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# MEGAPHONE

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MARYLAND USER GROUP

## President's Message The End of Format War II?

by Mike Kerwin

Well folks, it is the eve of the 2007 Consumer Electronics Show, and Mary and I are anxious to pack up and fly off. But first, duty calls, and I owe you a column of my thoughts before I leave. I actually have two ideas to share this month and the first is the inspiration for the title. (For the second read the end of this tale.)

As most of you are aware there is a terrible war raging in digital land and it has been raging since the dawn of HDTV. The basis of the conflict is how to record and distribute HDTV content to the consuming public. HDTV programs take a lot more data to fill the pixels of a true HD picture. With our soon-to-be-antique analog TV images (pooh on 4:3 format) the recording industry found that a standard (and later a dual layer) DVD held just sufficient data for two hour movie. Lots of people were very happy with this and rushed out and bought billions of \$ of DVD recorded movies. Now the industry would like to do it all over again with HD movies.

The problem is that while 2 hrs of analog images fit on a 4.7 GB DVD, HD movies take about 10 times as much space for the same 2 hrs of viewing. And no one want to go back to the bad old days of flipping tapes or disks to see the second half of the movie. Thus the stage was set for Format War II. This is truly reminiscent of Format War I (VHS vs BetaMax) and neither the industry nor consumers want to repeat the same scenario.

Enter new technology and industrialists with visions of royalties dangling from the Christmas tree. Just as HD was really taking hold, Sony invented the blue laser. The significance is that blue light has a shorter wavelength than the red lasers used in virtually all CD and DVD players. So data can be stored closer together under Sony's Blu-ray

Disc (BD) system: 25 GB on a single layer, or 50 on a dual-layer disk.

If Sony could convince the world to use its blue laser, then the company would be golden (and Sony is definitely in need of a reliable profit stream). Unfortunately the blue laser can't read all of the disks in circulation that were manufactured to use the red laser. Another technology champion entered the lists of combat with the HD-DVD format for storing HD movies on disks, using a red laser which would also read the existing disks. Not having Sony's blue laser, though, has cost the HD-DVD group (led by Toshiba); the HD-DVD only holds 30 GB on a dual layer disk.

One might think that history would have taught everyone the lesson that competing formats equal low sales and everyone loses, but the glitter of great profits has kept the competing camps apart. Recently the two groups held a meeting to try to develop some joint standards which would open the door to riches for industry and to acquisition by consumers. The meeting ended badly and the two camps have not met again since. You may have seen ads near Christmas time for HD recorders using removable media; if you don't look at ads for devices costing \$1000, though, maybe not. See the simple truth of economics is that the first of anything is expensive but once a mass market is established then the price falls drastically as the initial cost of development is recouped and then profits are kept in check by competitive pressure.



### Next General Meeting

This month's speaker is Amy Karlson, who is doing research at the University of Maryland on the human-mobile device interface, especially when the user has only one hand available. She will discuss the design guidelines they've developed based on their research.  
Wednesday, January 17, 7:30 pm.....Florence Bain Senior Center

### Next Windows SIG Meeting

Topic: Internet Resources to Make Your PC Better  
Tuesday, January 23, 7:00 pm.....Florence Bain Senior Center

### Inside the Megaphone

President's Message.....	from Mike Kerwin.....	Page 1
The End of Format War II?		
Upcoming Meetings and Help Needed.....		2
Deals from the DealsGuy.....	by Bob Click.....	3
Sad News.....		5
Fun with Freeware.....	by Cary Quinn, via APCUG.....	6
CMUG Survey.....	assembled by Paul Van Bloem.....	7
NeatReceipts Scanalizer.....	by Mike Wayte, via APCUG.....	9



These visions of profits—someday, down the road—led the two camps to try the indirect approach to market domination. In this round of the war the two tried to tie up the content side with their own format. This approach completely overlooks the consumer who may want to record home video in HD format, as cameras are now available to record such videos. This same indirect approach was tried with the first format war and the result was the same – stalemate and no sales.

