PPCUG *NEWS*

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

Video, Movies and TV on the Web

Sol Libes

Monday, September 8, 2008, at 7:30 p.m.

Is TV over the air, and via cable, going to be a thing of the past? Viewers can now watch videos, movies, and TV, on their computers via the Internet. The speaker will discuss how to do this and show examples. Much of this is free.

Also, TV over-the-air is going digital, and low-cost computer digital tuner devices, are an alternative to buying new digital TVs. If time permits, the speaker will demonstrate and discuss this new technology and hopefully give some insight into the future.

Sol Libes is a retired Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Programming. Sol founded the Amateur Computer Group of New Jersey in early 1975. It is the oldest Personal Computer Club in the world. Sol served as ACGNJ President for many years. In 1976 Sol co-founded the annual Trenton Computer Festival. Sol is currently an instructor at Ewing SeniorNet teaching seniors how to get the most out of their personal computers.

Mercer County's Lawrence Library
Meeting Room 1
US Alternate Route 1 South & Darrah Lane, Lawrenceville, NJ

*Meetings of an organization at any of the facilities of the Mercer County Library System
in no way imply endorsement of its programs.*

In this issue:

Upcoming Schedule

October 6, 2008 ------ tba
November 10, 2008 - tba
December 8, 2008 --- Member Party

About PPCUG

Summary of the August 2008 Meeting

David Shinkfield
by Judge Landis

At 7:30 p.m. Clarke started the Meeting.

The meeting was started with a discussion about the current state of the club and what future course the club should take.

Clarke displayed a D-Link DSM-G600 and a Bluetooth USB adapter. The DSM-G600 is a wireless and 1GBit LAN storage router. It can contain a PATA disk internally and two USB 2.0 devices.

David Shinkfield then talked to us about setting up a home network. His presentation's slides can be found at http://snipurl.com/homenetwork

Submitted by Clarke Walker

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Pictures from the August Meeting

by Judge Landis, judge@alumni.princeton.edu
Member of the Princeton PC Users Group

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President's Message

At our August meeting we had a discussion about the current state of the club. The prime questions where "Why do you belong to the club?" and "How do we attract more members to the club?" We will continue these discussions at the next several meetings.

One item that came out of the August meeting was to make more use of our Yahoo web site and its message board. Joe Lazar has agreed to moderate the message board and help members get better use of it. Thanks Joe!

I brought with me a Bluetooth network USB adapter. I'll try and remember to bring this adapter for future meetings. This way members who bring their Bluetooth enable device can fetch the latest Newsletter in high resolution and "bonus" material. You can also continue to bring a USB flash device. If you are doing so, please come early (7:00 pm) so we can transfer the files before the meeting starts.

Sol Libes last talked to us in December when he gave a presentation about the "Extinction of the Computer Hobbyist". Now Sol turns his focus on the future and will talk about TV and video delivery over the Internet to home computers. This will be a good talk for those new to this subject and those already using it, so invite your family, friends and neighbors.

- Clarke Walker

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Link of the Month

This site has a wealth of information on AMD and Intel processors:

http://www.cpu-world.com/

Have you discovered a useful link or add-on? Then share it with the members of the P PC UG.

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System Mechanic 8 – A PC "Swiss Army Knife"

by Ira Wilsker, editor (at) acug.net
APCUG Director, Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX, Radio and TV Show

Websites:
http://www.iolo.com
http://www.iolo.com/downloads.aspx *- free trial software*

Frequent readers of this column will be well aware that there are many computer utilities in cyberspace that can improve the performance of our PCs. As we use our computers, the registry becomes cluttered and inefficient; useless files consume valuable real estate on our hard drives; and other maladies caused by the software on our computers deprive us of the performance we paid for and deserve. While I admittedly use several different utilities to maintain peak operating efficiency of my computers, if I had to choose only a single utility for computer maintenance, it would be Iolo's System Mechanic (www.iolo.com). I have used System Mechanic for many years in its earlier versions, but now Iolo has released the latest iteration, System Mechanic version 8.

