Rosary School

Computer Users of Erie

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Beginner's User Group (BUG).....	Tom Kuklinski
Digital Photo.....	Lou Cioccio
Genealogy.....	Dave Howell
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Macintosh.....	Lou Cioccio

For SIG meeting dates and locations, please check out the monthly calendar, found on page 3 of each issue.

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Horizons

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October 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Digital Photo (HR)	2	3	4
5	6	7 Genealogy (DH)	8	9	10	11 Mac (HR)
12	13	14	15	16 General Meeting (HR)	17 Newsletter Deadline	18
19	20	21 BUG (TK)	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31 	

November 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4 Genealogy (DH)	5 Digital Photo (HR)	6	7	8 Mac (HR)
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18 BUG (TK)	19	20 General Meeting (HR)	21 Newsletter Deadline	22
23	24	25	26	27 	28	29
30						

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 • lcioccio@mac.com
 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.

Secretary's Reports

BOARD MEETING

September 18, 2008
Thursday
Holy Rosary
6:10 PM

Olen Seidler
Hadley Jones
Lee Williams
Don Grim
Tom Kuklinski
John Fair
Dave Howell
Scarlett Skarupski

Olen: Discussion of SIG reimbursements and budget expenses.

Magazine subscriptions to Genealogy SIG.
Copies / distributions of copies / Copy Right Laws
Dave Howell will check on Copy Right Laws.

Tom: Would only be fair to give all SIGs equal monies.

One-fourth of treasury would be for SIGs - approximately \$125.00 each.

John: Raise dues back to \$25.00 to cover expenses for SIG groups.

Hadley: Second

Scarlett: Possibly Dave could speak to his Genealogy group to see if they would be willing to contribute another \$5.00 per year to the \$20.00 Ancestry.com membership to cover the costs of the material, expenses, etc. Dave concurs.

Lee: Table motion until Dave speaks to his SIG group.

Table Motion passed and approved.

Scarlett: Yearly contribution to Holy Rosary for usage of the faculty, should be considered.

Meeting Adjourned

7:05 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Scarlett Skarupski

GENERAL MEETING

September 18, 2008
Thursday 7:20 PM
Holy Rosary School

Members in Attendance: 18

Olen Seidler: Welcome to New Members: Thomas Kalkof and Rick Cass

Reports and Readings:
June minutes published in September Newsletter. No additions or corrections: Approved and passed: Deb Cole, Bob Huber

Treasurer's Report: Tom Kuklinski \$2162.88 / \$65.45 (petty cash)
Approved: Bob Huber, Lee Williams /carried.

Three cases of Soda left from picnic, will bring to future meetings.

Communications, Publicity, Awareness Committees: Scarlett, TV Calendars, Senior News updated with Web site and phone number.

Publish our business card in Newsletter.

Web site: Tom Kuklinski:
Able to post sales, want ads.

Blog site (human interest)

Comments / Readers
Tips on your usage and problems
Tips - Vista, Linux, Mac, etc.
Help, questions asked and answered

Bookmark page / RSS

www.cuerie.com is \$35.00 per year

CUE History: Bob Huber, would prefer to not do the past but to have an article about the future of the technology of today and what is coming.

Database Development - File Maker Nine, \$399.00

Landline Phone - I Phone advantages.

Genealogy: Dave Howell, new update, Legacy 7, family storage. October 7th, SIG will have video training.

Photo Sig: Lou, Get together in Harborcreek for Lake side Sunset. Turned out Cloudy.

MAC Sig: Questions proposed and answered with discussion. Solved.

BUG: Web Development, Free Sites, Google accounts, problems discussed and solved.

50/50 \$24.00 Drawn by Thomas Kalkhof - Winner: Gene Meeks \$12.50

To follow:
Coffee on back tables.
Lou - Demonstration and information on preserving and storing of photos, etc.

Meeting Adjourned
8:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Scarlett Skarupski

Book Review - Photoshop Elements 6: The Missing Manual

By Greg Ames, Computer Users of Erie

Once upon a time, most computer programs came with a users manual that clearly listed all the features and functions of the newly purchased program, and gave you a fairly comprehensive description of how to use it.

These days it seems you get a vague user guide that may list features and functions but give no insight on what you can do with them, or send you online to a help screen. For me, trying to juggle a help screen and the program itself while trying to decipher the command sequence to perform a new task is downright painful.

Photoshop Elements 6 is such a powerful, complicated photo editing / organizing program that the learning curve can seem daunting. Well, take heart! O'Reilly Media has a series of books called The Missing Manuals, and there is one for Photoshop Elements 6 written by Barbara Brundage. She has been teaching people to use elements since 2001 so she is fully qualified to teach me.