So what glimmer of hope inspired my topic this month? Two announcements this past week may signal a new approach which will get the consumer and industry out of the stalemate: Time-Warner announced that it would distribute disks with both formats on the same media (check the news rags for details on Total HD, which uses the two sides of the disk) and LG Electronics announced that they would show a player at CES which incorporated both blue and red laser technology. I am really looking forward to seeing these devices at CES. These new steps might open the logjam and allow the HD content to flow. One part that I did not hear though is anything about pricing. Surely it costs more to master both sides of a disk and surely it costs more to incorporate two lasers in the same box; however these firms are not dummies and will understand that consumers will not be willing to pay twice for what is perceived as a home use device. We'll see how this latest round plays out. If others get on board with player hardware and with double format content then the profits could start flowing very shortly – let's keep our fingers crossed.

One of the side issues that may finally drag the combatants into cooperation is that a new type of DVD player is being offered which uses software to “Upconvert” analog content to simulate HD content. Some of you may have seen such movies shown on HD sets and can report directly. I am relying on second hand information and reviews in publications, but this does appear to be a significant force to be dealt with.

Another side issue is the use of a new encryption scheme for HD content disks. We all know the story of the attempts to block analog DVD movies to zones around the world. In that failed attempt, the industry folks overlooked the world of Linux and froze them out of contention for viewing DVD movies. Techies don't like limits on their data and shortly the world found the “DCCS” program floating about. That program not only unlocked DVD movies for Linux machines, it also unlocked them from distribution zones and from piracy protection schemes. Hence it is not surprising to me that the new encryption scheme would make likely target for techies (aka hackers).

Now that the first few HD players are becoming available on high-end computers, expensive set-top boxes, and as components of much desired game machines (maybe that's why folks were camped out for Sony Playstation 3s), it is only a matter of time till the code is broken. According to eWeek of 2 Jan 07, it

already has. [Ed. Note: I think Mike means this article: [www.eweek.com/ article2/ 0,1759,2077999,00.asp](http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,1759,2077999,00.asp)]. The article says a hacker who goes by the handle of Muslix64 has posted details of how to unlock the AACs system protecting HD movies. Stay tuned!

### Survey Warning

Finally I have a second issue to offer this month: Be careful about filling out surveys online. I have a penchant for answering surveys for several reasons; one of these is that my voice might be heard and some benefit might be gained by the firm and my personal accounts. In general I have been successful in this approach and my bookshelf is filling up with free items from Amazon purchased with survey awards.

However I was snookered by a recent survey request and I wish to pass along a warning. I don't recall the exact wording that I saw and responded to, but it was something of personal interest, and the offer of a reward was too tempting. My warning is to use great caution. In the survey I started, a lot of personal information was requested up front and the actual survey was several screens into the site. When I finally got to the product questions I found that I was required to buy things first and then I would be asked survey questions and be reimbursed for my purchases. I did have the presence of mind to bail at that point, but the cow was out of the barn.

Since then my Inbox has been deluged with spam offering bogus enticements to click through and who knows what happens then. These offers touch on areas of personal interest – favorite restaurants, favorite airlines, favorite vacation spots, favorite electronic gadgets, etc. What they all have in common is the “Opt-Out” at the bottom of the e-mail offer. The common element is the return address of the site willing to stop the deluge. This site is located in Romania! Beware, my friends, of 3Tools S. R. L. at Calea Floreasca 159, Bucharest, Romania.

### CMUG Business

On to business, last month I hope you all enjoyed the end of year celebration as much as Mary and I did. I hope the carol puzzle and answers served to amuse you and your friends as well. This month we will have Amy Karlson from the University of Maryland presenting her research on use of mobile electronic devices using only a single hand.

### Program Director

Also please give serious consideration to helping the Board fill the position of Program Director. Our group will only continue if the members support the activities and step forward to share the responsibility and fun of making it happen.

I look forward to seeing you at the meeting.

Digitally,

Mike



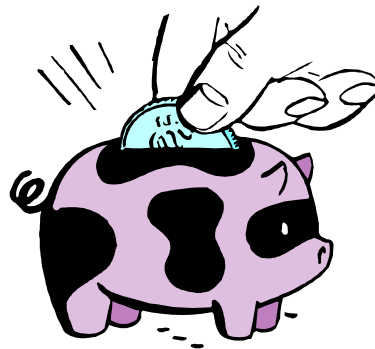
## Deals from the DealsGuy

by Bob (The Cheapskate) Click

It was with sadness that I read the final issue of Blue Chip News, newsletter of the Saginaw Valley Computer Organization ([www.svca.org](http://www.svca.org)). Describing the end must have been tough for their long time editor Lynn Kauer to write since he has long been one of the faithful for the benefit of the members. I thought I even detected a tearstain on that page. The final bell rang when four long time volunteers moved away and nobody would step forward to replace any of them, and the same problem for some other long time volunteers who wanted to relax for a while. With too few members willing to help with the work, it became necessary to determine the group's future, and only 13 members bothered to show up for the final meeting. I feel that the no-shows were actually the real losers. Two SIGs will continue to run independently. I hope the members who couldn't find the time realize the error of their ways and revive the group. I had occasion to visit that group several years ago and it was a fun night. My meeting badge still hangs in my office; my name written on a 5 ¼" floppy.

