

The Bridge



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The Bridge

The newsletter of the Memphis PC Users Group, Inc.

www.mpcug.org

The official website of the Memphis PC Users Group, Inc.

Announcement

MPCUG January Meeting (7:30 p.m., Jan. 24, Wednesday) will feature ***So, you got a computer for Christmas. Now what?*** presented by John Schuster. Wizard session will start at 6:30 p.m.

Location:

Jennings Room #8
Southwest Community College

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The Issue Quote

"The global village is not created by the motor car or even by the airplane. It is created by instant electronic information movement."

~ By Marshal McLuhan

The Bridge

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IT Veteran Presents on eBay and Long-time Member Shows Concern about MPCUG Future

The last meeting of the Memphis PC Users Group for 2006 featured Tommy Towery, a University of Memphis IT expert, who presented lessons learned from his rich Web experience on buying and selling on eBay.

For those interested in buying and selling on eBay, the meeting was very instructional. For those who are new to the online possibilities, the meeting was eye-opening. Towery's humorous and step-by-step online approach made an interesting evening for the attendees.

The Memphis PC Users Group made it through another year in its struggle for membership and leadership. This evening's presentation reminds veteran members of the time when the MPCUG had a membership of near a thousand and people were enthusiastic about taking on leadership roles and bringing in guest speakers each month. "While those times are gone, I hope those who see the value of the meeting can take on more responsibilities to keep the MPCUG going on," said Dr. Rick Fischer, long-time member and reviews editor for MPCUG newsletter Bridge.



Tommy Towery presents at the November MPCUG meeting on Buying and Selling on eBay.



Around 20 people attended the presentation on Buying and Selling on eBay.

Story and photos by Jin Yang

Computer News Digest

A tale of two trade shows

by Tom Krazit

From news.com

If there's a silver lining to the scheduling overlap between the Consumer Electronics Show and Macworld this

year, it's that many people no longer have to go to both.

"We're kind of glad," said Amy Cesari, a spokeswoman for iPod accessory maker Speck Products. In the past few years, Speck Products has spent four

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Computer News Digest continued

days in Las Vegas for CES, then packed up and headed north for another four days of Macworld in San Francisco. But this year, Speck is splitting up its efforts to hit both shows at the same time, relieving Cesari of yet another early January trip to the desert.

The tech industry is being forced to divide its attention between Las Vegas and San Francisco this week. CES got rolling on Sunday with a speech from Microsoft's Bill Gates, while his nemesis, Steve Jobs, will appear on stage at Macworld at 9 a.m. in San Francisco on Tuesday.

From an attendance standpoint, there's little question that CES, which hosts big tech names ranging from Sony to IBM and an estimated 150,000 attendees, is the bigger draw; Macworld is expected to have more than 40,000 attendees. But when it comes to attention-grabbing announcements, few are better at it than Jobs at Macworld, which can be equal parts trade show, rock concert and a revival meeting of the Apple faithful.

The two events overlap for the first time in five years. CES has generally fallen during the week prior to Macworld, but the Consumer Electronics Association moved the show for 2007, citing its contract with the Las Vegas Convention Center. This has forced many tech companies and analysts used to spending a few days in Las Vegas followed by a few days in San Francisco to choose between the two.

For tech industry veterans like Roger Kay, there's simply no choice. With dozens of tech industry clients all in Las Vegas for CES, it's possible to catch up with older clients while prospecting for new ones, said Kay, an analyst with Endpoint Technologies Associates. Virtually every major company in the PC and consumer electronics industry is making some sort of appearance at CES, from big flashy

technology demonstrations on the show floor to quiet briefing sessions in luxurious hotel suites along the Las Vegas Strip.

"Virtually everyone is here," Kay said of CES. Even companies that don't have consumer electronics businesses, like IBM, are taking advantage of the concentration of media, analysts and prospective business partners in Las Vegas this week.

