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Editorial

We are getting close to our next meeting 29th 30th & 31st October I hope you can come along.

I feel I should say that if we don't get a reasonable number of people coming along then I'm not sure that I will be arranging another meeting.

At the next meeting I will be demonstrating DVD SVCD VCD making, recording, converting editing writing and playing.

DVD Video Recording

This is what I have discovered about DVD & SVCD VCD movie & TV recording.

You probably already know there are two main formats of DVD the + and -, (yes I know there are DVD RAMs but at the present time few recorders use this type but the ones that do can record up to 16 hours of video against the 6 hours of the others) now I don't know what the differences are or if there are any advantages of one over the other, I hope that some who knows the facts about DVD formats will write something for us. I can say that your equipment must be made to use that type or it just will not recognise that you have even put a disk in the machine.

The first DVD video recorders that came on the market were the + format, recently that appears to have changed and it looks like the bulk of the new machines are the - format, the better recorders will use both formats.

The first DVD video recorder I used was a Phillips + format, the recorder will also play SVCD VCD Music and MP3 disks, It will use +R and +RW disks to record and rewrite.

I then used a recorder which was a new generation of less expensive type of machine, again it used the +R & +RW disks, I found that it was fussy about the quality of disk, some inexpensive disks would not work, also a well used +RW disk was also rejected.

Better quality recorders like the Sony will use both -R and -RW and +RW but will not use +R, also it will not play MP3, SVCD or VCD.

DVD players and the DVD drives in your computer will play and read +RW disks without the need to be finalised before they will play them, but -RW -R +R all need to be finalised.

Converting DVD to SVCD or VCD, I have found only one program (Intervideo DVD copy which I use on my PC) works well although very slow on my 1ghz machine, I have to say even this program can be a bit flakey, some times not completing the disk with a directory and some times locking up the PC, puzzling though the VCD disks without anything in the directory and totally useless will actually work in some players but cant be used in a PC at all.

I know there is a lot more to DVDs than I have covered here and I have still lots more to discover but I hope this gives you some food for thought.

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Bytes of Law: The Return of Copy Protection

by Roland J. Cole

[Reprinted from the 2002 June issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted from the 2002 April-June issue of "Reports", a publication of the Association of Personal Computer Users Groups Inc., 42 Lake Avenue Extension, #152, Danbury CT 06811, U S of A]

Some of you, regardless of age, have been around long enough to remember all the schemes that were used to prevent a user from making copies of software. The "key disk" (a floppy with a few sectors altered in a special way) and the "dongle" (a small device that fit on your serial port) are just two of the schemes. All of them were relatively easy to break. Even before the Internet, swap meets and computer bulletin boards quickly brought out various schemes for getting around the protection. In addition all got in the way of legitimate use, like backups and reinstallation after a computer crash.

So a group of personal computer user groups, led by Capitol PC and the Boston Computer Society, among others, persuaded major vendors, including the stand-alone Lotus at that time, that copy protection was costing more than it was worth. It did not stop the evildoer, and it did get in the way of the honest user.

There was not much concern about copying music, because the copies (reel to reel tape, even cassettes) were so inferior to the originals that they were not a threat.

Now fast forward 20 years (or so - ouch !). One can make copies of music that are almost or entirely indistinguishable from the originals, and the software industry has collapsed into a few giants and thousands of tiny firms. The cost benefit ratio of copy protection has swung back the other way. The major firms appear less worried about annoying the users (think of the "prove you are honest" letters being sent to businesses around the country concerning computer software, and the reluctance of the music firms to work with any sort of reasonable on-line distribution), and the copies are easier to spread around the world.

The most notable [example] of re-emergence in the computer arena is the "product activation" built into two new Microsoft products -- Office XP and Windows XP. That has been covered extensively in the computer press. Next is the copy protection that music companies are building into some of the music CDs. Of course, there is also the "serial copy management system" required by the Audio Home Recording Act (discussed in an earlier version of this column) and the Digital Millennium Copyright Act protection for copyright management information (also discussed in an earlier column).

