



## Useful Bits & Pieces

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### Using Electrical Wiring to Network

Generally users network their computers using cable via a router or a switch or by means of WiFi. Pulling cables can be a chore and WiFi doesn't work well in some environments. Did you know you can use your home electrical wiring for networking using powerline adapters? This technology is called HomePlug. Many modern powerline adapters are compliant with the IEEE 1901 standard (aka HomePlug AV2), which can transfer data up to 500 Mb/s. An older standard, HomePlug AV, can transfer data up to 200 Mb/s. However, home-use equipment in practice have

average read and write throughputs of about 60 and 50 Mb/s, respectively for HomePlug AV2 devices. There are nearly 200 products available from a variety of manufacturers (see [http://www.homeplug.org/certified\\_products](http://www.homeplug.org/certified_products)). In the table below are five examples of such equipment; more information about these products can be found in MaximumPC, 17 (12), December 2012, pp. 46-51.

### Supercomputers

Yes, these monster machines still exist and are very important. What are they used for? Weather forecasting, drug design, code breaking, probabilistic analysis, nuclear weapons design, molecular dynamics simulation, petroleum exploration, aircraft design and other

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Manufacturer/Model	Price for 2 Units	Ethernet Interface (Mb/s)	HomePlug AV2 Compliant	HomePlug AV Compliant
Cisco, Linksys PLSK400	\$82	10/100	No	Yes
D-Link DHP-501AV	\$105	10/100/1000	Yes	Yes
Netgear Nano 500 XAVB5101	\$130	10/100/1000	Yes	Yes
TP-Link AV500 TL-PAS11Kit	\$95	10/100/1000	No	Yes
Trendnet TPL-401E	\$115	10/100/1000	Yes	Yes




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applications requiring vast numerical calculations. The table below illustrates the fastest computers in recent years.

The speed of these machines is difficult to comprehend. A FLOP is a floating point operation per second (such as 3 plus 4); a PFLOP (or PetaFLOP) is 10<sup>15</sup> FLOPS. In the mid- to late 1990s Cray C90 supercomputers had a processing speed of 8 gigaflops (10<sup>9</sup> FLOPS). It could solve a problem in 0.002 seconds which would take a PC some hours to complete. The IBM Sequoia (running Linux) is 2,000,000 times faster than these Crays! Speed is not the only important factor. Power consumption, for example, is also very important. The IBM Sequoia consumes 7.9 megawatts whereas the Tianhe-1A uses “only” 4.04 megawatts.

### What’s Going On With My Computer?

Have you ever experienced an application that “hangs” or behaves in an unexpected manner? How about your computer suddenly running oh so slow? Ah yes, stuff happens. Resource Monitor (resmon) to the rescue! Resource Monitor is Windows Task Manager on steroids. To activate Resource Monitor, go the Start button, key “resmon” and left-click on “resmon” when it appears. You will need to have administrator privilege to run this tool.

Across the top of resmon you will see five tabs: Overview, CPU, Memory, Disk and Network. Click on any of these and you will see a host of

additional parameters, such as processes, services, associated handles, associated modules, physical memory, disk activity, [disk] storage, network activity, TCP connections, listening ports, etc. To the right you will see a variety of real-time graphs, depending which of the five tabs you have selected.

What does all this mean? Admittedly it’s a bit complicated and the best way to use resmon is to spend some time using it before you have a problem. Playing with resmon when all is well will give you an idea of what is normal so that when you use it trying to diagnose a problem you will be able to spot the abnormal. Of course the first tool you should use is the Task Manager (start it by keying Ctrl+Alt+Delete simultaneously and left-clicking on Start Task Manager), which will often give you a good idea of what’s going on or not working.

The Resource Monitor is a small subset of the utility called Performance Monitor (perfmon). This tool can be activated by going to the Start button, key “perfmon” and left-click on “perfmon” when it appears. However, perfmon is very complex, highly configurable, and has what appears to be thousands of what are called “counters”, that is sub-functions that monitor a very wide selection of parameters. See <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc749154.aspx> for information about this tool from Microsoft. This is not a tool for neophytes.

Year	Supercomputer	Peak Speed (PFLOPS)	Cores	Location
2012	IBM Sequoia	16.32	1,572,864	Livermore, USA
2011	Fujitsu K	10.51	705,024	Kobe, Japan
2010	Tianhe-1A (very different architecture)	2.566	86,016 +7,168 GPUs	Tianjin, China
2009	Cray Jaguar	1.759	224,526	Oak Ridge, USA
2008	IBM Roadrunner	1.026	25,920	New Mexico, USA
1990s	Cray C90 series	0.000008	16	USA

## Linux and Open Source News

by Geof Goodrum

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### Magnatune – an Alternative Music Service

It's more difficult to find a wide selection of music CDs in local stores, and my CD shelves are near capacity anyway. I occasionally stream music from music services and radio stations, and downloaded a few MP3 tracks using free credits I received with Amazon.com purchases. However, I won't pay for music in lossy (degraded quality) formats like MP3—I'd rather pay the same per-track cost for the original CD with high-quality lossless WAV format audio and "rip" copies in lossy formats for personal use, as I need them. I resent record labels realizing greater profits by selling degraded quality music while eliminating their media duplication, packaging and distribution costs. In some cases, the downloaded files include "Digital Rights Management" (DRM), also known as copy-protection, which may limit use on multiple devices and keeping backup copies.