This is not the first user group to shut down recently for the same reason, and the abundance of free-riders assures that it won't be the last. Some groups are still doing well even though they also have some long time workers who cannot get replaced. I have long heard the refrain about the Internet replacing user groups because it has every thing a computer user needs to know, but I don't buy that statement. Nobody from

the Internet is going to stand in front of you trying to explain something so you can better understand it, and answer your questions in the process. Nor will anybody from the Internet stop by and help fix your problem computer for free. Yes, there are some people who could read the answers on a Web page and know exactly what to do, but I am not one of them and many other people are not that capable either without friends to help. Most important though, the friendship and camaraderie of a user group is irreplaceable.



I know my opinion will be mostly ignored because freeloader members are what they are, but that type of member should think about all the answers and information they get at a meeting or presentation, and consider giving back instead of just taking. Try

it, you might enjoy it, and there are lots of ways to give back.

### Be Aware!

I now list mostly new product announcements here, and have usually not tried them. These are their own words, but I have severely edited them to fit, and reworded a few places, so check for more complete information on their Web sites. Hopefully you already knew that. Check for policy statements.

### Upcoming Meetings and Help Needed

As was announced previously, Andrew Rein is stepping down from his job as Program Director. So CMUG is in need of someone who can coordinate presentations for our general meetings.

This is not a time-consuming job, but does require a little organization, and facility with email. Andrew had a standard email that he has been sending to organizations and individuals, explaining what CMUG is and asking if they could come and present at a meeting. I'm not sure, but Andrew may have also made contact by phone.

If you have questions about the workload or are otherwise interested, you might speak with Andrew (or one of the other officers) at the meeting.

Meanwhile, here's what we have planned for the next few meetings:

**February 21:** To be determined.

**March 21:** To be determined.

**April 18:** To be determined.

### Windows SIG January 23: Hacking Your Way Thru Windows, Part III

The Windows Special Interest Group (SIG) meets on the fourth Tuesday of each month. The SIG focuses on using and maintaining Windows, all platforms. We take questions, present tips and techniques, demonstrate freeware/shareware and even feature some web topics using a little trickery.

This month I'll be showing some Internet resources to make your PC better, and you better prepared to use it. If time allows, I've also got some good shareware to, uh, share.

If you have a suggestion or a topic for a future SIG meeting, please email me at [mikes\\_line@hotmail.com](mailto:mikes_line@hotmail.com).

Remember that the meetings are at the Florence Bain Senior Center, and begin at 7 pm. See the CMUG website at [www.myCMUG.org](http://www.myCMUG.org) for maps and directions.

Hope to see you there.

- Mike Hayes



## A New Dictionary For Your Pocket PC

LingvoSoft has released the new LingvoSoft Dictionary 2007 for Pocket PC. The latest dictionaries are available to provide instant bi-directional translations between English and French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Turkish and Russian, and are faster than before. The 2007 dictionaries are fully compatible with the most popular MS Office application letting users translate any word found in an Internet Explorer webpage. Speaking versions speak their translations aloud using the most sophisticated TTS (text-to-speech) technology available. A synonym search and full usage information for every translation that includes part of the speech, gender, comment, transcription and sentence examples rounds out the improvements.

User group members get a 25% discount on any LingvoSoft software title at [www.lingvosoft.com](http://www.lingvosoft.com). Simply enter certificate code "MY8UZPF7M4" in the "Add Gift" field of the shopping cart and click the "Add Gift" button (deal good until March 2007).

Find out more about the new and improved LingvoSoft Dictionary 2007 for Pocket PC here: [www.lingvosoft.com/info/software/Pocket-2007/](http://www.lingvosoft.com/info/software/Pocket-2007/).

LingvoSoft Dictionary 2007 is the core component of a complete language solution called LingvoSoft Suite: [www.lingvosoft.com/info/software/Suites/](http://www.lingvosoft.com/info/software/Suites/).