Now there is the possibility of the most intrusive form yet. It has been said that "No one's life, liberty or property is safe while the legislature is in session". As if to prove the truth of that saying, Senator Fritz Hollings of South Carolina has introduced a bill called the Security Systems Standards and Classification Act (SSSCA).

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The essence of the act appears in Section 101 (a).

"IN GENERAL -- It is unlawful to manufacture, import, offer to the public, provide or otherwise traffic in any interactive digital device that does not include and utilize certified security technologies that adhere to the security standards adopted under Section 104."

There is an exception for devices existing at the time the bill is passed (i.e. your existing hard drive, CD recorder etc.) and the Secretary of commerce may create other exceptions via regulation.

But everything else is included. Note the definition of a device that must include AND UTILIZE a certified security technology in section 109(3). "(3) INTERACTIVE DIGITAL DEVICE -- The term 'interactive digital device' means any machine, device, product, software, or technology, whether or not included with or as a part of some other machine, device, product, software, or technology, that is designed, marketed, or used for the primary purpose of, and that is capable of, storing, retrieving, processing, performing, transmitting, receiving, or copying information in digital form."

Most commentators suggest that this not only includes hard drives, CD recorders, and other obvious "copying" devices, but also all software programs of any sort, all music of any sort, and a whole array of miscellaneous devices such as digital thermometers, digital clocks, medical devices and the like.

Some are worried that if a bill like this passes, it would mean that the open source software movement would be illegal, unless each submitted program included and used some form of security technology.

Others are worried that the prohibition on removing or altering the security technology involved will hinder research on software and recording technologies. Others are worried that the prohibition on transmitting or making available the "copyrighted material OR OTHER PROTECTED CONTENT" that a certified technology was protecting will extend protection to all sorts of material, such as public domain works, public works, pure facts, and the like that were exempt from copyright in the past -- thus extending the copyright act way beyond its current status, all in the guise of protecting music.

Some comment that the bill reminds one of the teacher that keeps the entire class in for recess because two of the thirty students were fighting over chewing gum.

Finally, the widespread deployment of security technology would enable all kinds of control that are not possible now. As a number of commentators have mentioned in regard to Microsoft's product activation, why should Microsoft control how much of your computer has to remain the same before the software can be reinstalled on it? What if widespread security technology were employed to screen out "undesirable" musicians or "undesirable" software companies (such as those involved with open source software)?

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The bill has a long way to go before it, or anything like it, is adapted [sic], and Microsoft is already back-peddalling a bit on how it will employ its product activation. But those of us who remember all the hassles of copy protection, and all the joys of freeware, shareware, open source software, and being able to upgrade our own machines at will (even if we have a purchased licence for each and every program we run), should brace for another vigorous debate on how "personal" a personal computer will remain if widespread copy protection returns.

The Bytes of Law series is edited by Rollie Cole, the Legal Editor for Indy PC News, with help from various of his associates at the law firm of Barnes and Thornburg. Rollie hastens to add that this is NOT legal advice (your mileage may vary). For further information, contact him at rcole@btlaw.com.

PCSYNC

by Richard Stone - SWIPCC

[Reprinted from the 2002 June issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2002 April issue of "Throughput", newsletter of the SouthWest International Personal Computer Club, PO Box 371236, El Paso Texas 79937, U S of A]

This program was given to me to evaluate for the club. The program is by LapLink, of Bithell, Washington.

When I do these evaluations, I first look to see what the system requirements are, so I looked for that information and this was a bit discouraging.

The documentation says: Windows 95, 98, 2000, Me, NT 4.0 and Windows XP. Please let it be known that I presently am using only Windows 98 SE -- references to other systems came from the manual.

