



The PULP

HUGE this month:

March 18th General Meeting:

Ann Duffy wants to transfer her 35mm negatives into iPhoto.

We will setup the hardware and software.

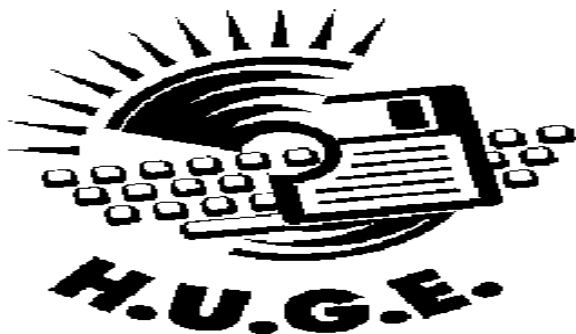
See you there!

East Hartford Public Library
Main St. & Central Ave., East Hartford, CT.

Q&A Session: 6:30PM–7:15PM
Meeting starts at: 7:15PM

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MEETING LOCATIONS

East Hartford Public
Library
Main & Central Avenue
in the Lion's
Room(downstairs)

Wethersfield Public
Library 500 Silas Deane
Hwy., Wethersfield, CT

Under New Management

As you might have read last month, Pat Teevan is no longer Editor-in-Chief/Publisher of the PULP. Someone even (your word here) has taken over the job, me. The staff has been completely replaced (except for one writer) and if you have any complaints--file them or the job might be yours.

While I was contemplating how dumb it was/or I was to take over the responsibility of keeping you informed about what's happening in the computer world, a couple of thoughts popped into my head:

Its been said that it's easier to follow an unsuccessful coach than a Hall of Famer, so I figured my tenure would be short.

I once heard a parable about becoming a new manager--Once upon a time an old-time manager was being escorted out of the business and spotted his successor. He said to the

budding manager that at times problems/crisis will arise, and that he had left 3 numbered envelopes in his desk drawer to help. Sure enough 6 months later there was a problem. The new manager remembered the 3 envelopes and proceeded to open the first one. In it was a piece of paper with the words, "Blame your predecessor". So he did and survived his first crisis.

Some time later a second crisis arose and the now semi-experienced manager opened the second envelope. The paper inside simply said, "Reorganize". He did and life went happily forward. Eventually a third problem occurred. The now old-timer opened the third envelope. The paper inside said, "Prepare 3 envelopes".

That said--here goes:

Stuart Rabinowitz
Editor-in-Chief/Publisher

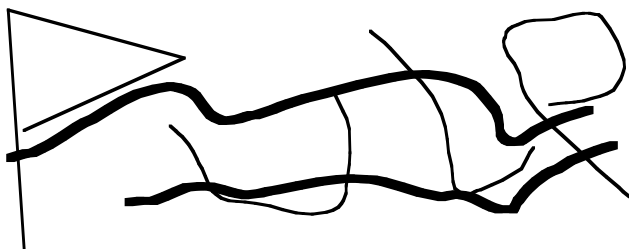


A Little Computer Quiz

by Stuart Rabinowitz

The trivia and minutiae of the computer related world. The answers will appear next month or you can submit an answer sheet at the General Meeting. Good Luck.

- 1 This past December, 2007 there was a party in Silicon Valley to mark the 25th anniversary of the introduction of a legendary computer, which one?
- 2 Who was the founder and CEO of the company?
- 3 This same company had the opportunity to distribute a different computer, but choose to offer their own. What was the other computer?
- 4 At some point we have all encountered a 'CAPTCHA'. They are those requests to type in some letters in order to do something at a website. What does 'CAPTCHA' stand for?
- 5 Who developed the term?
- 6 When?



Answers to Feb., 2008 Quiz

- 1 There are approximately 120 buildings on the Microsoft campus in Redmond, WA and they are numbered starting at 1 (which was the first building), except one building (& number) is missing. Which one?
A There is no building 7
- 2 I'm sure many of you know that the Osborne I was the first commercially available portable computer, but who developed the first prototype?
A Alan Kay developed the idea and mockup of the Dynabook in the early 1970's while working at Xerox PARC
- 3 The Osborne was the first (trans)portable computer, but what was the first computer to be consider (and be labeled) as a laptop?
A In 1983 the Gavilan SC, weighed in at a mere nine pounds with a clamshell design, rechargeable nickel-cadmium batteries, LCD screen, and a touchpad pointing device. It ran MS-DOS on a 5-MHz Intel 8088 processor and came standard with a hard drive, a floppy drive, and a 300-baud modem -- all for the low, low price of \$4,000. They declared bankruptcy in 1985 and were out of business by 1987.
- 4 One of the many games that can be played on a computer is chess, so when and where was the first computer chess program developed?