But with Macworld, there is typically a great deal of attention paid by the public and the industry to what Jobs has to show off. Last year, he unveiled Apple's first Macs using Intel's chips, and in the past has used the event to highlight new iPods such as 2005's Shuffle. So if you're a tech company torn between two conferences, what do you do? One factor that has helped companies decide who goes to Las Vegas and who goes to San Francisco is the type of customer present at each show. CES is much more industry-focused than Macworld, Speck Products' Cesari said. CES is about cutting deals with distributors and retailers, while Macworld is about showcasing products in front of consumers, she said. Speck Products is sending its sales teams to CES and its marketing folks to Macworld, she said.

The conference competition won't happen next year. CES 2008 is scheduled for January 7 through 10, while Macworld will return to San Francisco from January 14 to 18. That means for most of the tech world, it's back to a regularly scheduled January of heavy travel up and down the West Coast.

Browser Smackdown: Firefox vs. IE vs. Opera vs. Safari

by Scot Finnie, Dennis Fowler, Preston Gralla and Ken Mingis
From computerworld.com

People may be passionate about their favorite sports team, but if you really want to get them fired up, ask [continued on page 8](#)

Spyware for Everyone (Part 2)

By Gil Hennon



Shovelware seems like it is similar to bundling, but it is generally not malicious. It refers to the current practice by PC manufacturers

of installing instant messaging, Web access, and several crippled applications or suites on brand new computers. Some of these services are subscriptions which bill the user each month. Others are "trial versions" that usually expire in ninety days unless the user registers and pays for them. Most users do not want shovelware, and consider it a pain in the you-know-what that must be removed while setting up a new computer. A worse situation is a naive or curious user who tends to click icons to see what they do without understanding the consequences. Shovelware can also be found on purchased CD-ROMs and some Web sites.

◁▷**Downloaders** are programs designed to retrieve and install other files. Many legitimate automated software upgrade schemes are based on downloader technology. Spyware downloaders gain access to a PC, then bring down other, more malicious software to the compromised machine. Drive-by downloaders and automatic downloaders are usually secretly installed when a user happens to visit a malicious Web site. No other user action is required other than a connection to the site. Lately variations of drive-by downloads have been found in image files and fancy HTML e-mail messages. Each downloader exploits a particular open

port or security hole on an unsuspecting user's PC.

◁▷**Annoyware** or **Nagware** is not usually spyware. These small programs are usually installed with shareware or a purchased application to encourage a user to register (and possibly pay for) software being used. At some specific interval (every day or every week) a pop up notice reminds the user to register. These don't become spyware until they contain a component that secretly sends information to the vendor after several nag attempts have failed to get a response.

◁▷**Foistware** is software secretly downloaded and installed on a computer that has hidden components. It causes certain computer problems and attempts to trick the user into buying another specific product to cure these problems. Sometimes there is a Web site for the product that shows up in an Internet search for keywords describing the problems caused by the foistware.

◁▷**Trackware** or **Tracking Software** is usually bundled with free download software. It may or may not alert the user that it is being installed, but often removing the trackware will disable the application that was downloaded for free. Once installed, trackware logs system activity and user behavior and transmits this information to a third-party. Most trackware has a marketing objective; to learn a computer user's preferences in purchases in order to offer products through adware.

◁▷**Snoopware** covers several tools that record email, Web sites visited, chat room conversations, and other personal activities. Most snoopware products are sold commercially

Computer Spyware

to investigators and spouses looking for evidence in divorce lawsuits. In some states, snoopware is illegal, but the laws are not uniformly enforced. Some of the components in snoopware that aid in capturing personal information are keyloggers, **MRU** (Most Recently Used) reporters, and screen scrapers.

◁▷A **keylogger** records every keystroke made by a user. It builds a log file. **MRU** reporters keep track of files that have been opened and closed on a system. Screen scrapers capture each different screen that is displayed while a user is at the computer. Any of these may also transmit the information they have captured at regular intervals to a Web or e-mail address.