For running XP, Me, 98:
16 MB of memory (32 Recommended)
Java Virtual Machine version 5.00.3309 or later
Internet Explorer 4.0 (This provides files that PCSYNC needs to run.)
45 MB of disk space
Your Windows CD-ROM

For Windows 95:
It is the same, but in addition you will need to have Windows Sockets 2.0 also.

For Windows 2000 and NT:
Must be Windows NT 4.0 SP3 or higher [!?!?]

The way I understand all of this you could have an older computer as long as one of the above operating systems is on it. Also, one of the computers will have to have a CD-ROM drive.

Installing and running PCsync. PCsync comes with a LapLink serial cable that supports All Versions of Windows, according to the book. I couldn't check this claim because all I have is Windows 98 SE. PCsync also supports LapLink's USB Network cable which must be purchased separately. Windows XP will not recognise LapLink USB Network Cable software as a digital signed driver, but the driver will work properly.

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Put the CD in the drive and the screen will tell you what you need to do. Have your original Windows disk handy if you are going to use the serial cable. When all the files are installed, the program will ask you to install the serial cable, you must also install the driver. I had some trouble here because it always wanted to use my modem to connect to the second computer. I got around that by telling PCsync that there was no modem or outside network.

PCsync makes it possible to move files from one computer to another. This can be accomplished by cable, LAN or the Internet. After the connection is made, the Windows drag and drop works fine. The PCmover part of the program will move entire programs from one desktop to another without having to redo the settings.

The program has Music Mover, which allows one to move complete MP3 files and play lists from one computer to another.

The program can be used to keep two computers talking on the same page through Speed Sync which is a file transfer method of keeping all the [?] updated on both computers or more depending on the licence obtained.

Time used to transfer files can be reduced by using the LapLink USB cable, but if you are using a serial cable it is slower than a Zip Disk.

PCsync Manufacturer's list price is \$79.95 and can more than likely be found a few dollars cheaper, and there is a rebate for upgrades or complete upgrades.

The program has some good points, but for the home user who uses a Zip Disk and does not want to play games or share files with outsiders, I don't think the expense is worthwhile.

Software Review:

Quicken Deluxe 2002

by Mamie Fay Holloway - SWIPCC

[Reprinted from the 2002 June issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA, where it was reprinted via the "APCUGNET" BBS of APCUG from the 2002 April issue of "Throughput", newsletter of the SouthWest International Personal Computer Club, PO Software Review: Quicken Deluxe 2002

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I have been using Quicken for at least six years, mainly as a cheque register for various bank accounts. It has always given me good financial basics. These include recording cheques and expenses and printing reports on activity. Last year more investment options were added, but I never used them. Now in the 2002 version those options have been expanded. To actively use the stock monitoring features, I would need to spend a lot more time than I presently have. These features look very promising for later use.

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I am more into financial planning and current financial activity. The budgeting and planning feature was very easy to use. Since I have several years' history, the automatic feature will create a preliminary budget based on last year's history. Then you can adjust this year's projection based on more current knowledge. When you are unsure why numbers are so high, you can easily see graphs showing the actual data for last year. This helps explain unusual items and better plan for this year. After all changes are made, or as needed, reports/graphs can be displayed or printed. After the budget is complete, it can be compared to this year's actual data to see how you stand at any time.

There was one problem I had to have help with. The tax planning features showed that Turbo Tax data from last year could not be imported for tax planning this year. After several attempts, I quit and asked the other resident computer expert for help. This involved going to the website to find out that the Quicken program needed to be updated to release 2. It looks like this feature could be very useful for the future, but it will take a lot of work fine tuning the data and finding out how best to record the needed data. That may slow down some people from using this feature.

Taxes are not always easy to understand. The property and loan feature was new. I liked having the ability to list major items owned and open loans on them. It is possible to get current values on vehicles owned by going to the Internet. This could be helpful on vehicle loans or future purchases. I have not explored all the possibilities yet.