The book starts with a very good introduction explaining the basic differences between Photoshop and Elements, and "What's New in Elements 6. There is then a discussion of the Outline of the book, so you can go directly to the section relating to the task you want to perform. The outline consists of:

Introduction to Elements-- Getting started, downloading your photos, organizing, and backing them up.

Elemental Elements—Using Quick Fix, making selections, and using layers.

Retouching—This is the meat of altering your photos. It includes everything from fixing exposure and color to fixing blemishes or removing unwanted items or people.

Artistic Elements—This is the fun stuff. Painting, drawing shapes, using filters and effects, and adding text to your photos.

Sharing—Using your printer, creating images for the web and e-mail, making slideshows and web galleries, and many other fun projects.

Additional Elements—Plugins, styles, brushes to be downloaded, and a look at using a graphics tablet.

Each chapter progresses logically through every command and menu pick, clearly explaining what the choices do and showing examples of the results of all of your actions. There are palettes containing tools, history, effects, layers, and content that are explained in detail, but the total content of each palette is too vast to be completely listed. That is left for you to explore and experiment with. Just remember not to work in your original photo, and there is nothing that can't be undone or started over.

I particularly liked the fact that the book has a complete Table of Con-

tents and is fully cross referenced, with an extensive Index. This means you can go directly to the action you need to perform.

Many actions you may want to perform have multiple ways to get satisfactory results, so most of these are shown with comparisons to make it easier to decide which route to take.

All photos used in the book are downloadable for you to practice on.

Of all the books and online tutorials I have tried to better understand using Photoshop Elements 6, this fits the bill better than any other. I would not hesitate to recommend "The Missing Manual" to anyone wanting a tutorial on using Elements and having a great reference book of all its capabilities.

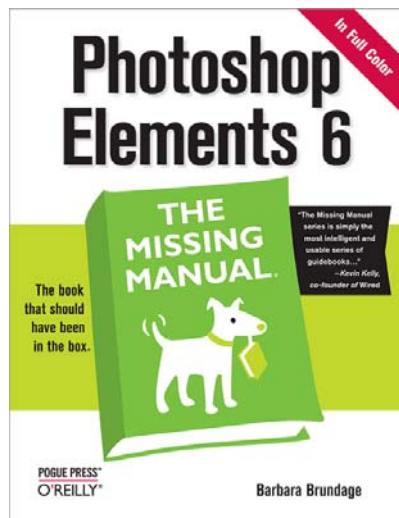
This is truly **"The book that should have been in the box."**

Ed. Note: This book is available for order from O'Reilly Books. And other sources.

If purchased from O'Reilly (the publisher), you may use your CUE member discount code, found on page 14 of this issue, to save 35% off the purchase price.

*List price is \$39.99 for a PRINT version. If you would like to obtain it as a PDF ONLY publication, it drops the price to \$31.99. If you would like both print and PDF versions of the title, it will run you \$51.99. PRICES LISTED HERE ARE **BEFORE** the user group discount of 35% is applied.*

Please go to <http://oreilly.com/> for more details on this and other books.



September 2008 Genealogy SIG Notes

By Dave Howell, Computer Users of Erie

The nine people in attendance welcomed newcomer, Carole Blakeslee. She has a Mac laptop, which she brought with her, and wants to learn how to use it to pursue her interests in her family history. We gave her some information about Ancestry.com and Legacy 7.0 and tried to answer her questions. She showed us a "ton" of information about her family that she recorded on Excel but was curious about how to transfer that data to a software program such as Family Tree Maker or Legacy 7.0. Now there's a challenge for someone!

Dave distributed copies of genealogy articles to those who ordered them. Back issues of the Crawford County, Chautauqua County, and ESGR Newsletters were also distributed. Dave told the group about the possible violation of copyright laws in distributing online bulletins and articles from genealogy sources. Dave brought the matter to the attention of the CUE Board. Mark Mattson, our Newsletter Editor, responded with a very professional evaluation of our situation which led to a couple of possible solutions, one of which Dave plans to pursue to avoid the issue completely.