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All Computers Wait at the Same Speed

by Vinny La Bash, Member of the Sarasota
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I first heard that phrase about ten years ago at a geek conference in Seattle. A decade ago is earlier than the Stone Age in computer years. It was probably meant to make fun of the propeller heads that couldn't live without the fasted CPU on their motherboard. The geeks' concern with processing speed seemed ridiculous to those who understood that computers spend very little of their time processing information. They spend it waiting for us to tell them to do something. You would certainly find your life very boring if you had to spend 99% of your time waiting for other people to act before you could do anything.

What are we talking about? We're talking about keeping your system properly tuned so that you don't have to wait while it tries to do its job. It's no secret that Vista has had performance problems. Microsoft has promised that their upcoming service pack should resolve most if not all performance issues. We've heard similar kinds of promises from Redmond before, but this time they say they really mean it. In fairness, not every performance issue can be laid at Microsoft's doorstep, but it's always fun to blame them because they're such an easy target.

Vista puts great demands on your CPU due to Aero and other assorted graphical gizmos built into the product. They should have named it the Eye Candy OS. Responding to the user community, Microsoft also added security

features and additional functions that were not present in XP. When you ask your CPU to do more, you're adding overhead. This means you need more CPU power or you live with a slower system. If Vista performance has been less than stellar, the good news is that you can do something about it other than buying a new computer. Here are some of the things you can do to make Vista more appealing from a performance standpoint.

You're probably tired of hearing this one. It's like mother telling you to eat your vegetables. You know she's right, but you don't want to hear it. **ADD MORE MEMORY.** Vista is hungrier for RAM than any of its predecessors, and with memory as cheap as it is, it doesn't make sense to keep it on a starvation diet. XP runs great on one gigabyte of RAM. Vista should have two gigabytes as a minimum, and you won't go wrong by installing even four gigabytes.

Even with enough physical memory, Vista can still act like a tired old dog if you have a lightweight video card. Go into the Performance Information and Tools utility in Control Panel, and check out your video card with the Windows Experience Index. You need a video card that's certified for Vista Premium and supports Direct X 10. Use the money you save on RAM to buy a good video card. Don't try to do this one on the cheap.

A real help to good performance is bringing your power settings to the High Performance option. Do this from the Power Options utility in Control Panel. The default setting is Balanced which is OK for XP but not Vista. The High Performance setting gives you full access to all the Power in the CPU.



Turn off the sidebar. While this feature is visually appealing, it has few socially redeeming traits. Turning off this feature can sometimes result in significantly faster startups and shutdowns. Disable the sidebar by right-clicking it. Select Properties, and remove the checkmark in the box that starts the sidebar when Vista wakes up.

Fine tune your indexing options. Vista has a great search feature, but it's totally dependent on indexing the files and programs on your hard drive. It's a mixed blessing. You have a fantastic search capability when you index all locations, but you take a performance hit. By indexing fewer areas, performance will improve, but your search feature will be less robust.

Vista won't let you turn off indexing completely, but you can disable indexing for locations that may not be important to you. Do this from the Performance Information and Tools utility in Control Panel.

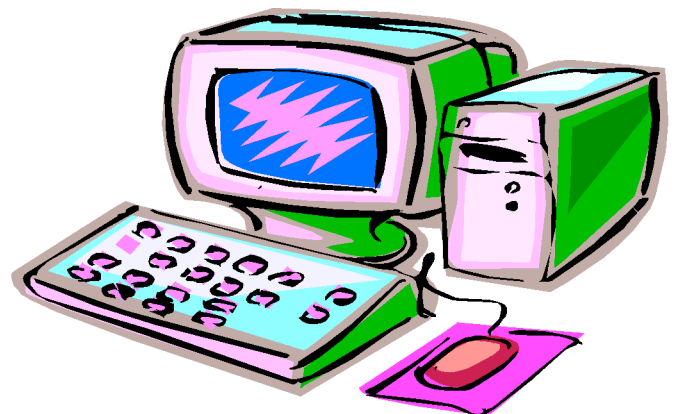
Here's another "eat your veggies" type tip. Empty the Recycle Bin and adjust it so it doesn't take up more than 2% of your hard drive. Right click on the Recycle Bin, select Properties, and make the necessary adjustments in the dialog box. Don't forget to defrag your disk once in a while, and empty the Recycle Bin before you defrag, not after.