*[Ed. note: This company is based in Long Island City, outside New York.]*

## A New CD/DVD Label Maker

Acoustica Inc. has released Acoustica CD/DVD Label Maker Version 3.x, which now supports LightScribe Direct Disk Technology™. LightScribe Direct Disc Labeling is a new technology that offers users a simple, no-hassle way to burn professional, silkscreen-quality labels on their CDs and DVDs. Using the same laser that burns data in their disc drives, users burn their data as always, flip the disc over, reinsert it into the drive and burn a precise, iridescent label with their desired text and graphics using the same laser that burns the data. No printer, permanent marker or adhesive labeling is required.

Acoustica CD Label Maker can automatically import track information directly from iTunes play lists, or from dozens of play list file types, can import track information from CD-Text, FreeDB, and MusicBrainz, and can directly read track/file information from MP3 or data CDs and DVDs. Its auto-track formatting allows you to format your tracks layout in a variety of styles, including circular and spiral text, with a single click. You can also hide and show specific tracks fields (title, artist, genre, etc.) or hide/show tracks listings altogether with a single button click or menu selection. It prints on over 500 stock sticker labels and CD jewel case templates. Acoustica CD/DVD Label Maker also supports direct-to-CD printing on more than 70 printers.

A free 7-day trial of Acoustica CD/DVD Label

Maker is available for download at [www.acoustica.com/cd-label-maker/download.htm](http://www.acoustica.com/cd-label-maker/download.htm) (4 MB download). System requirements: Pentium II-400, Win 98/NT/2000/ME/XP, 128 MB RAM, printer. Requires less than 250 MB of hard disk space. LightScribe requirements: LightScribe-enabled drives and LightScribe media

Pricing: \$21.95, but computer club member receive a 20% discount when they enter COMPUTERCLUB in the coupon box. All versions include lifetime support.

*[Ed. Note: if you're interested in LightScribe, check out [www.lightscribe.com](http://www.lightscribe.com). This is a technology HP developed a couple of years ago. You need a LightScribe-enabled CD or DVD writing drive, software, and special LightScribe media. The label image ends up as black-and-white, with a background color of whatever color the disk is.*

*[Acoustica is based in California.]*

## Remote Administration and Monitoring Software

V.A.P. Software has released version 6.0 of Net Control 2, remote administration and monitoring software for classroom, office, and home networks. Starting at only \$45 for the Home Edition, Net Control 2 enables you to control networking machines remotely using the keyboard and mouse, manage files, send messages (text, graphics, sound), and share any desktop with users. Version 6.0 introduces Desktop Recorder. It lets users record a sequence of actions taking place on the desktop and adds voice instructions to the record.



Users can transfer large files (above 1MB) much faster because version 6.0 has a special mode of transferring files. The 'Remote Desktop' feature is extended in the 'View One Control All' mode so you can view screenshots of all remote machines. Click on a screenshot and it will activate a Remote Desktop session for the selected machine. When 'Autoconnect at startup' mode is selected, Net Control 2 Client opens the connection automatically at startup. Check our site at [www.netcontrol2.com/nc2.html](http://www.netcontrol2.com/nc2.html) to learn about other new and enhanced features.

Net Control 2 v.6.0 runs under all versions of Windows (95-2003) and costs \$99 (US) for a Standard Edition license that allows the installation of administrator components on 1 machine and user components on up to 10 user machines. User group members get a 20% discount on Net Control 2 by using the coupon code: VADI-63DT. For other types of licenses, please refer to [www.netcontrol2.com/fullist.html](http://www.netcontrol2.com/fullist.html). Licensed customers are entitled to premium technical support by email. Further information is available from [www.netcontrol2.com](http://www.netcontrol2.com).

☞ Direct download link: [www.netcontrol2.com/](http://www.netcontrol2.com/)



getfile.php? id=232600.exe

✉ Email: [support@netcontrol2.com](mailto:support@netcontrol2.com)

[Ed. Note: I can't figure out where V.A.P. Software is physically located.]

## Protect Your Images with Your Own Watermark

Watermark Factory announces version 2.53 of its image protection tool, packed with new effects and image processing technologies. This update allows you to use a Vista-compatible product version as soon as you migrate to the new operating system. New features allow working with EXIF and IPTC information. Watermark Factory v2.53 helps you create a visible protection without destroying the overall aesthetic impression of an image. You can create a smart-looking text or a logo watermark and integrate it into your image. Once your watermark is created and saved, easily retrieve it and use it again with just a couple of mouse clicks.