Some features have not changed. Quicken still allows you to record cheques and deposits, reconcile bank accounts, schedule payments or deposits, and print reports.

I have always found Quicken very easy to use, however, I am an accountant. Quicken is written in understandable language for the average person to use. This is good if a person does not have a lot of time or patience trying to decipher a program. With a little work, Quicken will not only record current activity, but help you plan for the future and make sound judgements based on the forecasting data.Box 371236, El Paso Texas 79937, U S of A]

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Experiment in SPAM Control

by Douglas Agee - SWIPCC

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When I was a kid in elementary school, I had "Spam" sandwiches several times a week. My mother, bless her heart, loved the stuff and insisted it was good for me. And although the "Spam" sandwiches were preferable to some of the others she packed, they nevertheless contained a lot of fat. Over the years, of course, medical researchers have discovered that too much fat contributes to atherosclerosis, a disease in which the arteries become constricted and the blood flow impaired. Curiously, modern day "SPAM" otherwise known as unsolicited commercial e-mail (UCE) seems to have a similar effect on today's Internet communication "arteries". Alas, cleaning out these "arteries" is proving as difficult as cleaning out the arteries in our bodies.

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Like most of you, I'm continually inundated with SPAM and spend a lot of time deleting unsolicited messages. In searching for ways to deal with this problem, I came across Spaminator, a SPAM-filtering tool available through my Internet Service Provider (Earthlink). The Spaminator uses a proprietary filtering technology developed by Brightmail, Inc. to intercept suspected SPAM messages before they reach your Inbox. Spaminator places these suspect messages in a personal SPAM storage area and holds them for ten days, allowing you to access and selectively delete or download them at your leisure.

To assess the effectiveness of the Spaminator, I conducted a little experiment. For a ten day period, I kept tabs of the total number of UCE messages received, noting how many were filtered and how many passed through to my Inbox. To my disappointment, the Spaminator filtered only about 48 percent of the UCEs, allowing 52 percent to slip through. I checked the SPAM storage area to see if the Spaminator inadvertently filtered any non-spam messages, and fortunately it didn't. But I'm not particularly elated about the mediocre filtering efficiency.

How can you avoid SPAM ? Unfortunately, the only way is to stop using your Internet e-mail. But short of that, you can minimise SPAM by following a few simple rules:

* Never reply to UCE messages. If you reply, or ask to be removed from UCE lists, you'll just verify that your address is valid.

* Don't flash your name and e-mail address around on the Internet. That is, don't participate in surveys or contests, and don't provide your e-mail address unless required to access an Internet site. Read privacy statements carefully; many sites share your e-mail address with third parties.

* Minimise on-line enquiries and purchases. If you purchase books on-line, don't be surprised to receive unsolicited ads for books. Or, if you make enquiries at some of the on-line medical sites, don't be surprised to find unsolicited health or fitness-related e-mail messages in your Inbox.

If you get really energised and want to learn more about SPAM and how you can help to eliminate it, check out the Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial Email (CAUCE) at <http://www.cauce.org>. The website explains why SPAM poses a danger to Internet commerce and describes current legislation designed to counter the problem. CAUCE also provides links to other websites where you can wallow in SPAM-related issues to your heart's content. And, along the way, if you happen to come across any SPAM filters you'd like to have checked out, please let me know !

Doug Agee has been a member of the Southwest International Personal Computer Club (SWIPCC) for several years and has led SWIPCC's Photo editing Special Interest Group for the last two years. He is an avid photographer who has made the transition from the conventional to the digital darkroom.

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He has a BS degree in mechanical/aerospace engineering and is presently employed as a Research Engineer. He can be reached at grisha11@earthlink.net.