Dave announced his decision to charge \$20 per year per person for the "group" subscription to Ancestry.com based on the number of people who signed up for the service. Cash or checks, made out to Dave Howell, may be given to him at the next meeting or sent to him at 3904 Myrtle Street, Erie, PA 16508. Once all

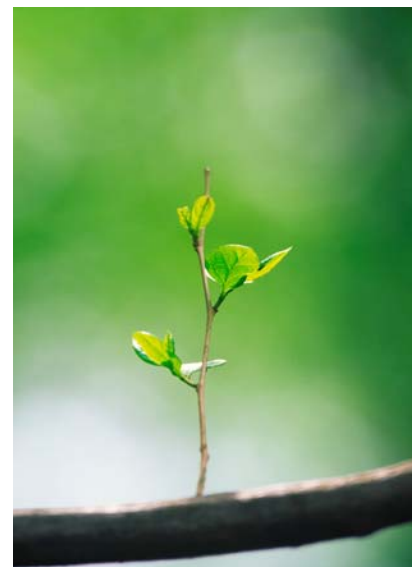
monies are received, he will send you the new password with which to access Ancestry.com.

It was noted that Hadley uses Ancestry.com to store his family tree. In so doing, he receives inquiries from individuals asking for more information about his ancestors and, in return, gets new information from those people or from Ancestry.com for his family tree. Hadley also showed us an old photo studio portrait of an ancestor and wanted to know how he can find out more about him. Dave may be able to find techniques designed to establish the time period in which the photo was taken and, by using a timeline, he may be able to research the family and community events surrounding that period of time.

We then accessed Legacy 7.0 to learn more about the changes of this new version. Those interested can access the "Beginner's Training Video" from <http://www.legacyfamilytree.net/videos/beg7/LegacyForBeginners.html> at no charge. You do not have to have Legacy 7.0 to view this basic training video. In fact, Legacy 7.0 is available to anyone with broad-

band internet service can download the basic Legacy 7.0 software free of charge. It's the Deluxe version that is priced at \$29.95.

Members of the group are encouraged to view the "Beginner's Training Video" online if they already haven't done so. Next month, we will begin the next level of the "Training Video's" at which time Dave hopes to convert his living room to a "theatre in the round" complete with a 32-inch monitor and stereo speaker system. The meeting will take place 7 PM, Tuesday, October 7th at Dave's house.



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Rootkits - A continuing Security Problem

By Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida www.spcug.org bwsail@yahoo.com

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

By now I suspect everyone reading this article is familiar with most malware: viruses, botnets, Trojans, etc. These are becoming less of a problem because of the efforts of the security companies to provide software solutions. More and more users are also becoming aware of the need to have some means of protecting their computer. As a result, hackers are turning to a more effective method of controlling your computer – rootkits. Although these have been around more than ten years, like other malware, their numbers seem to be increasing.

Probably the most dangerous form of the rootkit is the "kernel mode Trojan". This is a program that inserts itself into the "kernel" of the operating system. The kernel is the central component of the operating system – its heart or brain to put it in more common terms. It manages the communication between the operating system, the hardware and the software applications.

Most viruses operate as applications and can be readily found in memory or in the file system. Rootkits, however, can hide themselves in such a way that it is very difficult to find them. In order for a rootkit to alter the normal execution path of the operating system, one of the techniques it may employ is "hooking". In modern operating systems, there are many places to hook because the system was designed to be flexible, extendable, and backward compatible. For example, a rootkit can "hook" itself into the Application Programming Interface (API) which allows it to intercept the system calls that other programs use to perform basic functions, like ac-

cessing files on the computer's hard drive. If an application tries to list the contents of a directory containing one of the root kit's files, the rootkit will censor its filename from the list. It'll do the same thing with the system registry and the list of running processes.

A rootkit is a collection of tools an intruder brings along to a victim computer after gaining initial access. A rootkit may contain network sniffers, log-cleaning scripts, key-loggers and trojaned replacements of core system utilities. Although the intruders still need to break into a victim system before they can install their rootkits, the ease-of-use and the amount of destruction they cause make rootkits a considerable threat. One main purpose of a rootkit is to allow the intruder to come back to the compromised system later and access it without being detected. A rootkit makes this very easy by installing a remote-access backdoor. A rootkit can also allow the intruder to use the compromised computer as part of a botnet (see Botnets, SPCUG Monitor, January, 2008).

Another mechanism for hiding a rootkit is to add it to a system driver file. Windows XP and Vista store driver files in the System32/drivers folder. Many of these system files load early in the boot process. These files have boot or system flags in the registry and load before any of the malware-prevention software. That means they are very difficult to find. Although the file size for the driver will be increased, the rootkit may report the original file size to any query, not the infected file size. All of this means that once a rootkit has been installed and activated on your computer, it is difficult to find by any of the usual malware prevention software.

Rootkits do not require large software applications to carry out their function. We are accustomed to commercial applications that are many megabytes in size. Even the anti-virus software may be 40-50 megabytes in size. In 2003 a rootkit was identified that required only 7 kilobytes for its cloaking routine and 27 kilobytes for maintaining the open backdoor.