Watermark Factory allows adjusting opacity and offers shadow, embossing and engraving effects. As for a logo, you can emboss the image and make it opaque to different degrees. The anti-aliasing technology implemented in the program will render your watermark crystal-clear quality. Three modes of positioning allow the user to tune the watermark placement to the image size and margins, and set a desired tilt angle.

Watermark Factory v2.53 runs under Windows 95/98/XP/NT/2003/VISTA platforms and costs \$69 for a single user license and \$149 for a business license. User group members receive a 30% discount on the new version of Watermark Factory v2.53 by using the discount coupon SBE-KX6U. Free technical support and minor upgrades are extended to all registered users. A free trial version is available for download at [www.watermarkfactory.com/download/WatermarkFactory\\_setup.EXE](http://www.watermarkfactory.com/download/WatermarkFactory_setup.EXE).

✉ Product page link:

[www.watermarkfactory.com](http://www.watermarkfactory.com)

✉ Phone: (206) 984-1843

✉ Fax: (206) 984-2378

✉ Postal address: Pacific Business Centre: Sibental, P.O. Box 34069 #381 Seattle, WA 98124-1069.

## That's It for This Month

Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. I'll have other new announcements on my Web site page. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Visit my website at [www.dealsguy.com](http://www.dealsguy.com).

- Bob (The Cheap skate) Click

[bobclick@mindspring.com](mailto:bobclick@mindspring.com)



## Sad News

I've been meaning to pass along the sad news about Paul Motzenbecker's death last Fall, and now I find I actually have two deaths to report, as Nick Vogel died shortly after Christmas.

### Paul Motzenbecker

Paul was a long-time member of CMMUG and then CMUG. He was fond of both the Holiday Meeting and the Picnic; I remember him bringing not one but two lemon meringue pies one year. Mary Guarnieri fondly remembers the Beef Bourguignon he made and brought to the Holiday potluck.

In the last few years, Paul's health deteriorated, and he moved back to New Jersey, where his family lives, for treatment. He died on October 26 at age 48. His death notice in the Washington Post is online at [www.legacy.com/washingtonpost/DeathNotices.asp?Page=LifeStory&PersonID=19736346](http://www.legacy.com/washingtonpost/DeathNotices.asp?Page=LifeStory&PersonID=19736346). Our condolences to his family and friends.

### Nick Vogel

Mike Hayes sent along an announcement on Nick Vogel's recent demise. "Our friend Nick Vogel, a member since 1989, passed away December 28. Although his fight with cancer the last six months was often painful, his passing that night was peaceful, attended by close friends. A Memorial Celebration in his honor was held on Saturday, January 13."

I knew Nick mostly from the Tuesday computer meetings that the late John Van Horn used to host at his house in Oakland Mills. Age and change has long broken up the original group; if memory serves, it included the John and Nick, the late Wallace Kendall, Bill Madison (who moved to Texas), George Walker (who also moved to Texas), and sometimes John Griffin, who moved to California. The more recent Tuesday group also included Nick, when he was feeling energetic enough, and also Sumi Kinoshita and Jean Tigner, Larry Medoff, Dick Roberts, and Bill Kendall. I haven't been able to make a meeting in several years, as my job at Lockheed makes afternoon meetings a bit difficult.

Nick was also a CMMUG member, and more recently a CMUG member. For some years, he ran the



## Fun with Freeware

by Cary Quinn, via APCUG

Here are a couple of utilities I have been using lately to correct a couple of bumps in the road to a positive Windows experience.