Book Review:

Windows XP Unleashed

by Jim Gaffney

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Windows XP Unleashed by Terry W Ogletree
Sams Publishing, Indianapolis IN
ISBN 0-672-32280-3 MSRP \$US
49.99

Soon after an upgraded operating system reaches the market, book shelves are flooded with how-tos for idiots, dummies and first-time users. Typically they contain information on how to install and start applications, how to empty the recycle bin and other mundane tasks. There is a need for such texts, of course; otherwise they would not appear on the market. But how about something with a little more detail for those of us who are experienced in using the preceding OS ? Microsoft's Resource Guides are chock-full of technical information, but they (in my opinion) are not "a good read". And those guides seem to have been forgotten with the release of Windows XP.

There's "Inside Out", "Plain and Simple", and "Step by Step", but no Guide.

Sams Publishing, well known for the "Teach Yourself ... in 21 Days" series, has come to the rescue. "Windows WP Unleashed" is a reference for the experienced user who would like to delve just a little deeper. Beginning with a chapter on the architecture of Windows XP and following it with detailed instructions on multiple strategies for installation or upgrading, "Unleashed" will lead you to a deeper, richer knowledge of just what makes XP tick. It is not for every user, but certainly it is a good read for anyone who wants to achieve a more complete understanding. There are sections on memory management, performance tuning and automatic driver update.

There is a large section on configuring an XP system to join a LAN. Tools that are integral to XP are discussed in detail (much to my surprise I learned that there is a Disk Management Utility with functions similar (but not equal) to Power Quest's Partition Magic). Do you understand the strengths and weaknesses of files FAT and NTFS systems ? The author of "Unleashed" certainly does, and he'll help you decide how you should configure your XP based system. There is a section on the XP Backup application and strategies for its use. (Interestingly enough, the "About" help file for XP Backup reveals that the utility is partially authored by Veritas and it looks a lot like Veritas Backup Exec !)

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The manufacturer's suggested price for "Unleashed" is a bit intimidating at one penny under \$US50-00, but it can be had from Amazon.com for \$US34.99 plus shipping and no tax. (Barnes and Noble is asking the full retail price, the content of this work makes it great value when you need the information it contains.

Jim Gaffney spent 25 years in the US Army. His last assignment prior to retirement was as Chief of a software centre for automated command and control systems and digital data links. His first personal computer in 1989 was a Radio Shack TRS-80 with 16K RAM and cassette recorder storage. He holds Bachelors and Masters degrees in Mechanical Engineering and is currently a faculty member in Computer Information Systems at El Paso Community College.

Jim has spent five years as the Sysop of the SWIPCC BBS, two as Vice-President and three as President of SWIPCC. He is currently SWIPCC Webmaster. He can be reached at jgaffney@elp.rr.com.

The Computer Age

by Geoffrey Wilkinson

[Reprinted from the 2003 March issue of "SYDTRUG News", newsletter of SYDTRUG Inc., PO Box 75, PANANIA NSW 2213, AUSTRALIA where it was submitted by Mary Randall]

It is sixty years since I was last considered illiterate, and a lot of water has passed under the bridge since then, but it seems that I am back to where I began, at least as

far as computers are concerned. In fact I am worse off now, because I do not even understand the language. When our teacher, Miss Bedall, spoke to us in my first class at the Parish Church School, Darlaston, UK back in 1941, I was able to understand what she said, so I learned a little each day, and proved it when my Grandma asked me what I had learned after my first day, and I replied with great excitement,

"E for Egg, and A for Apple".

All this has reared its ugly head, because Sheila, my wife, has recently become computer semi-literate, and is leaving me behind on a daily basis, so much so that I am starting to panic, lose confidence, and self esteem. The only prop to my Black Country ego, is that I am still pretty handy with a spanner and screwdriver. In the last twenty-four hours I have changed a tap washer in the shower, stopped the cistern from leaking in the toilet, and changed the spark plugs in the car. I hope something else goes wrong soon, or else she will start to think that she can manage without me.