Open My Computer from the Desktop. Right click on the C: drive, select Properties and check how much space you have left on your hard drive. If you're approaching 90% or more, you need to take non-essential files and move them to another location. Vista needs free disk space to perform certain housekeeping functions, and if it has to hunt around for room or use virtual memory, your performance hit could be enormous.

Keep your device drivers up-to-date. Device drivers were designed to ensure that programs or hardware peripherals could "talk" to the system without problems and do their jobs properly. Newer drivers can improve 3D performance, fix bugs and other graphical glitches in games and video programs. Device drivers can avoid memory conflicts and prevent programs from squabbling over resources. Newer device drivers can support innovative features within applications, and ensure compatibility among different programs.

These are only some of the things you can do to improve Vista performance. Removing unnecessary startup programs, preventing spyware and virus infections, and updating old software are additional steps you can take. If your system is frequently hanging up or crashing after doing everything you can do to improve performance, then it's time to consider reformatting your hard drive and reinstalling everything, but that's another article.

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E-Mail Responsibilities

By Bob Schwartz, a member of HAL-PC, Texas,
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E-mail is a very valuable method of almost instant communication. However, many people operate under an illusion that it is private. It is not. Once sent, it is effectively broadcast to the world. So one should NEVER send anything that they might regret. Once it is sent, it is now in other people's hands. The recipient may or may not care as much about controlling your e-mails distribution as you do.

Just suppose you send something clever about someone you know to a friend or acquaintance and they bring it up on the screen. Then, they take a break and go to coffee, leaving it on the screen. Another person passes by, snoops, and sees the e-mail. They also think it is clever, and make a copy of it and send it to someone they know, etc.

Or, the employer records all e-mail traffic passing within their company, which they have every right to do, since the equipment is theirs.

Worse yet, some people send messages that they believe are benign and strictly business, yet some self-anointed "god" thinks otherwise.

Yet even sneakier are viruses that can unknowingly, by you, forward your e-mails elsewhere; or, police and other snoops tapping your connection. There are innumerable ways by which your "private" traffic can go public.

So, the BOTTOM LINE is: compose your messages with care, check the addressees listed, and review the message before pressing the "SEND" key.

Oh, by the way: do not think that once sent and "deleted", that the file is gone from your computer. When you "delete" a file, this DOES NOT ERASE THE FILE. All this does is change the first letter of the file name in the directory. The file, in all its glory, remains untouched on the hard drive, which is why it is so easy to recover it. Technology has provided a variety of means to recover and reconstitute "deleted" files.

To conclude, e-mail is a tremendously valuable means of almost instant communication. Just make sure that you use it carefully, thoughtfully and wisely.

Bob Schwartz is a HAL-PC member, retired EE, 14 patents, technical writer, active in civic affairs: President, Brays Bayou Association; Vice President, Marilyn Estates Civic Association; Correspondence Secretary with the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy.

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Year 2007 Tax Software

by Milton G. Gugenheim, Jr., a member of HAL-PC, Texas, and an AARP Tax Aide Instructor and Local Coordinator for over 12 years

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Personal Software

Most of us seem to put the dreaded tax chore off until the last moment and then find ourselves faced with incomprehensible IRS forms, shoeboxes of receipts, check registers, antacids and headache pills. The return must be filed by Tuesday, April 15, 2008 (you can file an extension to delay filing until August 15, 2008. But payment, without P&I, is due April 15, 2008 – the IRS is nice, but not that nice!)

Fortunately help is on the way in the form of a couple of good tax preparation programs from Intuit – TurboTax, H&R Block – TaxCUT and 2nd Story's TaxACT. This review covers the two most popular programs.

In addition to well-crafted interfaces and good online help, both TaxCUT and TurboTax include Microsoft's Internet Explorer Web browser for seamless integration with the World Wide Web for updating. An internet connection is required to obtain updates as the software is released in December, before the IRS has completed all the forms, etc.

Even if you think that you need the skills of an experienced CPA in the preparation of your return, either of these programs will help you to become better organized and possibly keep accountant fees to a minimum.