### OverDisk (v0.11 beta)

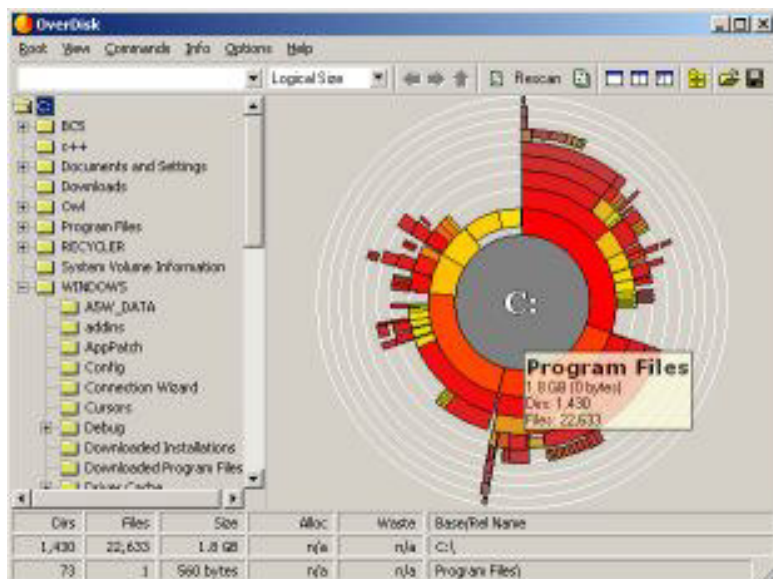
↳ <http://users.forthnet.gr/pat/efotinis/programs/overdisk.html>

↳ freeware

Elias Fotinis, a programmer from Greece, is one of those programmers you often find on the net who in their spare time writes little apps and utilities to solve some personal issue they might have getting the operating system, or some other program, to work the way they want it to.

One of the programs he has written is a disk space monitor called Overdisk. It basically scans a drive or folders of your choice and tells you how much space is being taken up by the files therein. One special difference with Overdisk though, is the way it graphs that data to your screen.

Instead of representing the files as a pie chart, or bar graph, Overdisk shows a breakdown of folders and files as a series of concentric rings, as if you were looking down onto the disk itself and seeing the files laid out below. But it's even better than that.



When you mouse-over a particular section of the chart, a tooltip window will appear to give you more information about that particular folder (size, number of subdirectories, and the number of files); and if you click on a specific point of the chart you can drill down to get the same information for individual files. Clicking on the center of the chart takes you back up the directory path, or you can click on the tree view on the side of the screen to better select a particular folder to view.

I find this utility most useful when trying to identify what parts of a drive need to have a cleanup, or which folders I need to prioritize for backups.

### Taskbar Shuffle

↳ [www.freewebs.com/nerdcave/taskbarshuffle.htm](http://www.freewebs.com/nerdcave/taskbarshuffle.htm)

↳ (free, but accepting donations)

From the home of the nerd cave, comes a pretty nifty little tool that answers a minor nit I have had with the Windows Taskbar for a while—why you cannot drag and drop the programs listed on the taskbar to better arrange your programs to your preference. With Taskbar Shuffle, you can. That seems pretty simple, and it appears to work quite seamlessly within the OS.

The utility leaves an icon running on your system tray that you can use to turn it on or off, or close it down completely. I've been using it for a few months, and haven't noticed any conflicts with other windows or programs that have caused me to want to shut it off.

*This article comes to us from APCUG, the Association of Personal Computer User Groups, of which CMUG is a member. Cary Quinn is a member of the Pikes Peak Computer Application Society in Colorado (<http://ppcompas.apcug.org>); he can be reached via email at [cary.quinn@gmail.com](mailto:cary.quinn@gmail.com).*



CMMUG election meeting; I suspect this was one way he made sure that he never got elected as one of the group's officers.

Nick was an avid photographer. The Columbia Flier ran an obituary last week that talked about Nick's photography; you can read it at [http://news.mywebpal.com/news\\_tool\\_v2.cfm?pnPID=658&NewsID=774989&CategoryID=5023&show=localnews&om=1](http://news.mywebpal.com/news_tool_v2.cfm?pnPID=658&NewsID=774989&CategoryID=5023&show=localnews&om=1). (Sorry about that URL; I don't know why the Flier can't have a sensible website like most papers.) The printed article includes a picture of Nick, miming taking a photograph; unfortunately, the photo is not included in the online article.

Nick was 83, so we don't have grounds for complaint about his leaving us early (as we do in Paul's case). In addition, he has been in some pain lately, and was unable to enjoy simple pleasures like favorite foods and taking pictures these last few months. So we wish him Bon Voyage; he was born in Romania, and lived in France and Canada before moving to the DC area, and now he has moved again.

- Paul Van Bloem

As I mentioned several meetings ago, I thought it would be a good idea to survey CMUG's membership. This will give us a chance to see what members are doing with their computers, what they like (and dislike) about the group, and maybe come up with some improvements (assuming that's possible!).