Simply, System Mechanic 8 is arguably the most comprehensive PC maintenance utility available, with over 40 distinct per-

formance and security tools included, giving it "Swiss Army Knife" features. According to published sales figures, System Mechanic is the #1 best selling PC tune-up software on the market, and has won awards for excellence from dozens of computer publications, including Cnet's Editors' Choice, Windows Magazine, PC Computing, ZDNet Editors' Pick, Computer Shopper's Top 100, Computerworld, and many others.

Rhetorically, why would I choose System Mechanic 8 over all of its competitors?   Because of what it does, its power, versatility, and features; that is why. Compared to its major competitors, none of them offer the feature rich set of functions that System Mechanic offers. According to Iolo, "Over 98% of PC problems are caused by clutter and faulty settings that are the result of everyday PC use." System Mechanic 8 can repair or otherwise remedy virtually all of these problems. Many of a PC's problems can be traced to problems and errors in the registry, a large data file that contains information on the hardware and software installed on the computer. The registry is almost constantly written to, and read, often leaving obsolete data in the registry.   This obsolete, and eventually erroneous data left in the registry consumes some system resources, and can promote errors and other problems as faulty data is read and processed. The registry must be periodically purged of useless data, defragmented and compacted in order to contribute to better PC performance, a function that System Mechanic 8 excels at.

Our computers are constantly reading from and writing to the hard drive, and that drive often becomes cluttered, fragmented, and may also have some errors in the data stored on it. While almost all flavors of Windows have some type of "defrag" and "chkdsk" software to defragment the hard drive, and check it for errors, the Windows integral versions of those utilities are very basic and lack the power to do a truly thorough job, as System Mechanic will do. Clutter and useless files consume a lot of the storage space on our hard drives; System Mechanic 8 can identify and remove that clutter, freeing up that hard drive space, making for a more efficient hard drive.

Sometimes, and it will likely happen eventually to each PC user, the computer will not properly boot. For that particular eventuality, System Mechanic 8 will allow the user to create a bootable emergency CD that may be able to revive "crashed" systems. Another irritant that many of us suffer through on a regular basis is the boringly slow boot process itself, where we wait and wait for our computer to become usable. System Mechanic 8 claims to have 19 different ways that it can speed the boot process by making it more logical and efficient. Another way that we are losing performance that we are paying for is by having improper internet settings. Many of these settings are mundane and not readily accessible to the typical user. By modifying these settings to their ideal point, internet throughput can be improved, in some cases tripled. System Mechanic 8 will analyze our internet connection, and make any changes necessary to maximize performance.

PC security is a major issue that all of us must deal with on a constant basis. System Mechanic 8 contributes to system security by fixing settings that would otherwise allow an intruder to access the computer, making cyber attacks that more difficult. Sometimes we have files that we want to securely delete, being well aware that normally deleted files are easy to recover, which may create another security problem. This utility offers the user a military grade wiping function that can securely delete unwanted data.

System Mechanic 8 retails for $49.95 for a one-year license, and can be used on up to three computers; discounts are available online (www.iolo.com) for longer licenses.

For those who want an even more feature rich product, Iolo offers System Mechanic Professional, version 8 ($69.95 for 3 computers). This Professional version is an integrated bundle which includes most of Iolo's other popular products. The bundle includes Iolo's antivirus software, renowned for its hourly updates; and its Personal Firewall to protect from intruders and malicious software. Another program included with the Professional bundle is another personal favorite of mine, Iolo's Search and Recover. This program can recover files that were deleted, including photos, videos, documents, email, music, and other data that may have otherwise been lost. Search and Recover can undelete files from hard drives, digital cameras, memory cards, and almost all other digital media.

Professional also includes DriveScrubber, a utility that can securely erase data from hard drives. This is necessary when donating a computer, selling it, or recycling it. Without securely deleting our personal data, others can access it and use it for a variety of purposes, including identity theft. DriveScrubber overwrites the data using methods that meet strict government and military standards, ensuring the destruction of that data, without harm to the drive itself.