For several years I admired an alternative business model adopted by online music service Magnatune (<http://magnatune.com/>), which I find consistent with the Open Source software philosophy (see <http://magnatune.com/info/openmusic>). It's no great secret that typical industry recording contracts rarely favor the artists, as described at <http://magnatune.com/info/why>. As Magnatune's founder John Buckman explains on the info page under "Why we are not evil," Magnatune works with artist's directly, not record labels, to market their music. 50% of Magnatune membership fees go directly to the artist, 50% to Magnatune (details at [http://magnatune.com/info/faq\\_download#musicians](http://magnatune.com/info/faq_download#musicians)).

Magnatune is also friendly to its members, who can access music by online streaming (high or low bandwidth) and by download in a variety of lossy (MP3, AAC, Ogg Vorbis) and lossless (WAV, FLAC) digital formats. Album art is included with

most formats or as a separate download. Magnatune does not use DRM, and actually encourages members to share up to three copies of albums with friends as a way of introducing them to the service (<http://magnatune.com/info/give>), but limited to one album per friend per month. Even use of the music in non-commercial podcasts is allowed (Magnatune has liberal terms for commercial licensing, too). However, a membership cannot be shared with others. Instead of treating the customer like a criminal with restrictive DRM and legal threats, Magnatune relies on the honor system.

Magnatune supports a wide variety of musical categories, from Ambient, New Age, World, Electronica, Rock, Jazz, Hip Hop, Blues and Classical. Magnatune reviews and selects only 3% of the music submitted. I've found the musicianship and recordings to be very high quality. That said, don't expect to find lots of major record label artists on Magnatune – though most are talented professional musicians and composers. You can find out for yourself by browsing the artist list and background information on the Magnatune web site and listening to their albums with the online music player for free (the default player uses Adobe Flash, but there is an impressive "Web 2.0" player at <http://greattuneplayer.jit.su/#/about>, as well). Magnatune also offers a free Song of the Day download at <http://magnatune.com/today/>. Note that a "Magnatune" announcement overlay is introduced to free streaming audio previews unless you login as a member.

Magnatune membership is available on a three month (\$45), annual (\$156) and lifetime (\$240) basis, during which time you can download or stream as much music as you like to any device. You get to keep whatever you download, even if your membership expires. The three month and annual options include a seven day free trial.

If you use the Open Source Amarok (<http://amarok.kde.org/>) or Rhythmbox (<http://www.gnome.org/projects/rhythmbox/>) music players (which include integrated access

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to Magnatune), use the link built-into the software to sign-up for your Magnatune membership. Magnatune will donate 10% of your membership fee to the project ([http://magnatune.com/info/faq\\_download#open](http://magnatune.com/info/faq_download#open)). For example, Rhythmbox (the default music player in Ubuntu 12.04) has the link under the Rhythmbox menu Edit, then select Plugins, check Magnatune Store, and click on Preferences in the Plugin window. In the Magnatune Store preferences window, click the link after "Get an Account at" to sign-up for Magnatune to ensure the project gets the credit. Also re-visit this preferences window to enter your account information and your download format preference once you have signed up.

I prefer downloading music in the non-proprietary FLAC format (<http://flac.sourceforge.net/>) for smallest files with highest-quality. FLAC files can be played directly by Linux-based music players and "transcoded" into the other formats, as needed (see <http://www.transcoding.org/cgi-bin/transcode>). If you plan to burn audio CDs,

#### Download

Kirsty Hawkshaw  
*The Ice Castle*

You can download this album in any of the formats below.

You will not be charged for multiple downloads. Your download password is valid for 60 days. If you lose your password, you can fill out the "redownload" form in our "Info" section to get it back, even after 60 days.



To download artwork: right-click the image and choose "save target as"

#### Recommended:

**44k/16bit WAV:** 541meg zip of perfect quality WAVs.  
**MP3 VBR:** 87meg zip of high quality MP3 [VBR](#) files.

#### Other formats:

**FLAC:** 256meg zip file of perfect quality [FLAC](#) files.  
**OGG:** 70meg zip file of high quality [Ogg Vorbis](#) files.  
**128kb MP3:** 67meg zip file of 128kb MP3 files.  
**Mac iTunes:** 59meg iTunes OS X [AAC](#) files.

#### Suggestions:

- If you're going to burn a CD, the WAV files are best, as they're a perfect copy of our master CD and work on Windows, Mac and Linux.
- If you're going to play on an iPod or other mp3 device, the MP3 VBR files are best, as they sound near-perfect and play everywhere.
- If you'd like to learn more about the other formats, click the link next to each.

you may want to download the larger WAV files that can be burned to CDs directly and skip the transcoding step. See the accompanying figure from a sample download page to see the options and relative filesizes.

### Review: SanDisk Sansa® Clip Zip™ MP3 Player

I had the recent misfortune of dropping my venerable (circa 2002) Sharp Zaurus handheld computer and breaking the audio jack off of the circuit board. Particularly unfortunate, as I've been using the Zaurus as my portable music player. While I'm fixing the Zaurus, I decided it was time to get a dedicated player with more capabilities, smaller size, and longer battery life. I found what I was looking for in the SanDisk Sansa Clip Zip MP3 Player.