Anti-malware programs depend on two main means of identifying malware. One is the signature method and the other is heuristics. The signature method requires that the malware be identified and reverse engineered to determine a code sequence which can be used to identify the application in the wild. This code sequence is referred to as the signature and is used by the anti-virus database. This signature is then compared to code sequences in applications to determine if they are malware. This method is of no value when dealing with new or unreported malware.

So the next option is heuristic signatures. Their primary advantage lies in their ability to identify new, previously unidentified malware. The heuristics technique assumes that malware will display certain characteristics or attributes. They also attempt to recognize deviations in "normal" system patterns or behaviors. Using these predicted patterns, the anti-malware application will attempt to determine if the target application is malware. This has been a successful approach for identifying viruses, but it is less successful for active rootkits.

The April 2008 Virus Bulletin (www.virusbtn.com) reported the

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

results of testing a number of popular commercial A-V programs, Internet security suites, web-based scanners and specialized anti-rootkit tools. The testing involved 30 known rootkits. The testing categories were detection of: (1) inactive rootkits; (2) active rootkits; and (3) malware hidden by rootkits. Then they tested removal of (1) inactive rootkits; (2) malware hidden by rootkits; and (3) active rootkits. The results were not encouraging.

The seven Internet Security Suites used in the test were able to detect 95% of the inactive rootkits. (Remember, these were known samples that had already been identified and their signatures incorporated into the anti-malware applications.) These suites were also able to remove 95% of the inactive rootkits. However, when it came to active rootkits the story was very different. The Internet Security Suites detected only 65% of the active rootkits and were able to remove only 48%. They also were able to remove only 48% of the hidden malware. All of the versions of the Internet Security Suites were the latest available at the time of the test.

There were fourteen specialized anti-rootkit tools tested using the same thirty rootkits. They were not tested against the inactive rootkits, only the active rootkits and the hidden malware. Again, the results were anything but satisfying. These tools detected 83% of the active rootkits and 80% of the hidden malware. The anti-rootkit tools removed only 60% of the active rootkits and 67% of the hidden malware.

The web-based scanners did a far poorer job of identification of the rootkits. They also were uniformly unsuccessful in removing rootkits. The detection rate was 53% and the removal was around 32%.

In reviewing these tests it is obvi-

ous that successful detection and removal of rootkits depends on their being inactivated. This can be done by running the computer in "SAFE" mode which does not allow the rootkit to load from the hard drive. However, it would be expected that if detection/removal tools were developed for this specific purpose, then rootkits would appear that would load in "SAFE" mode. Another alternative would be to develop rootkit scanning software that would run from a CD. The computer would boot from the CD and the operating system for the scan would load from the CD. This should improve the detection and removal rates considerably. However, it then depends on the user running the CD application periodically to scan the entire computer. Considering how few users backup their hard drives on a regular basis, this CD system might be less than universally successful.

Given the current difficulty of detecting and removing rootkits from your computer, what is a user to do for protection? The only answer to this is to prevent the rootkit from getting access to your computer. That means using every tool you have available to prevent the malware from gaining access to your system. Your firewall is the first line of defense, followed by your anti-virus, then your anti-spyware. Also, when you are surfing the web, make sure you aren't your own worst enemy. Be careful and check out links before you click on them. It just like getting spam in your e-mail. Check where the link will take you before you click on it. Social engineering techniques are also used to propagate everything from viruses to rootkits. These are techniques that encourage the user to take some action which allows the malware to be downloaded and installed on the users computer. A very interesting analysis on these techniques is contained in this article from the University of Cambridge (U.K.); <http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/techreports/>

UCAM-CL-TR-666.pdf. Although this is written specifically about virus propagation, similar techniques are used to gain entry for rootkits. This paper illustrates many of the "carrot & stick" methods used by malware to gain access to computer systems. Microsoft has also published a paper detailing many of the common methods used to trick users into installing malware. These can be found in the paper "Behavioral Modeling of Social Engineering-Based Malicious Software" on the Microsoft web site.

So to all of you reading this paper, I would suggest that "caution is the watchword" when it comes to using your computer. I'm afraid that the situation will only get worse when it comes to new forms of malware.

Update Note: In my article on iFrame attacks (SPCUG Monitor, May 2008), I listed a number of portals that had been affected by iFrame attacks. One of these was the eHawaii.gov portal. I have received information from the site manager that the problem has been corrected (removal of the iFrame) and actually only affected one page on their site. Thanks to Russell Castagnaro for correcting this problem and notifying me.

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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What Can an iPhone Do for Me?

By Lee Williams, Computer Users of Erie

OK, we now have two members who each own an iPhone. Why should you care?