◁▷**Spamware** generally refers to spam that is distributed in other ways than through e-mail. The most common forms are spam links embedded in forum and blog comments or in site guest books. Guest book spam became so annoying that very few guest books are still on Web sites.

Search Engine results manipulation can be done in by several different methods controlled by spyware. Most common are hidden links and false tags. When a link cannot be seen because it is colored the same as the screen background, or disguised as a simple graphic object, it is a hidden link. These are usually scattered randomly on a search engine results page or on the first Web page displayed after a search. When a hidden link snares an unsuspecting user it is not always apparent that the location is not a page relevant to the search. False tags work in a similar manner by sitting transparently on top of a genuine link. When the link is

Spyware for Everyone (Part 2) continued

clicked, the false tag takes the user somewhere other than the desired destination. Sometimes users are victims of **Cloaking**, where a hidden spyware program scans the IP address of incoming Web pages. When the address of a search engine site is detected, the spyware stops the real search page and modifies the links or replaces the whole page with a counterfeit. Needless to say, the links go somewhere other than where the user expected. Cloaking has been used most successfully to redirect ordinary searches to pornographic sites.

A related method of manipulating searches is not truly spyware. **Spamdexing** also redirects a user by changing the ranking of search results. Pages belonging to the manipulator are inserted higher in relevance than the genuine pages found by the search engine. It can be done by dynamically inserting search keywords into the site or by adding unrelated keywords to the search string. Spam Blogs -- also called splogs -- are blogs created to fool search engines. They contain thousands of keywords in order to improve their search results rankings, but the links point only to spamming sites. Cloaking, as described above, may also often be used to manipulate the rankings of search engine results.

Wikiware and **Wiki Spam** insert links into Wiki articles to increase a site's relevance in search engines. Allowing all users to edit Wiki articles made it easy for hackers and spammers to add their links and frequently they destroyed Wiki content in the process. Most Wiki sites now quarantine new content and inspect it before incorporating it into



the Wiki.

Blogware is similar to Spam Blogs in containing links to fool search engines, but Blogware generally is confined to the comments section of genuine blogs. Google, Yahoo, and other search engines try very hard to

intercept all of the different methods of manipulation and protect the integrity of their searches. Since the engines must first identify an exploit and then take countermeasures, some search engine manipulation is bound to occur occasionally.

Botnets, Remoteware, Zombieware, Droneware, and Remote Access Tools (RATs) are all ways in which a hacker can take control of remote PCs and use them for malicious purposes. A botnet may be a small number of machines or a legion of thousands. All of the computers on a botnet monitor the location of their "master" and respond simultaneously to commands from the "master." Many botnets have been established to distribute SPAM email or conduct concerted attacks on networks and servers.

Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) is often the end result of a hacker setting up botnets. Many individual PCs participate in sending a flood of requests or pings to a single server. Unless the server is "hardened" and capable of diverting millions of simultaneous connections, the server will fall farther and farther behind the demand until it can no longer function. "Meltdown" is the common term for a server in this condition. Hardening a server is usually accomplished by configuring filters

upstream of the server that can retard or prohibit a large number of simultaneous requests.

Alternate data streams are extensions to the Microsoft NTFS file system that make data compatible with the Apple Hierarchical File System (HFS). While this is most often a good thing and allows cross-platform data sharing, it can also allow data in the alternate stream to be manipulated, offering an opportunity for abuse and a place to hide spyware and other malicious software.

Rootkits are programs that gain administrator access to computers and then monitor various functions and record data. Often the rootkit transmits what it learns to a remote location. In addition to logging keystrokes and gathering data, rootkits usually create a back-door into the PC, allowing hackers to secretly enter the computer and make changes to the system and applications. Sometimes rootkits can alter log files and otherwise conceal their presence, making them extremely difficult to remove.

Tricklers are secret background programs that download and install other software to a computer. The downloads are often very slow in order to avoid alerting a user that something unintended is taking place. Hackers can go to great lengths to install a trickler or back door software because these give them access into a computer for future installations and data collection. Some tricklers come bundled with downloaded free software and use the installation process to add as many as forty unwanted programs to a computer.