The Clip Zip is light and very small: 2.25" high by 1.4" wide and 0.6" thick. The plastic case includes a microUSB port (a 6" USB 2.0 transfer cable is included), a stereo miniplug earphone jack (a set of basic padded earbuds are included), a microSDHC card slot, a 1.1" diagonal LCD screen, and controls for power, volume, and menu selection. The case also incorporates a spring-loaded belt clip (hence the model name), but the clip is plastic like the rest of the case. Incidentally, the case comes in colors including black, white, gray, blue, purple, red, and orange.



The Clip Zip has a non-replaceable Lithium Ion battery that lasts up to 15 hours on a full charge, and 4 GB of internal storage (8 GB model is also available). MicroSDHC cards (not included) can provide additional storage up to 32 GB. Not just a player supporting music and podcasts in MP3, WMA, secure WMA, Ogg Vorbis, FLAC, and DRM-free AAC (iTunes) formats, the Clip Zip also has an FM radio receiver with up to 30 station presets, a voice and FM radio recorder function, and a stopwatch function. The firmware is upgradeable from the SanDisk website, but is also replaceable with the Open Source Rockbox jukebox firmware (<http://www.rockbox.org/>) that has enhanced features and plug-ins.

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I use my Clip Zip with firmware v01.01.20A, a 8 GB microSDHC Class 2 card (for a total of 12 GB storage), and Sony MDR-ED12LP earbuds. The player fully recharges in less than three hours by connecting it to a computer through the USB cable. Under Ubuntu Linux, the internal storage and the expansion card each showed up as separate drives once connected. I do not use the player with Microsoft Windows, but the instructions indicate it functions similarly, and syncs with Windows Media Player 10 or later (see instructions). Music files can be dragged & dropped into the Music folder in the player storage, where the player detects them after the USB cable is disconnected. The menus are easy to read even on the small screen and reasonably easy to navigate with the controls. I use Ogg Vorbis and FLAC music files and found the sound quality to be excellent. If album art is embedded in the music file, it displays on the screen during playback (the screen will shutoff to save power).

More information is available on the SanDisk web site at <http://www.sandisk.com/clipzip/>. Best Buy sells the Clip Zip for \$39.99. The warranty in the US is one year.

### Featured Linux Software of the Month: January 2013

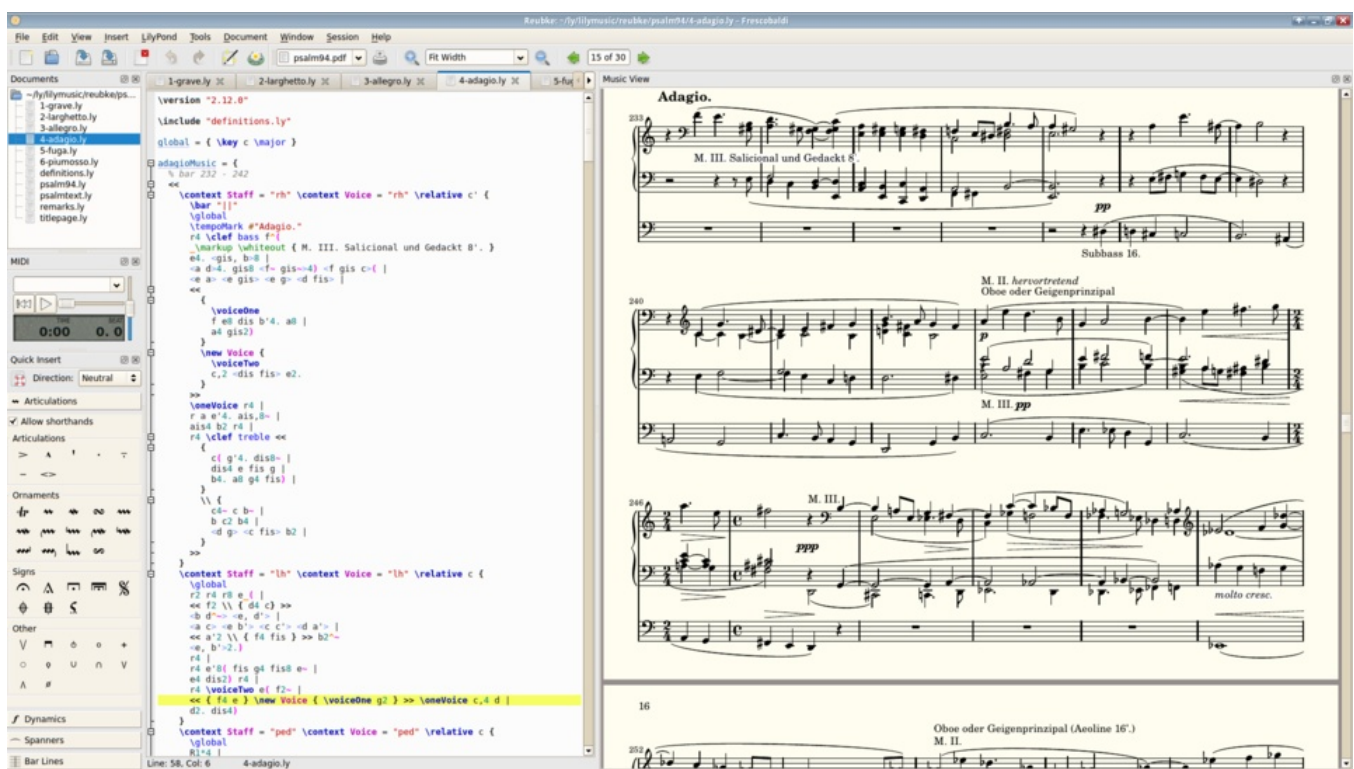
The software described below can be downloaded at the links provided or copied onto a USB flash drive at the PATACS Fairfax meeting. However, please check the online package management tool included with your GNU/Linux distribution first, as installation is often just a click away.