Well, this device is a powerful tool with high entertainment value. It's obviously a phone, but it also holds and displays your calendar and address book. If you want to call someone, open the address book, scroll to the name, touch the number and the phone calls him or her. If you use iCal and Address Book in your Mac, all of your data is brought up-to-date each time you sync. If you're a MobileMe (.Mac) member, any new entry in Address Book or iCal is immediately transmitted to the ³cloud² (web server) and then ³pushed² (transmitted automatically) to all your computers.

In addition to being a phone, an iPhone is also a web device. Surf the web, watch and listen to Youtube, Google items, check the temperature, check your stocks, receive and send email, check the news, and do all the other things you might do on the web.

Because of the App(lication) store, the iPhone is also a calculator (standard or scientific), a gaming device (Sudoku, Solitaire, MahJong, Tetris, etc.), unit converter (yards to meters, etc.), a book reader, a currency calculator (for calculating foreign currencies), a DVD data base, and many more applications are available with still more on the way.

If this is not enough, the iPhone is also an mp3 player, a movie player and photo display unit. Remember when we carried 5 or 6 photos in our wallets? Well, now you can easily carry 1600 photos in your pocket.

Oh, and you can make your own ringtones in GarageBand and transfer them to your phone via iTunes.

This device, then, is a phone, a web device, a PDA, an iPod and a picture and movie viewer. Whew... Oops, I forgot, it's a camera, too!!



Editor's Notebook

There has been a change at CUE that many of you may not have known about until now.

For the past several years, since Chip DeVoge moved out of town, I have been maintaining the CUE website. Although not a terribly difficult job, it DID take some time to do.

As CUE's face on the Web, it made sense it should look the best it could, to attract potential new members and make them curious about our group. I have tried to keep it interesting and changing, adding new features as time went on.

If you've been to the CUE website in the last couple of months, you've undoubtedly noticed a dramatic change in it. The site is undergoing a complete makeover, from top to bottom.

The creative mind behind the new design is our own Tom Kuklinski.

Tom had approached me in the early spring about assisting with the webmaster duties. We talked about a few things, and he proposed a couple ideas. As I was just in the process of setting up a new residence with my wife Tanya, things CUE were taking a back seat, with time allocated to them as a free moment here and there permitted.

Not wanting to hold him back, I gave Tom free access to the CUE website account, and let his mind run wild with the possibilities for the site. So far, he's done a marvelous job of redesign, and is planning even more changes in the future.

As my involvement with the website was only temporary to begin with, I have been waiting for the day to hand it off to

one who would be able to give it the attention it truly deserves, and has good ideas for it.

I feel that Tom has those qualities, and will make an excellent webmaster for CUE.

I have agreed to remain involved with the CUE website, but to a lesser extent...mainly keeping the newsletter archives and Review Software Listing pages updated. But all other facets of the site will now be handled by Tom.

There have been many good suggestions from members on changes to the website. Keep them coming, and Tom is sure to make it into a premiere place for our visitors and members.

The Part of Backup Nobody Mentions

By Vinny La Bash, Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida vlabash@comcast.net <http://www.spcug.org>

There are dozens if not hundreds of ways to backup your data, but we're not going to talk about that. We're going to discuss the most important part of doing a backup, the part that is hardly ever mentioned. Do you believe that your backup is a sound copy of your data? Would you be at ease if all your files suddenly disappeared from your computer, and all you had was your backup to restore them?

If your confidence fizzled to zero, what's the problem?

You may have developed the most sophisticated and comprehensive backup scheme the computer world has ever seen, but you won't ever know if it's any good unless you test it. Without a valid method of testing, you can have no confidence in your backups. There are many things that can go wrong with a backup, some beyond your control, some not.

Perhaps one day you were in too much of a hurry, and you made a backup of one folder instead of your entire system as you planned. Hmm, no wonder that backup completed so fast.

Your backup disk got exposed to a magnetic field and scrambled all your data.

The CD containing your data was left in the car, and excessive heat warped the media, making it unreadable.

You encrypted your backup and lost the password to restore it. You upgraded your backup software, and now it can't read your old backups.

Your new upgraded backup software program becomes corrupted, and you can't make a new backup or restore an old one.

Your new backup program has a great innovative file compression scheme. However, it turns out that it compresses better than anyone expected.

You upgrade your Windows Operating System and your backup software no longer works. (Rare, but it happens).

Let's stop here before you get too depressed to make another backup. What's important is to understand that a great many things can go wrong even with the best backup methods.

The only true test of your backup is to do a restore and see if it works. Does this mean you have to erase all your files, and then run a restore from your backup media? No. Fortunately, there are less chancy ways of verifying your backup data.