Mind you, her present meager knowledge of computers has not been gained without pain. It all started when I learned through our local branch of U 3 A, The University of the Third Age, that a course called "Seniors On-line" was available for older citizens, and I convinced her to enroll. Well, rather her than me, I can do without stress at my time of life.

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I soon learned the beginner's catch phrase, however,

"I've lost it".

"What do you mean, you've lost it ?"

"I thought I'd saved it, now I can't find it."

"You can't find it ?"

"Well, it should be in there somewhere, but I can't retrieve it. It should be on the floppy disk. It's OK, I've found it."

"What did you do ?"

"I don't know."

"Have you tried downloading it ?"

"Oh shut up, you don't know what you're talking about."

Once a computer comes through the door, love and respect go out of the window.

A friend had given us an old computer so that Sheila could practice what "Seniors On-line" were preaching, but it soon became apparent that this machine was not compatible with the ones she was learning on.

AOL Scam Alert

by Steve Bass - Pasadena IBM Users Group

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Pass this on to all your AOL friends

We all know someone -- friends and relatives -- who use AOL, and I suggest you consider forwarding this message to them. As you'll see, it's not a hoax but a real-life scam.

It started when my mother recently received a beautifully done AOL message. It's the kind of thing you read about but rarely get to see firsthand.

The message she received was from the AOL Billing Services Team. She forwarded it to the accounting department -- moi -- because I pay for her account (she has me to blame, I know). Read the message here:

<http://www.pibmug.com/files/aolletter.jpg>

It took a minute to figure out something wasn't right.

Telltale Clues

For one thing, the e-mail header showed that the AOL Billing Services Team was blind copying her using version AOL 5.0

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(<http://www.pibmug.com/files/aolheader.jpg>). You'd think they could use a more current version, right? There's more: The return address was Remindingyou@aol.com and the subject line had a misspelling.

I followed the Billing link in the message. At first glance I saw an AOL Welcome box. (<http://www.pibmug.com/files/aolwelcomescreen.jpg>). Take a careful look and you'll know why I was suspicious. Yep, lots of misspellings.

I went along with the game plan and clicked OK. Now I was staring into what looked like a remarkably authentic credit card payment form. Even if you didn't click the other links, you HAVE to see this one. It's worse than a loan application. <http://www.pibmug.com/files/aolcreditcard.jpg>

Is it Really You?

To make sure it's really you, they also want your Social Security Number, date of birth, driver's license number, and mother's maiden name. With that, the scammers can get to "identity theft" heaven before you shut down your PC for the night.

But they're not finished. How about throwing in your AOL screen name and password, something even novices know AOL wouldn't do. To add a level of legitimacy, they warn you that, "For your safety, please do not download any files from strangers. AOL will never ask you to download anything."

Who Is?

I went to <http://www.samspace.org>, my favorite Web examination site, and backtraced the Billing link. (The site was closed by Hypermart so it now leads to an error page). It's an obfuscated URL: <http://www.aol.com-billing:july-2002@072002.hypermart.net> that leads to <http://072002.hypermart.net>. It works because any characters before the @ sign are ignored. And all it took was a quick web search with Google.com to find locations loaded with AOL scamming files. You can view one site here: <http://www.pibmug.com/files/aolhypermart.jpg>

I contacted one of AOL's security people I met years ago because of a story I did about AOL. Unfortunately, I never heard back from him. I also sent a message to abuse@hypermart.net and they responded in four days.

AOL Protection Strategy

Forward this to a buddy using AOL. They need to know that the best AOL protection strategy is to be alert to constant scams. You know, if it looks like a duck, smells like one, and occasionally quacks, there's a good chance it is one.

If you're unsure about a billing question, it's best to call AOL's billing services directly at 800/827-6364, or their Screen Name/Password line at 888/265-8004.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He's also a founding member of APCUG.

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Check PCW's current edition at www.pcworld.com/resource/toc/index.asp and sign up for the Steve Bass on line newsletter at www.pcworld.com/bass_letter.