#### Frescobaldi – v2.0.8.

<http://www.frescobaldi.org/>. Free GNU General Public License source code and executable packages for Debian/Ubuntu and Fedora. Frescobaldi is a LilyPond (see below) sheet music text editor. It aims to be powerful, yet lightweight and easy to use. Features include: Powerful text editor with syntax highlighting and automatic completion; Music view with advanced Point & Click; Midi player to proof-listen LilyPond-generated MIDI files; Powerful Score Wizard to quickly setup a music score; Snippet Manager to store and apply text snippets, templates or scripts; Use multiple versions of LilyPond, automatically selects the correct version; Built-in LilyPond documentation

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Below: Editing a music score with Frescobaldi and LilyPond





Above: TripleA “New World Order” Game Map (combat)

Left: TripleA Game Map for Middle Earth

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browser and built-in User Guide; Modern user interface with configurable colors, fonts and keyboard shortcuts.

**LibrePlan** – v1.3.2. <http://www.libreplan.com/>. Free Affero GNU General Public License source code and executable packages for Debian/Ubuntu and OpenSUSE/Fedora. LibrePlan is a Web application for project planning, monitoring, and control. It is a collaborative tool to plan, monitor, and control projects and has a rich Web interface that provides a desktop-like user experience. All the team members can take part in the planning, which makes it possible to have real-time planning. It was designed for a scenario where multiple projects and resources interact to carry out the work inside a company. It makes it possible to communicate with other company tools, providing a wide set of Web services to import and export data.

**LilyPond** – v2.16.1. <http://lilypond.org/>. Free GNU General Public License source code and generic executable. LilyPond is a music engraving program using text-based input, devoted to producing the highest-quality sheet music possible. It brings the aesthetics of traditionally engraved music to computer printouts.

**The Linux Documentation Project** – <http://www.tldp.org/>. Free license documents in HTML, PDF and plain text formats by various authors. The Linux Documentation Project is a collection of Guides, FAQs and HOWTO documents on a wide variety of topics, including shell scripting, network configuration, filesystems, printing, security, and backup.

**TripleA** – v1.6.1.2. <http://triplea.sourceforge.net/mywiki>. Free GNU General Public License source code and Java executable. TripleA is a clone of the popular board game “Axis & Allies,” which is a turn based strategy wargame. TripleA also acts as a game engine allowing creation of custom games with similar mechanics to Axis and Allies. It supports online play, network play, play-by-email, and single player vs AI or hot-seat. It comes with 11 different maps and the option to download more from online repositories. Most games take place during World War II, though there are mods to play other conflicts like the Napoleonic wars, or Lord of the Rings. Requires Java6.

**Kernel Source** – v3.6.8. <http://www.kernel.org/>. Free GNU General Public License source code for all platforms by the Linux community.

## “And the Oscar Goes To . . .”

### Making a Good Video

by Greg Skalka

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April 2012 issue, Drive Light

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I’ve discovered it is a lot harder to make a good video than it is to take a good photograph. It is definitely a lot more work.

For the most part, the majority of the effort involved in taking a good photograph occurs before the picture is taken. While some augmentation and enhancement can occur after the exposure, through the marvels of digital photo editing, much of the merit of a photo comes from basics like subject, composition, focus and lighting. While photo editing software can enhance a photo, perhaps making a good picture great, it can only go so far in fixing a poor photograph.

In making a great video, once you have captured the action, your work typically has only begun. In spite of all the star-centric hoopla surrounding the Academy Awards, have you ever noticed that the majority of the awards don’t go to performers, but to creators?

There are only a few categories of awards given to actors and actresses. The majority go to writers, directors, film editors, cinematographers and designers of sound, sets, costumes and effects. In a lot of movies made today, most of the work is done after the filming is over. The difference between raw footage and polished final product is much greater for video than for still photography, indicative of the amount of post processing work usually required. As with photography, however, it is still hard to turn poor exposures into a good final product.

I got my first still camera in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, taking black and white film photos. In the 40-something years since, I learned to take decent photos (at least by my standards) using mostly slide film, where there was no chance for corrections after the exposure. I’ve had a digital camera for eleven years, but still don’t typically edit or enhance my pictures after taking them. I’ve spent more time

making digital corrections on the slides I have digitized, to fix the effects of film aging and imperfections, than on any of my recent digital photos.

Growing up, my family never had a movie camera. A neighbor friend my age got access to their family’s old 8 mm movie camera, and he and I made a two-reel epic titled “The History of Aviation.” Through careful planning and filming, we came up with a pretty impressive movie for a couple of grade school kids, though we probably destroyed most of our collections of model airplanes in the process (in addition to scorching the underside of his family’s metal patio cover during our “reenactment” of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima). I’d love to see that film again, if it still exists.

When my wife and I had kids of our own, my in-laws gave us one of the early shoulder-mounted video cameras (it was so big and heavy, you had to rest it on your shoulder), which recorded directly on VHS tape cartridges.