This article will be continued in the next Issue of Bridge.

Excel for Starters

By Jeremy Roberts

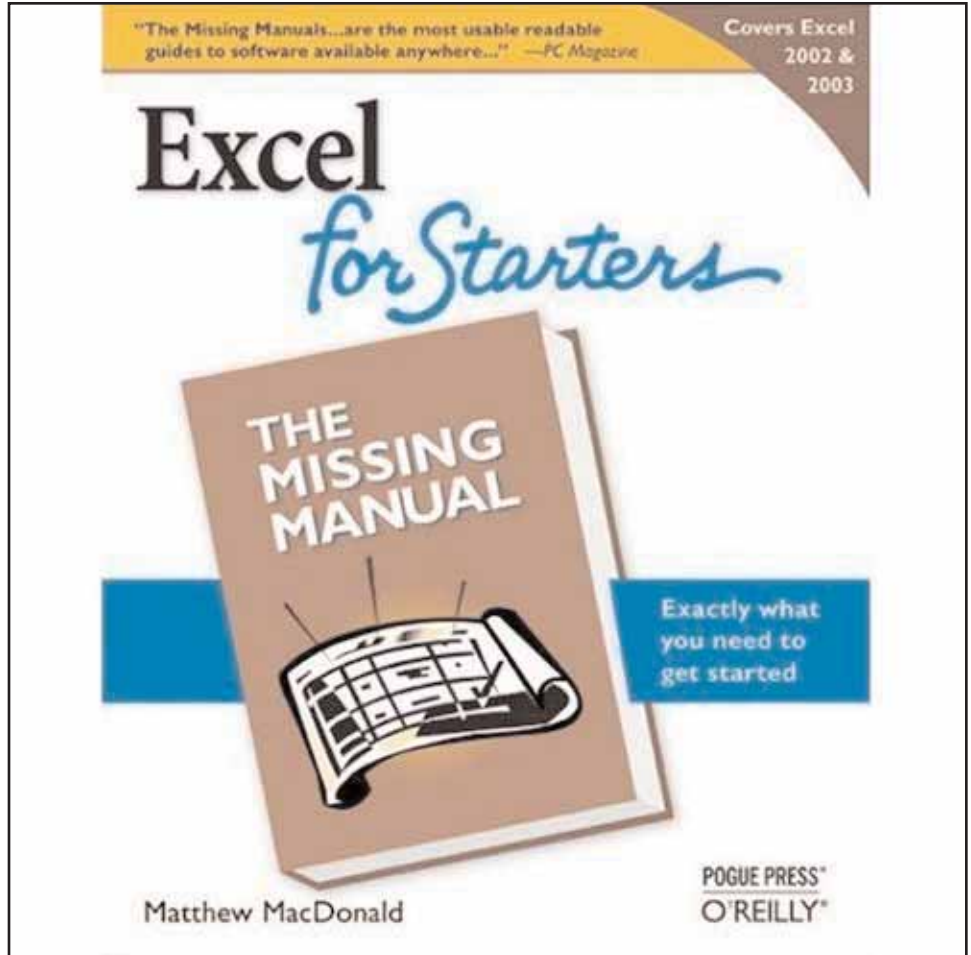
Book Review

Excel for Starters is a manual, by Matthew MacDonald, that teaches about the world of Microsoft Excel 2002 and 2003. This is a book for beginners, it starts out very basic and doesn't really touch on some of the more advanced features of Excel. However, it is a really good book that prepares the reader to use Excel in the real world with examples that have a connection to everyday problems.

As I flipped through the pages and reached the back cover, I noticed something that was missing -- something that is an usually and integral part of a manual today. There was no companion CD with exercises. There was however, a picture of a CD telling where to find examples and demo software online. Not being lucky enough to have a copy of Microsoft Office, I searched this Website and the Microsoft Website for a downloadable demo and I found nothing, so I was forced to use the labs on my college campus.