I found the following software tax packages for

the 2007 tax year: TurboTax Basic, TurboTax Deluxe, TurboTax Premier, TaxCUT, TaxCUT Deluxe, and TaxCUT Premier, for Windows 98, 2000, ME, XP, Vista and MacPowerPC processor. Most of the local office supply stores and other retail and software outlets stock the software.

There are free tax preparation programs on the web. Go to a search engine and enter "free federal income tax programs". TaxACT is a good free program. The program is easy to use and includes forms most tax payers require. A paid version is also available for more complex returns.

Features

TurboTax Basic is the basic package needed to file all individual returns including professional or sole proprietor, and includes Internet Explorer on the CD. TurboTax Deluxe includes all the features of TurboTax Basic and one free e-file (after rebate). Plus extra help for deductions – the deduction finder (library resources, tax planner, on-screen references and IRS publications, video advice and a financial planner). TurboTax Premier includes all the feature of TurboTax Deluxe plus help for investments, complex taxes, Schedule C business and Rental Property.

TaxCUT Deluxe is almost identical to TurboTax including Internet Explorer 6 on the CD. TaxCUT Deluxe includes all the features of TurboTax Deluxe, tax tips, on-screen IRS instructions and publications. All the programs will import financial data from most popular financial programs, and include details on preparing a return, reviewing a return, electronic filing (e-file) via a second party, planning for next year,



plus help locations.

Installation

All packages were easy to install following the given directions. TurboTax Basic requires 175 MB of disc space without the installation of Explorer. TaxCUT Deluxe requires 170 MB of disc space without the installation of Explorer

Manual

Both TurboTax and TaxCUT include a on-screen user guide with typical screens of the described function. All the usual files, edit, forms, tools and help are in the tool bar. TaxACT has almost as much on-screen help.

General Overview

All of the packages have an easy step-by-step program to walk the taxpayer through the various steps required to do a return. The experienced taxpayer may prefer the forms method after completing a basic information page. The taxpayer selects the form and fills in the required information. Some have supplemental sheets for recording information, which is then transferred to the form. Help is available from any screen. All programs import from Quicken and Microsoft Money.

Details

The latest tax changes are incorporated in the packages (at the time of release). Each package allows the taxpayer to enter data on various forms after completing the basic information sheet. The return is then saved. Be sure to give the file a name if more than one return will be prepared using the same program. The programs may be used whether you are the organized type or the shoe box type. The shoebox type should organize the various types of entries first.

Printing

TurboTax and TaxCUT allow you to print an IRS

return or select a form or schedule to be printed. The current computer printer setup does not have to be changed. Check to be sure you have the latest updates prior to printing the return for filing. Print a return for filing and a return for your records. The record return will contain detail sheets. I have no experience using these programs to e-file.

Summary

The Basic package of TurboTax or Deluxe of TaxCUT is more than adequate for most users. The upgrade packages are great for users who like the “bells and whistles” that include lots of helpful literature, suggestions, etc. The street price for the basic packages is around \$20, TurboTax Deluxe, and TaxCUT Premier is about \$40 Each company has an extensive business program for about \$70 +. A new program is required for the each tax year. TurboTax and TaxCUT sites, each sell the programs and it will cost more than the local stores.





from page 3

Helpful Hints: I suggest the return be prepared in all caps since this is preferred by the IRS. All returns are mathematically corrected based on the input data. Most of programs have promotion tie-ins, such as a money program, anti-virus, etc. Read carefully the conditions before buying the program. TurboTax, for more info goes to: www.turbotax.com/support. Block TaxCUT. For more info go to: www.taxcut.com and for TaxACT go to: www.taxact.com.

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A 1956 and it ran on the MANIAC I computer at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. Actually the game was a variant, being played with rules that excluded several legal moves. The first chess program to play complete games wasn't developed until 1958.

5 That first chess program actually only ran 3 times, what was its record?

A It beat a novice, lost to skilled human, and (presumably) tied itself, so its record was 1W, 1L, & 1T.

6 Who wrote it?

A The Los Alamos Chess program, written by computer scientists Paul Stein and Mark Wells





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Editor	Stuart Rabinowitz
Distribution	George Carbonell

Membership: Anyone may become a member. Dues are \$12 per year and include a one-year subscription to The Pulp as well as access to the HUGE Public Domain disk libraries and BBS. Meeting topics, times and places can be found on page 1 of this issue.

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MARCH 2008

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
DST						
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18 General Meeting	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					