One thing you can do is install a second hard drive and restore your data files to the second disk. If your original disk has enough capacity,

you can partition it into at least two sections, and restore into one of the new partitions. Hard drives have become almost dirt cheap, so this is not particularly expensive.

Another thing you can do is make at least three backups and store them in three different locations for safety. Keep one copy at home, but in a different room than your computer. Store a second copy at your office or a friend's house, and do the same for him or her. The third copy could be in a safe deposit box or similar secure location.

If you feel that such measures are not necessary, ask yourself if you are ready to perform the ultimate test. Would you feel totally at ease erasing your hard disk today and restoring it from your backups? If not, then think again.

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Remember to check the CUE Website at www.cuerie.com for a listing of Review Software.

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

Weird Thing Happened....

By Dave Howell, Computer Users of Erie

Original message:

Hi guys,

A strange thing happened to my 5-year XP Dell laptop today. When I turned it on, the two LEDs for power and processor came on. 2 seconds later, the processor LED turned from green to orange and the system shut down immediately.

Hmmmmmm! This never happened before. Naturally, I thought the worse - my system went to cyber-heaven! Could it be that the average life of a laptop is 5 years?

So, using the process of elimination, I disconnected all peripherals, connections, etc., except for the power cord and powered it up. Same thing happened.

Next, I pulled the A/C power cord and powered up the system. Still wouldn't go. Ah-ha! Maybe the battery is bad.

So I pulled out the laptop's battery and reconnected the A/C power cord. Voila! The system booted up as if nothing was wrong. The battery was the culprit somehow. But what really is the problem. Is the battery DOA? Or was it completely discharged? The only way to find out was to re-install the battery, shut down the system with the power cord connected and let it recharge for a few hours.

Later, I powered up the system as I did originally and was back in business.

Now the question in my mind was, "How did the battery get completely discharged? I always have the system plugged into A/C whenever booting it up. Only two answers come to mind. Perhaps the power

cord came loose from the laptop, or, I forgot to flip the switch on the power strip. For sure, we didn't have any power failures in the last 24-hours.

In the past, the system would always alert me whenever the battery level dipped to 10-20%. That didn't happen this time. Strange! Weird! Oh well. I shoulda played dumb when my wife offered to get me a new computer for my "special birthday" next month! Dummy that I am!

Dave

P.S. While the laptop was down, I was forced to switch operations to my 10-year old desktop with Windows 98 First Edition which is certainly not the "state-of-the-art" by today's standards! This system is also connected to the same wireless broadband as the laptop. To my amazement, this system booted up one-tenth the time of the newer laptop and email messages and WebPages downloaded from the net blazingly fast! I couldn't believe my eyes! Maybe I should retire the laptop after all!

>From Lou Cioccio:

You mean 98 was faster than the XP??

Maybe different virus checking software?

Mark's thoughts (added at publication):

It COULD be a simple matter of the contacts on the battery had some oxidation on the terminals, that was preventing it from getting a full charge.

If the contacts on the battery and inside the laptop were of two dissimilar metals (which is a strong possibility), then the chances of this happening are increased. The chemical reactions between the two metals can cause a buildup of non-conductive materials on the surfaces, making charging a much more difficult process.

I would suggest taking the battery out of the laptop every 6 months or so and, using a soft pencil eraser, clean the contacts on the battery until they are nice and shiny again. Some alcohol on a Q-tip will also do wonders to clean off any other contaminants.

Membership News

Current Membership: 43

New Members: Thomas Kalkof Rick Cass

Renewals Received: Kathleen Bolla

Renewals Due: Bob Huber Hadley Jones Ken Fosco David Szymanski
Bruce Carter Carol Repoff Art Delano Bill Ellis Don Grim

Remember, a CUE Membership makes a nice present!!

RSS Explained

By Phil Shapiro, member of the Capital PC User Group, Virginia Macintosh Users Group, Washington Apple Pi, Young Hackers and Scholars Libre Users Group pshapiro@his.com

RSS - really simple syndication -- is a labor-saving tool that allows people to tune into information sources that interest them. The information source could be a blog, a podcast, a videocast or any web site that includes RSS feeds.

The value of RSS accrues when you subscribe to multiple RSS feeds. You can then monitor multiple information streams with a minimum of effort.

There are many different software tools for subscribing to RSS feeds. One of the most popular is a web site named Bloglines. Some web browsers let you subscribe to RSS feeds. Safari 2.x and Firefox are two browsers that do. Firefox lets you to subscribe to RSS feeds using something called Live Bookmarks. You can also use a Firefox extension named Sage to subscribe to RSS feeds.