Iolo has a winner in System Mechanic 8. For those who like to try software before they purchase it, Iolo offers a free, 30 day, fully functional trial version of each of its products at www.iolo.com/downloads.aspx. If you try the software, you will probably like it as much as I do, and find it indispensable.

Using Vista's Hidden Disk Cleanup Options

by *Vinny La Bash,* vlabashcug (at) Comcast.net
Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida, www.spcug.org

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 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 sagset 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 Schedular to run the tool automatically at your conveience.

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Window Pains – Task Manager

by Bob Balogh, helpbrcs (at) yahoo.com
President, Boca Raton Computer Society, Florida, www.brcs.org

TASK MANAGER

Task Manager is a helpful application that is part of the Windows Operating System (2000, XP & Vista). You can open it with the three fingered salute – Ctrl/Alt/Delete, or more easily, my preferred way, by a right click on an open space on your Taskbar, and clicking on Task Manager. You may also open Task Manager by going to Start-Run and entering "taskmgr" (without the quotes).

Most of us have only experienced dealing with the Task Manager when a program no longer seems to be functioning. We then open the Task Manager and click on the Applications Tab, see the list of running programs, and highlight the program we are having difficulty with, then click on "End Task" at the bottom of the page. Voila, the program is shutdown and is no longer causing you a problem. Of course, you still will want to find out why the problem began or why the program froze in the first place. However, that is for another time.
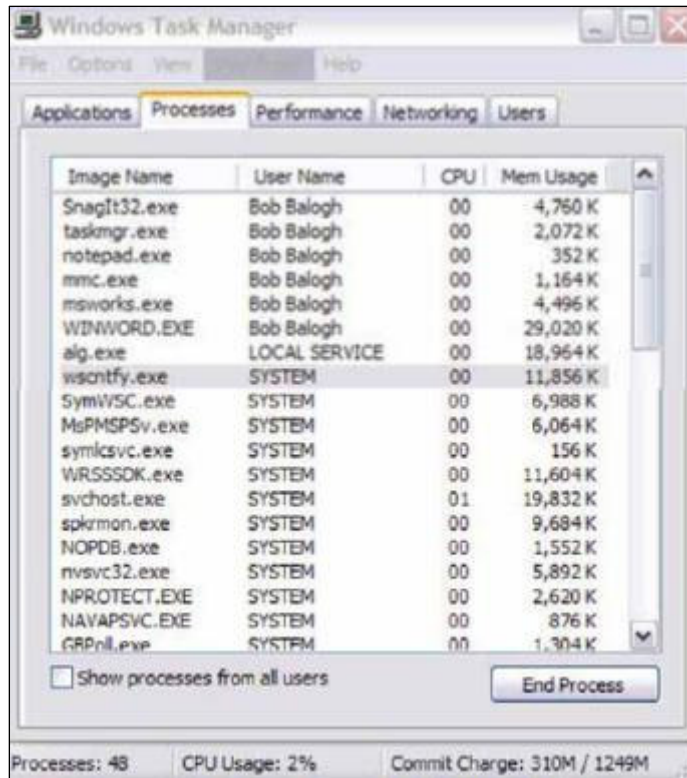
PROCESSES

You can also click on the "Processes" tab, to see exactly which programs are running in the background.

Go on open yours up and see what is running. Here is part of mine:

Of course all these programs do not have to run. In fact while many of these programs are useful and are needed others are not needed and may at times cause problems. The problem is what determining what these programs do. Even if you are not inclined to stop any of these programs it is a step forward to know what these programs do so at least you have an idea as to what may be causing a particular problem when it arises.
To see a list of most of the possible programs that are running in the background just go to this web site
 http://www.answersthatwork.com/Tasklist_pages/tasklist.htm and peruse the programs from A-Z. Well, you don't have to look at all of them, just the ones you have listed in your Task Manager.