Everything Else on Google **Part 4**

by Joe Nowak

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****Introduction****

In the last article I said it would be the last on this topic unless Google comes up with something else. Guess what ? They did. This is going to be the last article anyway. I don't know if the readers could take much more and I know even I am getting overwhelmed by the Google site. In this article we will start with the newest Google service, then move on to discuss Google's Directory tab, Google Answers, Google Special Searches and the Google toolbar.

****News is New****

#"This page was generated entirely by computer algorithms without human editors. No humans were harmed or even used in the creation of this page."# -- Advisory at the bottom of Google's new news page.

At the time of this writing (2002 September) Google has just added a new tab to the top of the Google search page. It is called News. And that's exactly what it covers. This breaks from the usual Google plain page presentation. While a search field box is available, Google uses a series of special computer algorithm to display brief headline stories of the day. These are also hyperlinked. Google searches over 4,000 news sources for their information and only the last 30 days are covered. Because no human editors are involved Google sometimes comes up with an interesting twist in the choice of news stories and the way it groups things. It also eliminates editorial bias.

What kind of news reports can you get ? When I first heard of this new service I had just read that the e-mail smiley :-) had recently celebrated its 20th birthday (1982 September 19). Sure enough I typed "smiley :-)" (without quotes) and found 484 articles on the topic. One of those articles was the one I had read in the Wall Street Journal (WSJ). For those that don't know, the WSJ is a subscription site on the World Wide Web. Google brought the article up and I didn't have to log in to the WSJ site, or enter my password.

This service has just finished beta testing and at this writing results are still being disclaimed with a statement of (BETA). It does have a significantly different appearance and when you first visit this site you would do well to click on the "About Google News" hyperlink for an explanation and instructions.

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Something Completely Different

We now travel from News, generated totally by computer algorithms, to Directory, generated by human volunteer editors in the Open Directory Project. At first glance this looks a lot like the old Yahoo home page. A list of broad categories with subcategories is listed on the Directory home page.

The method normally used with this type of searching (drill down) is to click on a broad category. This category takes you to a group of related subcategories and so on and so forth until you find the perfect solution for your search.

What does the Directory search do that Web search doesn't? This is a common question asked any time the drill down method is discussed. After all, there are only about 1.5 million web sites indexed here as opposed to 2.5 billion under Google Web.

Sometimes while using a keyword search it seems like you can't narrow the search enough, or you're just using the wrong words entirely and getting few, or maybe zero, hits. Now is the time to try the directory. Sometimes using the words of someone else can help.

Let's take a simple search using this technique. We'll look for Christopher Reeve, who played Superman in the movies. We go to the Google Directory home page and see the broad categories of Arts, Business, Computers. We suspect since Christopher Reeve is an actor he would fall somewhere under the category of Arts.

We click on Arts and see more subcategories: ... Awards, Bodyart, Celebrities, Classical Studies ... show up and we choose Celebrities. Now we receive a series of choices; we can branch to additional categories like Addresses, Fan Clubs, or Gossip, or try to get our search narrower by using the A-Z index. We click on R and are taken to a page listing celebrities from Daniel Radcliffe to Winona Ryder. Somewhere in there we find Chris Reeve. We can see from the number 5 in parentheses next to his name that there are five direct hits for Christopher Reeve. We are shown yet another subcategory of Superman with 19 hits, or we can go to one of the five sites that focus on Christopher Reeve.

The Web page listing are not shown in alphabetical order, but rather in the order of their significance (called Page Rank) to the current search task. The green bar on the left of each citation suggests just how relevant each Web site is to the current search criteria.

Immediately below the Google logo at the top of the page the words Reeve, Christopher are seen. Below that is the search path we used to get here (Arts > Celebrities > R > Reeve, Christopher). At any time during this index search we can revert to keyword search, with one difference. The keyword search will only search within the particular directory category. So, if we were looking for the Patriot, a standard search in Google Web might find results for the New England Patriots, militia groups, the PATRIOT Act of 2001, and more (396,000+ hits).