It recorded some of the early moments in our children’s lives, but being analog tape, the results were of mixed quality and could not be edited. We still have some of those 20-year-old tapes around (we should digitize them), but unfortunately I think a few were taped over at some time in the past. Later, we bought a smaller handheld camcorder, which used the smaller VHS-C tapes and was more convenient to take on family outings. These too would not be editable unless digitized.

My very first digital camera had a primitive video capture capability of 320 x 240 with no audio, which was about half the 704 x 480 equivalent resolution of the camcorder NTSC video, but was much more convenient to carry. It still resulted in only video snippets of our lives being captured. Even after graduating in 2007 to a new digital camera with 640 x 480 video and sound, I only shot occasional video clips, and never tried to find a way to edit and combine them into a coherent video feature.

For my birthday late last year, my wife surprised me with a Panasonic SD40 HD video camcorder. It

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records HD video (1920 x 1080) in the AVCHD (Advanced Video Coding High Definition) file format. Depending on the card size, it can store hours of video on an internal SDHC memory card.

One of the first things I learned about shooting HD video with this camcorder is that I'm going to need more hard drives. I think I shoot a lot of digital photos, sometimes hundreds per month. Using my 12 Megapixel camera, this averages 5 MB per photo, I'm generating around 0.5 GB of new photos per month (assuming 100 photos), or 6 GB per year. I first used my new camcorder in earnest during family festivities on Christmas Day, and managed to fill up the 8 GB SD card that came with the camcorder that day.

If I hold my filming down to 16 GB of video per month, that means I'll generate nearly 200 GB of video data every year. How am I going to store it all?

The second thing I learned about shooting HD video is that not every computer can easily play it. I normally use my XP laptop PC to copy my still photos from memory cards to hard drive and to view them, so I plugged in the SDHC card from the camcorder. Unfortunately, I could not view the .MTS AVCHD video files with any program on that computer. When I put the SD card in my wife's new Windows 7 laptop, I was able to play the files with Media Player. Score another one for Windows 7.

To make the 45 minute video on computer upgrading that was shown at our meeting last month, I started by shooting 51 video segments, totaling 5.7 GB. These included the introductions and descriptions I gave, the scenes of dis-assembly and modification of the computer, and the screen shots of the computer showing the results. A tripod proved essential in filming the scenes where I was talking, as I had to work with a film crew of only one (me). The camcorder's display can be flipped around to allow the subject of the video to see how they look onscreen. The tripod was also used in most of the shots where I was working on the computer, since it usually took two hands to do the work. I would set up the tripod and camcorder to give a good view of the

hardware, and then start filming. I was not watching what was being filmed, but just made sure my activities stayed within what I understood was the field of view.

One of the filming mistakes I made was in sometimes not allowing enough "lead in" and "lead out" time at the beginning and end of the scenes. Excess footage can be trimmed, but you can't easily make more footage after filming is done.

I started shooting scenes before determining what program I would be using to edit the video, so I was not sure what editing capabilities I could count on. I was not sure the program I would use could add titles, so I printed titles on paper and held them up in front of the camcorder. I later found titles could be added using software, but not with the flexibility of my paper signs.

Although I had a couple of commercial video editing software packages available to install, I decided to initially try the editing software that came with the camcorder, Panasonic's HD Writer LE 1.0. I installed it on my wife's laptop to make sure I'd have enough horsepower to do the video editing quickly.

I found the software would not recognize the raw video files I had copied from the SD memory card to the computer's hard drive. To use the captured video with this program, I had to connect the camcorder to the PC with the provided USB adapter cable and download the files from the camcorder through the program. The program had all the basic features I had seen in other video editing software. It allowed clips to be combined on a timeline, with a number of choices for transitions between scenes. Scenes could be edited for length, and basic titles could be added.

I chose the least flashy transitions and put the video segments together one by one. Because of the brief lead-ins I had shot, I could not add much in the way of additional titles, but fortunately the signs I had filmed worked well. I was concerned that 45 minutes might be too long without a break, so I split the video into two

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22 minute segments, allowing an intermission in between.

The program could convert the finished video to several different resolutions on DVD or Blu-Ray discs for playing on home players or computers.

I'll try using one of my fancier video editing programs with this camcorder one day, but I found the Panasonic-provided software could turn out a good video.

Since making a coherent video out of the filmed segments I made was not too difficult, I'll probably try to make similar edited videos for all the events I film.



## Customizing Labels in Word 2007

by Nancy DeMarte

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August 2012 issue, Sarasota PC Monitor

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Among special projects we users can do with Word is creating labels. The word "label" includes all sorts of things like shipping labels, address labels, business cards, name badges, and fabric transfers. Just look in the office stores at the racks of label paper for the range of projects. I began making our return address labels with Word years ago. They were simple: just our name and address. Since then I've learned more about how to customize labels by changing the font attributes and adding a graphic to each label. It isn't difficult, but does require a few special steps to make it successful. A note: Word offers two methods of creating labels, depending on your purpose. One uses the Mail Merge wizard to produce sheets where each label contains different content, such as mailing labels for a list of people. I do use Mail Merge often, and will discuss that in a future article. This article presents a walk-through of the process I use to customize a full page of identical labels.