Remember, all the programs, that are listed in your Task Manager, may not be listed at "Answers that Work". Why you might ask? Well, just look at my list and you will see a program listed called SnagIt32.exe. That is a program that I added to my computer, and use often.

Actually, it is the program I used to create the picture of the Task Manager above. So it is listed, since it was still "running", when I made the screen capture. Could I turn it off? Sure, all I have to do is close the program.
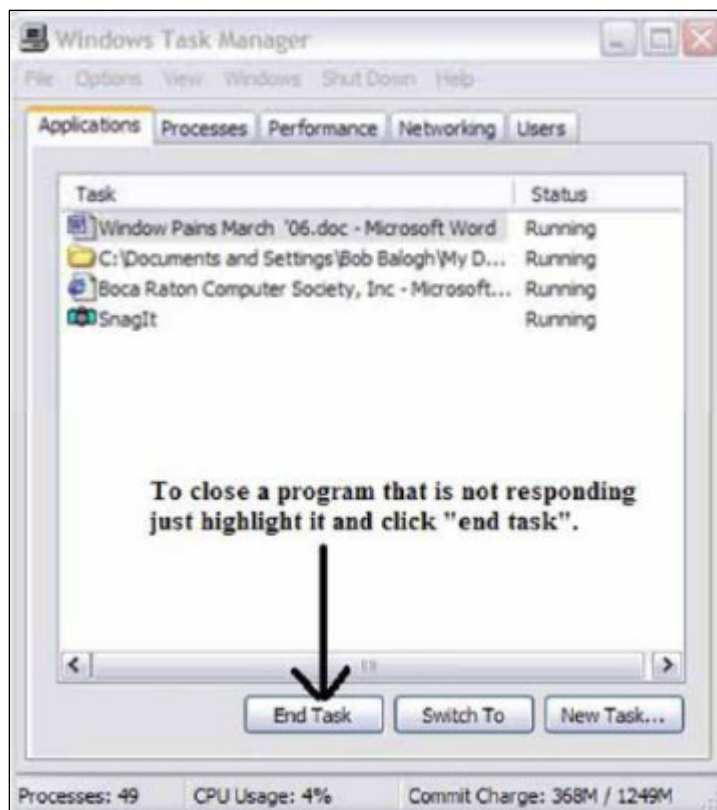
If you want to turn off a program that is running in Task Manager, don't change, or disable it in the Windows Task Manager. Instead, go to the Control Panel | Administrative Tools | Services, and change them there.

Double click on the entry, and change it from the drop-down list where it says "Startup Type". Carefully read what it does, and what it is related to, before making a decision. Write down what you changed, in the event you wish to change it back.

If you have System Restore or Go Back operating, write down the date and time, in case you want to return to an earlier time, when all was well. Additionally, set a new restore point, prior to doing anything. If the service isn't listed in there, then more than likely it was added by an application you added after the install. You'll need to decide if it's necessary, or if you only want it running when you decide

There also comes a time when a particular program "freezes" and is not functioning as we mentioned at the outset of the article. What should you do? Simply use Ctrl+Alt+Delete, open the Task Manager, and simply close down the program by selecting it and clicking on "End Task". The following figure demonstrates it for you:

The Performance tab displays an overview of your computer's performance, including graphs for CPU and memory usage as well as the total number of processes running. Google such other items displayed if you are interested in the purpose they serve. I do not wish to get too technical here.

The remaining tabs, Networking and Users are basically self explanatory. If you are running a home network it will show up under Networking and inform you of it function ability. As far as Users is concerned you will see a list of those using your computer.

Peruse the headings in the toolbar (top), just to get an idea of what they are and do. Of course the Help tab, as usual, is the most important in explaining the program at hand. Use it and you will learn much.

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All unattributed articles are solely the fault of the editor.

This and previous Princeton PC User Group Newsletters can be found at:

http://www.ppcug-nj.org/newsltr.html

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Volunteers Sought

Volunteers are needed to lead our group. See any Board Member for more information regarding the Treasurer/Member Records, Secretary and Hospitality Coordinator positions.

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