There are several ways you can get your answers to me. Email is probably simplest; just send me an email with each question number, followed by your answer; my email is **pjvanbloem@aol.com**. I will also bring paper copies to the meetings, which you can mark up; I've tried to leave space to the right of each question for your answer(s). Or mark up these pages (or a copy) and snail mail them to me via the group's PO Box: CMUG Survey, PO Box 125, Columbia MD 21045.

I'll give you all a while to send in your answers. I'll run a report in the newsletter on the response, probably in the March or April issue.

## Your Computer

There was a time when we could just ask, "What kind of computer do you have?" and expect a simple answer. But now, people have machines at home, and at work, and in their home office. Then there are laptops, and PDAs, and cell phones with PDAs built-in to them. In these questions, please focus on the machine you use the most.

1. What CPU and speed is your primary computer? (You'll find this under System Properties in Control Panel, in most version of Windows.)
2. Which version of Windows (or other OS) are you using on your primary machine? (eg, WinXP)
3. A. What size and type of monitor do you have? (eg CRT 17")  
B. What resolution are you running at? (eg, 1024 x 768)
4. What brand and type of printer do you have? (eg HP inkjet; if you have more than one that you use regularly, please list each)
5. Now consider all the computers you typically use. What do you do with your computer(s)? Please list activities and approximate number of hours per week, eg: Internet 10 hrs/wk, Email 3, Finances 1, Games 5.
6. A. Considering just your home, how many active computers do you have? (Say, those used by someone for at least an hour in a typical week)  
B. In your household, how many people use a computer in a typical week? (Count yourself!)  
C. All told, how many hours is a computer used in your household in a typical week?

## Other Hardware

7. Please circle any of the items below that you own, or use regularly:
  - A. CD writer (in a computer)
  - B. DVD writer (in a computer)
  - C. Scanner
  - D. Cell phone
  - E. Cell phone with camera
  - F. Digital Camera (standalone)
  - G. Trackball
  - H. MP3 player, iPod, or other audio player
  - I. HD TV (I mean a separate box)
  - J. DVD recorder (standalone)
  - K. Anything else you think might be of interest to CMUG members?





## Communication

8. What sort of Internet access do you have at home, and who is your service provider? (eg, Cable – Comcast; if None, just say that) \_\_\_\_\_
9. About how many hours per week would you estimate that you or members of your household are actively connected to the Internet? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Please list a few website that you visit regularly (say, three): \_\_\_\_\_
11. What homepage do you use? \_\_\_\_\_
12. What search engine do you use? \_\_\_\_\_
13. How many email addresses do you have, counting both work and personal email addresses that you check at least occasionally? \_\_\_\_\_
14. Are you running a network at home? *Yes / No*      If so, is it wireless? *Yes / No*

## CMUG

15. A. Do you read The Megaphone newsletter you receive each month?  
*Always / Usually / Sometimes / Rarely or Never*
- B. The best thing about The Megaphone is:
- C. What I really hate about The Megaphone is:
- D. Any comments on the newsletter would be appreciated.
  
16. A. Do you attend CMUG's monthly meetings?  
*Always / Usually / Sometimes / Rarely / Never*
- B. If you didn't say "always" or "never", what determines whether you come to the meeting?  
*Schedule Conflicts / Presentation at meeting / Weather / Travel / Other (explain)*
17. What is your idea of the best possible CMUG meeting?
18. What is your idea of the worst possible CMUG meeting?
19. Any comments on the monthly CMUG meeting, or the Windows SIG, would be appreciated.
20. Please include any additional comments below.

Your name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

# NeatReceipts Scanalizer

by Mike Wayte, via APCUG

The Scanalizer by NeatReceipts is a hardware/software package that allows you to organize the paper products in your life. It is specifically geared to copying, analyzing, organizing and filing receipts (with provisions to identify and present Income Tax info) and business cards, and copying, sorting and storing documents.

One might say, I store my receipts and tax information in a file cabinet, my business cards in a cardholder and my documents in notebooks. Why do I need a Scanalizer?

Those thoughts were on my mind as I read the information on their website. But the more I read, the more intrigued I became with the description of their product. After a few calls, one showed up on my doorstep, one week before the October membership meeting, where I was to give a demo of its capabilities.