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Going to Google Directory and clicking Sport > Football and then typing "patriot" gets listings dealing only with football teams known as "Patriots" (253 hits).

You've read this article, tried every trick demonstrated here, several of your own, and you still can't find what your looking for ? With Google Answers () that's exactly what you do. Google has a group of 500 certified researchers who will look things up for you. These researchers do not do this out of the kindness of their heart. That means you have to pay. The prices start at \$2.50 per question. Google guarantees satisfaction with the results and 85% of questions are answered within one day. If you are dissatisfied with the results you have the option of requesting a refund, minus \$0.50 for posting the question. The rules of getting a refund are a bit involved, so before deciding to use this service it would probably be best to read the instructions (click on "guarantees satisfaction" on the Google Answer home page) for this procedure.

I have never used this particular Google service, but I did look at several of the questions (no charge for this) and the responses. With 500 different researchers the results were varied. Some answers were brief and simply provided web sites where the answer might be found; others had in-depth explanation with appropriate Web sites and search techniques listed, while some came back with a "No answer at this time".

****Isn't that Special****
Google has "Special Searches" (<http://www.google.com/options/specialsearches.html>) ... that at first

glance appear similar to the Google Directory search. These searches are much more focused, in that they cover a limited number of special categories: U.S. Government, Linux, BSD, Apple Macintosh, Microsoft and a special University search. That's it. Each one gets tighter results to your query than a straight search from Google Web.

After getting to the Google Special Searches page, click on one of the choices, like University Search. Pick from an alphabetic list of colleges and then use standard Google search techniques to find what you want about the school.

From Google Special Searches I clicked on University Search, then clicked on Columbia College, Chicago. Then I typed "admission policy" (with quotes) and found four citations, all from the Columbia College Web site. At Google Web I typed "Columbia College Chicago" "admission policy" and had fifteen hits with several references leading to sites that simply group Columbia as one of several colleges that have an open enrollment Policy.

The scope of the searches in Google Special Searches is extremely narrow and tends to focus on colleges and Universities and various special areas of computer technology. If you have the need, the device and services are at your disposal. It deserves at least a quick glance.

If your needs revolve around searching the Internet, you definitely want to consider downloading the Google Toolbar.

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This is an add-on for your Microsoft Internet Explorer 5.x or 6.x, and allows the user to enter search criteria in one swift click. The toolbar is narrow and doesn't require a lot of screen real estate. The search box is small, but allows you instant access to Google without the necessity of typing the URL or finding it in your favourites list. Just type your search criteria and click.

Once the download starts it is a quick and easy process as Google installs itself on your browser without additional input from the user. Before reaching the download/install stage you may run into several disclaimers. If you have an early version of MSIE (MS Internet Explorer) 5.0 there are some known problems and they are explained with work-arounds. The Google Toolbar also sends information about the sites you visit to Google. They use this information to determine the Page Rank of the web site you visit, by comparing it with others who have visited the site. Google claims the toolbar does not supply them with who you are, or your e-mail address. I'm still uncertain if I really understand why this info needs to be collected.

I've been using the Google toolbar on my computer at work for about the last two months and it is fantastic. It works the same as the regular Google web site and eliminates the need for going to the Google home page before I can start a search.

There has been some concern about inherent problems in the Google Toolbar and I would refer those with concerns to the

excellent response from the "Maestro of computer answers", C.C. Delan in the 2002 September #Hard-Copy [SYDTRUG News# Editor's Note: See #SYDTRUG News# 2003].

****Final Words****

In this month's article we have touched on the Google News, Google's Directory tab, Google Answers, Google Special Searches and the Google toolbar. I'm sure that, while every feature available from Google has not been covered fully, this series of articles have provided a good starting point for your further exploration of the nearly infinite possibilities available with Google. Happy searching!

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