The first step is choosing the right package of labels for your project. I always actually purchase the labels before starting, which can be done in

an office store or on the web, in order to have the vendor name and label product number handy when I start the project. Let's say I'm going to create a calling card (Why would a retiree need a business card?) which contains name, address, phone, and email address, plus a graphic. I go to an office store and buy a business card label package from the popular company, Avery, possibly product number 8871. The package tells me that these cards are 2 inches by 3 ½ inches and will print ten on each page, just what I want.

Next I open Word 2007 and click the Mailings tab, then Labels. I click Options, change the vendor to Avery US Letter, and scroll to my product number. Once the number is clicked, its attributes show up on the right side of the window. Since I want to customize these labels, I do not type the text in the Address box at this time. Instead, I click New Document, which opens a document which shows the outline of the cards I'm going to create. I will create my design in the first (top left) label and copy it to the rest.

I plan to create two text boxes in this first label, one to hold the text and one the graphic. To make sure my text and graphic stay where I put them, I start by opening the drawing canvas. If you remember when Microsoft first introduced the drawing canvas, you probably also remember screaming out loud when it appeared because it took over the page, moving all objects out of position. It's tamer now, so proceed. The canvas will be a way of grouping the two text boxes together. With the cursor in the first label, I click the Insert tab, then Shapes. I scroll to the bottom and click Drawing Canvas which opens it within the first label. I click and drag the edges of the canvas to fill the label. I click the Insert tab again, then Text box - Draw Text Box. I click inside the drawing canvas, hold down the left mouse button, and drag diagonally to draw a box. This box will hold the graphic, so I size it accordingly. Next, with the cursor inside the text box, I click Insert - Picture (or Clip Art). I find the graphic I want and drag or copy and paste it into the text box. Then I create another text box next to the first one and type my text in this box. Now I change the font, font size and text effects or

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colors using the commands in the Font group on the Home tab. If needed, I resize or move the text boxes to create my desired layout.

At this point, I realize that I don't want the two text boxes to have borders around them. To remove these, I select the first text box and click the Text Box Tools (Format) contextual tab - Shape Outline - No Outline. I repeat this process for the second text box, and all the borders are gone. (A contextual tab in Word 2007 or 2010 appears only when the item it relates to is selected. You must select the text box to see its tab.) Here is an example of a calling card with text box borders removed.

Now I need to copy this completed calling card label design to the other cards on the page. Since the drawing canvas has grouped the two text boxes together, I click to select the canvas, not the individual text boxes. I press Ctrl + C on the keyboard to copy the whole card to the clipboard. Now I can paste it into any number of places without having to copy it again. I click in the second cell and press Ctrl + V to paste the card, and so on until all ten cards are filled. When the page is complete, I save it to a folder on my computer for future use. Then I print one page of my cards on a blank sheet of paper so as not to waste a label sheet. I hold this print up behind a sheet of labels to make sure the design will fit correctly within each cell on the label sheet. Then I check the label package and/or printer manual for instructions for loading labels since printers differ. Just to be safe, I load only one label sheet into the printer for the first printing. If all is well, I continue with more copies.

At first reading, this sounds like a complicated process. But, as with many computer tasks, it's the attention to detail that makes for success. Give yourself a few tries, and you will be creating customized labels like a pro.



## POyNT

by George Harding

Treasurer, Tucson Computer Society, AZ  
April 2012 issue, eJournal  
www.aztcs.org  
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This is a nifty app for your iPhone or Blackberry. It points you to various services or places of business.

The choices are Businesses, People, Movies, Restaurants, Gas, Events and Offers.

For Businesses, you can enter a business name, such as "Wendy's" which produces a list of Wendy's restaurants sequenced by distance from your position. The list also includes other entries which include the name Wendy, such as a dentist, a veterinarian and a hospital! But it does show the fast-food restaurants you wanted to find. When you touch one of them, you get location information, including a map and directions.

If you choose People, you can search by name, phone or address. I tried the search by phone, using my phone number and got my name and address, along with directions and a map for location. The search by name works very efficiently, producing a list of people with the name you entered and their phone and location info.

For Movies, you can search by theaters nearby, movies, top 10 and genres. You get a list of theaters with the movies currently being shown, times, phone, location and the availability of a trailer.

You can search nearby Restaurants or by cuisine. You get a list of restaurants sequenced by increasing distance from your location, with info about location, phone, map and website.

Searching for Gas or Events gives the same sort of information, in a helpful and easy-to-use format.

I recommend this app highly. It's fun to use and very helpful in finding the sort of item you're looking for without having to resort to the Yellow Pages books. You can even use your

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mobile phone to download the app from [m.poynt.com](http://m.poynt.com) (but not with a browser).

About: POYNT

Vendor: Poynt

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

Price: Free



## Your Own Website

by Bill Armstrong

Treasurer, Lehigh Valley Computer Group, PA

July 2012 issue, LVCG Journal

[www.lvcg.org](http://www.lvcg.org)

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Web addresses (URLs) are not just for businesses. Many individuals prefer to have their own family address, such as [armstrongfamily.org](http://armstrongfamily.org) (I made that up). Here are some things to think about when considering this approach.

There are two phases that both have to be completed:

1. Get your own web address (a yearly charge)
2. Get some business/ISP to host your address (a yearly charge)

Getting your own web address is accomplished by searching on the web for a web address vendor, such as <http://www.networksolutions.com>. They are the original authorized vendor (many others are now available). Here you may do a search to discover what addresses are available. Many URL extensions are now available, in addition to .com, .org, and .net.