RSS's primary value is that it brings information to you without you having to visit multiple web sites. In a knowledge economy, anything that streamlines the flow of information from producer to consumer gives benefit to both producer and consumer. You tune into the information you do want, and tune out the information you don't want.

Some Examples of How RSS Simplifies Peoples' Lives

I asked some technology consultants to explain how RSS brings value to peoples' lives. Curtis Brown at MissionMovers.org, in Seattle, is a strong believer in RSS. He explains, "RSS has invaded every part of our life, but we just don't know it. RSS is an information delivery method that gives added convenience to both senders and receivers of the information."

As an example, RSS feeds can be used by a nonprofit organization to distribute different kinds of information to different people. One RSS feed

could be the organization's calendar of events or classes. Another could be a call for volunteers. A third feed might be information for funders. The more feeds an organization offers, the more narrowly tailored the information delivered to people served by that organization or supporting that organization.

Here are some other examples of RSS feeds. A used car dealer can have an RSS feed that details newly arrived used cars. A public library could have an RSS feed of newly purchased books. A police department can have separate RSS feeds for different neighborhoods, giving up-to-date information on safety concerns in each neighborhood.

Curtis Brown explains that information received in an RSS feed can be filtered by keyword and colored in text. So you have control over the RSS feed. You decide the ways in which that stream of information is going to serve your needs.

Curtis explains that RSS feeds become immensely useful when people work collaboratively in a wiki. (A wiki is a web page that different people can edit.) Changes to the web page can be monitored via an RSS feed. This allows anyone participating in the wiki to have a clear idea of who is adding the most value to the wiki. RSS allows for better monitoring and gives added transparency to the collaborative process.

Curtis goes on to explain that there are two kinds of RSS feeds -- static feeds and dynamic feeds. A static feed might be sports scores or the feed from a single blog. A dynamic feed is a stream of information where there is searching going on to pull out specific pieces of information to add to the stream.

It's also possible to combine several RSS feeds into a single new feed. One

web site that lets you do that is rssmix.com. Why would you want to do that? Suppose you live in a metropolitan area with several different library systems spanning several counties. Each library system provides an RSS feed of the events happening within their library system. You'd like to keep track of library events in multiple counties. rssmix.com would let you combine RSS feeds in that way.

Another RSS enthusiast, Bruce Roy, in Sydney, Australia explains - "I have found the RSS facility in The Next Generation of Genealogy Sitebuilding (TNG) very useful for the family tree site. It enables people interested in following the family tree to get information about changes to the tree without having to check the website's "What's New?" or wade through the data."

One other advantage of RSS is that it lets you tune out mainstream media and tune into alternative media and personal media. If you find the CBS Evening News a touch thin in how it covers the news, with RSS you have an alternative source of news where news stories don't need to be squeezed into 45 second slots.

Another RSS enthusiast, Winthrop Morgan, in the Washington DC-area had this to add:

"Regarding your request for examples of how RSS brings benefits into peoples' lives, I highly recommend you consider including Join Together Online as a great Win-Win-Win model.

Join Together Online (JTO) (<http://www.jointogether.org>) has long been a pioneer in using the Internet to support people working on substance abuse and gun violence issues. Every month, one million JTO web pages are viewed by over 350,000 people.

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

JTO uses RSS feeds to not only help their web presence spread, but also to provide vital to support state, municipal, and nonprofit drug treatment and prevention program managers and their audiences. While these programs' web masters might have a modest web presence, they lack the wherewithal to continuously produce new content, or even gather and republish it. Without new content, their audiences lack a reason to come back to their Web site. The JTO RSS service enormously increases both the return visit value of these sites and the presence of authoritative information in this highly charged information space.

To keep the RSS feeds fresh and riveting, JTO employs a small editorial staff who aggregates both online and offline news on substance abuse funding, policies, and more from authoritative sources. They edit this news down to its essential content, and then republish it via RSS, as well as to users of their site and subscribers to their e-mail news services."

RSS Relieves Cluttered Email Inboxes

If you have traditionally received a lot of your information via email, RSS can provide some relief to your inbox. Would you like to follow a particular email list, but can't stomach subscribing to one more email list? If that list is on Yahoogroups, you can follow the list via the list's RSS feed. An excellent free tool for reading RSS feeds is Bloglines. (<http://www.bloglines.com>)

RSS feeds are almost always spam-free. The provider of the RSS feed doesn't want you to unsubscribe from the feed -- so they treat you with respect.

Ben Sheldon, in Lowell, Massachusetts, passes along this RSS tip: "Google still only offers email news alerts, but this utility lets you use create an RSS feed out of any Google News search term. [<http://www.justinpfister.com/newsfeed.cfm>] I aggregate my name, my projects (DigitalBicycle, Ser-

viceSpeak), and my street and city so that if something happens I should know about, I will."