When I began to read, the first thing I noticed was the size of the text. This not only makes it an easy read but also gives the reader a sense that this can be accomplished. The use of plain language and graphics makes it really appealing. Language use is very important. It can be the deciding factor on who will read the book. I think that one of the most appealing factors is that not every page is full of text. It makes it more fun to look at and there is more of an incentive to finish it because it is enjoyable. On nearly every other page you find a screenshot. This makes the explanations easier to understand.

Excel can be easy to learn and easy to use. It just depends on what you are given and how you are told to



use it. With the right information anyone can learn the basics and become a proficient user. This is who I thought I was -- a learned user. I thought this book would be just a very basic guide on the functions of Excel. When I got to the chapter on formulas I was astonished at what I could do. I had no idea that it could handle trigonometry functions as well as If/Else statements.

I would recommend this book to anyone who needs to learn the basics quickly. With its easy-to-follow examples and use of graphics anyone can pick it up and start making spreadsheets in the same sitting. As for other tech manuals I have bought

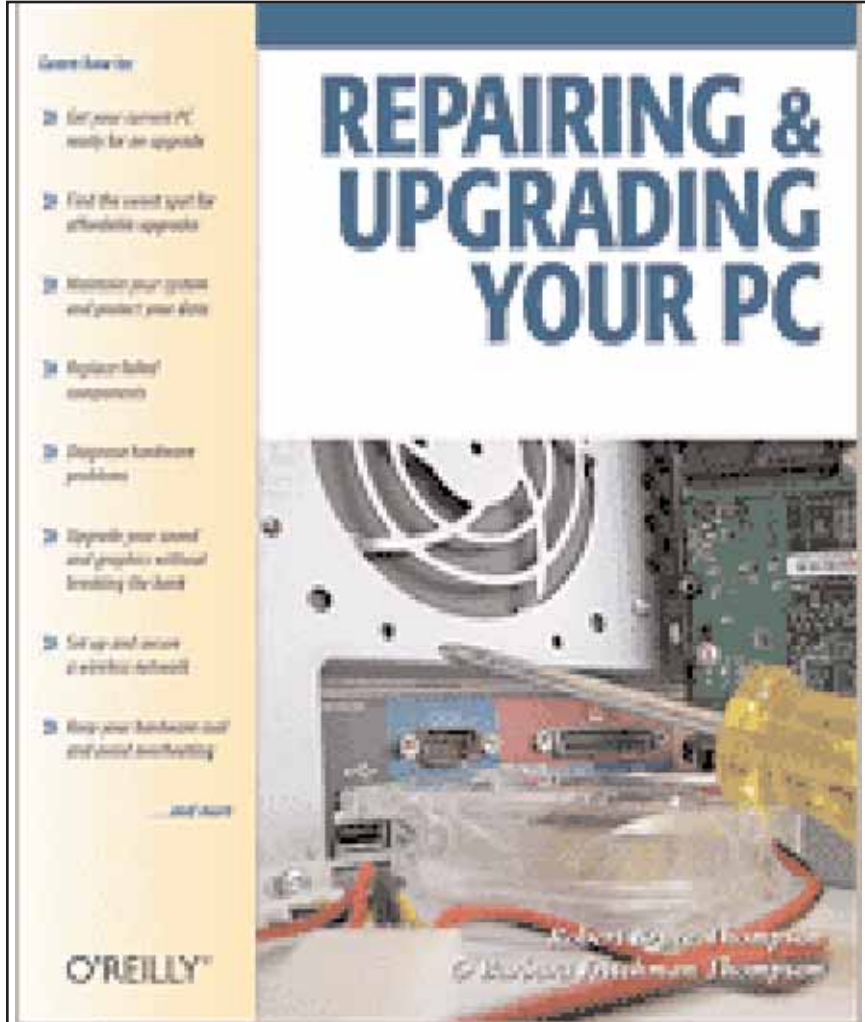
in the past, they were so boring. A computer book with nothing but text is a hard one to get into. That is probably why they have taken up residence on the top of my bookshelf.