Let's start with first impressions: the scanner is small. I thought, yes, it is small, but I already have a scanner, why do I need this one? If you travel, you can plug this little thing into your laptop via the USB cable and you are ready to copy and organize your expense receipts, catalogue those business cards you picked up and save that literature you collected. Now everything is orderly and in one place. If you are at home, you will find the Scanalizer quickly scans your material, rotates the receipt on the screen and puts the information in the proper storage slot. I have an HP 6110 all-purpose office machine and quickly learned it is much easier and quicker to push the receipt, business card or document into the scanner. I also learned that I had to adjust my 6110 to 200% so business cards could be read and stored into the database. For those of you who do not have photocopier capability, Scanalizer helps here too. Run the document through the scanner and print out a copy.

We have all been exposed to sales pitches. I wanted to see if this thing could really do all the purported analysis of receipts and business cards.

The interface is very user friendly. The types of items we wish to file are an easy click away. When a feature comes up we see all the information categories into which data will be catalogued. There are about 20 choices and if you don't like those you can change the name of one you don't like to something you want.

I started with receipts: I collected as many different receipts as I could. One of the features is that the Scanalizer has a database with 1500 stores/vendors. Thus, many of your receipts will match the database and be so identified. For those that don't, you type in the name the first time (I was surprised to learn that Costco was not in their database) and it will be remembered. My receipts covered a wide range of sizes, shapes and suppliers. Everything from gas station receipts to Costco to Hertz Equipment rental statements. There were a few glitches, such as missing

names, reading Costco zeros that look like phi ( ) as 8 or adding digits to the receipt.

Overall, however, receipts entered top up, top down, sideways (width limit of 8-1/2 inches) or anywhere between gave the same result. The accuracy was truly impressive. It also has the capability to allow you to split expenses from a single receipt, which can be multi-page. At present they do not have an archiving system but are working on it. Categories and vendors are determined by the user to catalogue and save receipt information. Sales tax is captured and isolated as a category. You can also identify a tax-deductible item. Tax-deductible items are gathered up and summarized for entry into your 1040. (The IRS accepts the electronic receipt format.)

Being a packrat, I have many different kinds of business cards. A couple of my old Boeing cards resulted in a flawless copy and catalogue job. Other cards ranged from a complete job to an almost incomplete job. I showed 15 different cards at the meeting. Those with graphics (e.g. car repair shops with figures of cars) did not fare as well as a "strictly business" type of card. The information that can be copied and catalogued includes name, company name, phone and fax numbers, email addresses and websites. Clicking on the website in the database takes you directly to the site. You can recall the card information by one of several methods including the person's first or last name, the company name, address or, like an Internet search, information containing some data.

Finally, there is the document copy feature. Tell the Scanalizer how many pages and how you want to file it, and copy away.

Did I also mention they have a great help desk using a version of instant messaging (or telephone if you really need help)? Top notch!

OK, how much does the Scanalizer cost? The list price is \$230; on the web I've seen it for as low as \$180. NeatReceipts has offered us the product for \$170 at your front door. UPS ground shipping will be used to send the product to you.

The procedure for ordering is: call Guilia Umile of NeatReceipts (pronounced Julia Umilay) at 866-632-8732, ext 106; If she is not at her phone, leave your name and phone number; she will call you back. They take the major credit cards: Visa, MC, Amex and Discover.

More info on the Scanalizer, which requires Win2000 or XP, can be found at their website, [www.neatreceipts.com](http://www.neatreceipts.com).

[Note from Judy Taylour, Chair, APCUG Benefits / Services Committee: Guilia has extended the offer to all of the APCUG-member user groups.]

*This article comes to us via APCUG, the Association of Personal Computer User Groups, of which CMUG is a member. Mike Wayte is a member of the Boeing Employees' Computer Society ([www.becs-wa.org](http://www.becs-wa.org)) in Washington state. He can be reached at [mikejwsr@comcast.net](mailto:mikejwsr@comcast.net).*



# CMUG MEGAPHONE

George Coffin  
8652 Open Meadow Way  
Columbia, MD 21045

Meeting:

**Wednesday, January 17, 7:30 pm**

Amy Karlson from the University of Maryland will speak on her research on mobile device interface design, and the guidelines her research has led to.



## CENTRAL MARYLAND USER GROUP

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General meetings are held the third Wednesday of every month at 7:30 pm at the Florence Bain Senior Center, near the Harpers Choice Village Center in Columbia MD. The number there is 410-313-7213.

Membership in the user group is currently \$30 (cheap!). Membership includes a monthly subscription to the CMUG Megaphone, a membership directory, full access privileges to the Website, and drawings for free and review software at meetings.

**www.myCMUG.org**