Finding a business to host your site is easy also. Try Googling “web hosting” to find many. You might also consider local Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

You will have to inquire about the hosting coats. Most companies offer a low-cost hosting that includes basic services, such as email accounts, limited disk space for storage, etc.

In many cases, these two items merge into one, by companies that specialize in doing both and

charging you one fee. Examples are:

*iPage*

*BlueHost*

*FatCow*

*Inmotion*

*Hub*

*GreenGeeks*

*JustHost.com*

*HostMonster*

Here’s a website that reviews them and more:

<http://www.top10hostinglist.com>.

Most of these all-in-one sites offer ways for you to create a website for yourself. Their scripting services will assist you.

If, however, you want the ease of using Google Sites, as we do in the LVCG, that can also be done. Our website is [www.lvcg.org](http://www.lvcg.org), hosted by PAETEC (formerly Fast.net) and on it we have a “redirect script” that sends every visitor to our Google Sites website. We can have many people able to add and edit stuff, and customize it easily. Our webmaster, George Palmer, has given two classes recently about how to create your own site in Google Sites. You may find that it is easier to work in Google Sites than in the tools offered by the hosting site.

However, redirecting to Google Sites does not give you e-mail services. You could check with the hosting companies to see if there is a way to redirect web-based traffic to another address (your Google Sites website), and still give you the ability to have, access and manage email services using your own web address.

Be careful of limited time offers. I saw one that was \$3.50 per month for the initial period, and then jumped to \$7-8 per month. It did include a free web address (URL), so that’s probably still a good deal. Also review their “uptime” and “speed” statistics for the various sites.

Having your own website address is a nice feature, and many consider it well worth the expense. It is a little work to do the maintenance needed, but that is minimal.

## IObit Releases Version 6 of Advanced System Care

by Ira Wilsker

WEBSITES:

<http://www.iobit.com/advancedsystemcareper.html> (FREE Version)

<http://www.iobit.com/advancedsystemcarepro.html> (PRO Version)

One of the very popular categories of PC software is the type that can perform comprehensive system analysis and repair, probably leading to improved system performance. There are quite a few of these utilities available, both as freeware and as paid commercial products. Many of these utilities have previously been reviewed in this column with comments from readers indicating a general high level of satisfaction with most of them. One of the most popular comprehensive system maintenance utilities is IObit's Advanced System Care, with over 150 million downloads of its free version ([www.iobit.com/advancedsystemcareper.html](http://www.iobit.com/advancedsystemcareper.html)).

Recently, IObit released version 6 of its popular Advanced System Care software, continuing to be available as both a free and a paid "Pro" version. IObit states that this software will "keep your PC safe, error-free, and running at top speed". The new version 6 has a new front-end interface, and several new features; it continues to offer system analysis and performance enhancements that can easily be implemented by users of all skill levels, from novice to advanced users. While beginners can use the "Smart Scan" mode to perform a quite satisfactory system performance scan, advanced users can find a wealth of individual utilities in the "Toolkit" option. One of the most useful tools to improve PC performance is IObit's Startup Manager", which can be used to control which programs are loaded when the system boots; by eliminating unnecessary programs at boot, the computer boots faster, and overall system performance is improved as more system resources become available.

With over 150 million copies downloaded of the earlier versions of Advanced System Care (ASC) over the past eight years, IObit has been active in

continuously adding new features to the product. The newly released version 6, continues that evolution with a host of new and improved functions. The first improvement is a visual one, with a clean interface that opens to a large "Smart Scan" button which commences a comprehensive series of system scans all intended to improve system performance. While the default screen is black with a soft blue font, it is very easy to implement other color schemes by clicking on the "skins" icon on the top-right edge of the ASC screen and selecting the desired theme.

Many of the contemporary web based security threats are spread from purloined websites that may have themselves been hijacked and infected by a miscreant or intentionally posted as a source of malware acting as bait, just waiting for unsuspecting web surfer to be caught and infected with malware when the contaminated website is opened. Advanced System Care 6 now includes web surfing protection that can detect many of the risky websites and other online threats that can jeopardize the safety and security of the user's computer. ASC6 also protects the user's privacy while surfing the web. In addition to detecting web based threats, ASC6 contains an integral tool that can boost internet throughput by tweaking the settings on the computer to allow web pages and other internet content to load faster and more efficiently, taking better advantage of the speed that the user is paying for. While I cannot independently verify the claim, the IObit website claims that ASC6's internet boost functions can improve internet performance such that web pages and other online content can load up to 300% faster. In order to clean a computer of malware, and keep it clean, ASC6 also includes a malware scanner and removal function which is frequently updated and capable of detecting and neutralizing most common varieties of malware.

Typical users of these performance enhancement utilities are seeking faster, more smoothly operating computers, and Advanced System Care may be the most popular integrated utility for that purpose. ASC6 integrates a series of utilities

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Above: IOBits Advanced SystemCare 6.0 Scan Results screen

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that provide these performance improvements including a new performance monitoring technology for comprehensive and efficient system optimization which can be performed in real-time. While some PC users sincerely believe that disk defragmentation is an unnecessary task, ASC6 incorporates a “New Generation Super Engine for Disk Defragment” that can scan the hard drive for fragmentation and reorder or otherwise optimize file placement on the hard drive in order to minimize seek times, making programs load faster as the hard drive does not have to work as hard finding fragments of needed files.