If you're still with me, I'll pass along a few small tips of my own. I use RSS, Bloglines and my Digg.com account to keep track of what Digg stories my friends are digging (i.e. voting for.) I just copy the RSS feed from the bottom left of <http://digg.com/users/pshapiro/friends> and then paste it into Add Feed in Bloglines.

Between Katie Couric and the 50 friends I have on Digg, which do you think provides the richer quality of information to me? Right. Just for kicks I subscribe to the Associated Press RSS feed, so I'm in the loop with whatever Katie knows.

I also use the free service at Squeet.com to send me an email whenever one of my friends submits a story to Digg.com, so they don't have to let me know about their submissions. That email alert capability might well come to Digg sometime.

I use RSS to keep me posted on new items of interest to me that are posted to Del.icio.us. For example, if anyone submits an item to Del.icio.us with the tag digitalstorytelling, I find out about that really easily in my Bloglines account.

That puts me in touch with anyone doing digital storytelling anywhere on the planet. And I don't even have to subscribe to another email list to be in touch with them. I like that.

Phil Shapiro

The author is a former president of Virginia Macintosh Users Group and worked as the Washington DC Regional Coordinator for Community Technology Centers' Network, an international network of more than 1000 organizations bringing technology and technology training to underserved communities.

He can be reached at <http://www.digitaldivide.net/profile/pshapiro> and at pshapiro@his.com His blog is at <http://philsrssfeed.blogspot.com>

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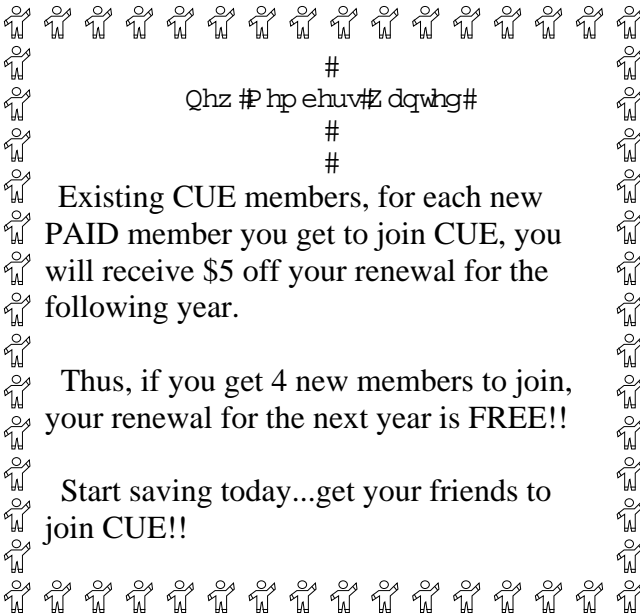
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	Digital Imaging			
	Graphics			
	Internet			
	Operating Systems			
	Macintosh			
	Programming			

X	Computer Interest	Skill Level		
		Low	Med	High
	Advanced Technology			
	Hardware			
	Networking			
	Financial			
	Genealogy			
	Beginner's Group			
	Other:			

X	Volunteer Interests
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	Newsletter Reporter
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Computer Users of Erie Membership PO Box 8941 Erie, PA 16505-0941

Directions to Holy Rosary School

CUE Members and Visitors

Arriving at the school, turn into the drive between the Church and the School building.

Proceed through the chain poles at the rear of the drive into the main parking lot.

Turn **RIGHT** in the lot, and proceed to the far end of the parking lot.

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****

Finding Holy Rosary

From the West

Take 26th St. (Rt. 20) to the intersection of Parade Street. Turn right, go to the next light. Make a hard left turn onto 28th St. Follow to the school, which will be on your left.

From the South

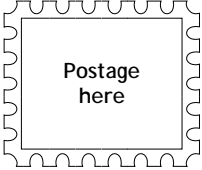
From Rt. 19 (Peach St.), Rt. 97 or Rt. 8, follow that street to 38th Street. Head east on 38th street. Turn **LEFT** onto East Ave. from East 38th street (first traffic light east of the intersection of Rt 8 (Pine Ave.) and East 38th St. The school will be immediately in front of you when you reach the T-intersection of East Ave. and 28th St.

From the East

Follow Rt. 20 WEST to Broad Street. Follow Broad street until you see Wal-Mart and McDonalds on your left. Turn **LEFT** onto Burton Ave. When you reach the end of the street, turn **RIGHT** onto 28th St. School will be on your right in approximately 3 blocks.



Horizons
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