As more users are using system intensive utilities for a variety of tasks, or are involved with sophisticated online gaming, the efficient operation of the computer becomes more necessary. Advances System Care 6 has a “Turbo Boost Function” that manages memory, low priority running tasks, and other resources in order to improve the performance of the more demanding tasks being used.

There is much active debate as to whether or not the computer’s registry, the large database containing information about the hardware and software on the computer, should be periodically “cleaned” or “repaired” by removing outdated or obsolete information from the registry. For those who desire to attempt to improve performance and reliability by cleaning the registry, Advanced System Care 6 offers “Enhanced Registry Fix and Vulnerability Scanning Technology”. In the event that the user is not satisfied with the “cleaned and repaired” registry, ASC6 is smart enough to save a backup of any registry items deleted or modified during the process, allowing for their instant restoration by clicking on the “Rescue” icon on the top-right of the window.

There are two current versions of Advanced System Care 6, the Free version and the Pro version. The Pro version has all of the features of the Free version, but offers several enhanced features including a deep registry scan (more comprehensive than the standard registry scan),

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better online web security, more performance enhancements, automatic updates, and more capability to improve online performance. Normally a one year license for the Pro version is \$29.99, but it is currently on sale on the IObit website for \$14.77 by clicking on the “Special Offer” link on the Pro version webpage ([www.iobit.com/advancedsystemcarepro.html](http://www.iobit.com/advancedsystemcarepro.html)).

Advanced System Care 6 (both Free and Pro versions) are available as a 19mb download from IObit or its download partners such as cNet’s download.com. ASC6 works well on all versions of Windows from XP to the newly released Windows 8.

For those who want an even more powerful system enhancement and protection utility, IObit is about to release a new product “Advanced SystemCare Ultimate” which includes all of the features and functionality of the more traditional Advanced System Care, but adds comprehensive real-time virus and malware protection by incorporating a “Dual Engine” concept that combines the well respected and highly rated BitDefender anti-virus engine with IObit’s proven anti-malware engine. This combination also protects against phishing (identity theft), as well as spyware and other forms of malware and viruses. According to IObit, “Advanced SystemCare Ultimate provides always-on, automated, and all-in-one protection against all kinds of security threats, system slow down, freeze and crash. It ensures PC security, and maintains maximum computer performance automatically without slowing your system down.” Increased online protection is provided by its “Surfing Protection Technology”. The free version of Advanced System Care is among the utilities that I recommend the most when asked about improving system performance. For less than \$15 for a one year license, many users may find the increased functionality of the Pro version worthwhile. The upcoming Ultimate version may be interesting as well, but I have no insight on its pricing. IObit has some very good free and paid utilities ([iobit.com](http://iobit.com)) that users may find interesting.

## Micro Center® In Store Clinics

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Micro Center stores host free events called “In Store Clinics.” The clinics cover a wide range of topics. All Micro Center store locations follow the same schedule of topics.

A link for store locations is at the top center of the home page, [www.microcenter.com](http://www.microcenter.com). For those in the Washington, D.C. area, the only store in Virginia is in the Pan Am Plaza at 3089 Nutley Street, Fairfax, VA 22031, phone (703) 204-8400, and the only store in Maryland is in the Federal Plaza at 1776 E. Jefferson #203, Rockville, MD 20852, phone (301) 692-2130.

Micro Center Clinics are held on most weekends, except during holidays. The same topic is usually presented on both Saturday and Sunday. Topics may change and clinics may be cancelled without notice. Please verify the schedule with the store before leaving and register online for e-mail updates ([http://www.microcenter.com/instore\\_clinic/sign\\_up.html](http://www.microcenter.com/instore_clinic/sign_up.html)).

Signing up in advance reserves a seat, recommended as space is limited. This can only be done at a store, either at the Tech Support or Customer Support area.

### December 2012 - January 2013 Schedule

Start Time is 2pm local unless otherwise stated.

Dec 8 & Dec 9: Smartphones and Tablets

Dec 15 & Dec 16: Windows® 8 Basics

Jan 5 & Jan 6: Windows® 8 Basics

Jan 12 & Jan 13: System Performance

Jan 19 & Jan 20: HDD, RAID, & SSD

Jan 26: Arduino Basics Workshop (pre-register)

Notes from previous clinics are available online at

[http://www.microcenter.com/understand\\_tech/index.html](http://www.microcenter.com/understand_tech/index.html).

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<http://www.patacs.org/>

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### **Arlington Meetings**

(temporary location until further notice)

Walter Reed Community Center  
2909 S. 16th Street, Arlington, VA 22203

<http://www.patacs.org/arlingtonmeetings.html>

#### General Meeting

1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday (1/2), 7 p.m. ET

#### Internet Special Interest Group (SIG)

4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday (1/23), 7 p.m. ET

#### Board of Directors

3<sup>rd</sup> Monday (1/21), 7 p.m. ET

### **Fairfax Meetings**

(with OLLI PC User Group)

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI)  
4210 Roberts Road, Fairfax VA 22032

<http://www.patacs.org/fairfaxmeetings.html>

#### General Meeting

3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday (1/19), 12:30 p.m. ET

#### **Online-Only Webinar using Skype™**

<http://www.patacs.org/webinarpat.html>

2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday (1/9), 7-9 p.m. ET