Excel for Starters by Matthew MacDonald (2005). Pogue Press/O'Reilly. 396 pages. \$20.

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Repairing and Upgrading Your PC

By Rick Fischer



With Windows Vista shipping some of you may be wondering about whether your PC can handle the new operating system. To find out, visit: www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/getready/upgradeadvisor/default.aspx to download a small program that will give you the answer.

It's times like these that you consider a hardware upgrade. And, naturally, there are books waiting to help. *Repairing and Upgrading Your PC* can walk you through changing the motherboard (chap. 4), the processor (chap. 5), adding memory (chap. 6), installing a bigger hard drive (chap.

7), or adding an optical drive (chap. 8). But, more importantly, you need someone to help you with the decision whether or not to upgrade. And, if you do, will the job be easy or difficult (for me)? Where should I look for new components? Thompson and Thompson cover all this without troubling jargon.

All that I read leads me to conclude that the best option is to just buy a new PC with Vista installed.

But if you think there are a few more good years in your PC with Windows XP if only you tweaked this or that, you might look at the chap-

Book Review

ters on working on your PC (chap. 2) and performing system maintenance (chap. 3).

The authors are clear in recommending you not use IE6 or Outlook. They offer alternatives. They also suggest settings for Windows XP in your home or small office. You'll also find a suggested maintenance schedule -- things to do daily, weekly, monthly, etc.

You'll enjoy reading the first few chapters. They are for everyone. After that, you will pick and choose depending on what components you are interested in learning more about, and possibly upgrading. Those thinking about setting up a network in their home will find the chapter on setting up a wireless network (chap. 14) very useful. Read it before you buy any gear.

The O'Reilly description is apt: "Repairing and Upgrading Your PC delivers start-to-finish instructions, simple enough for even the most inexperienced PC owner, for troubleshooting, repairing, and upgrading your computer. Written by hardware experts Robert Bruce Thompson and Barbara Fritchman Thompson, this book covers it all: how to troubleshoot a troublesome PC, how to identify which components make sense for an upgrade, and how to tear it all down and put it back together. This book shows how to repair and upgrade all of your PC's essential components."

Repairing and Upgrading Your PC
by Robert Thompson and Barbara
Thompson. (2006). O'Reilly. 429
pages. \$35.

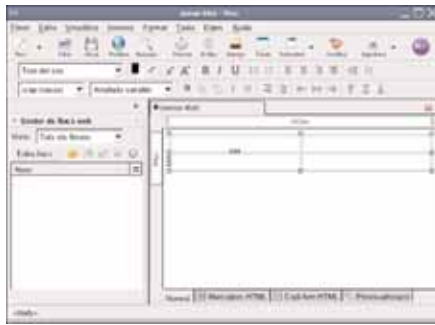
Great Freebies and Downloads

Excerpted from *PC World*

Note from editors. One of the greatest things about the Internet and computers is that some talents are willing to share their intellectual works with you free of charge. They are not working for commercial benefits but for fun and helping people efficiently work with computers. From this issue on, we will introduce some of fabulous free downloads on the Internet. We hope you would like to try them on your own.

Nvu Beta

Looking for a Web authoring tool for Firefox? Composer used to be the software of choice, but Nvu seems destined to succeed it. The program retains Composer's basic interface and organization, yet it adds such welcome features as a tabbed interface for working on multiple Web sites at one time, as well as HTML markup cleaner that strips away superfluous or empty HTML tags.



http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,24956,00.asp

OpenOffice.org

Want to use Microsoft Office applications without using Microsoft Office? OpenOffice.org is a free, multi-platform productivity suite being developed as an open-source application and project. It is available for numerous operating systems and supports many common file formats, as well as languages. Its files are interchangeable with those of Microsoft Office applications.



OpenOffice.org is a sizable download; you can cut your time down by downloading it with BitTorrent.

http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,

Computer Download

23158,00.asp

Palm Desktop



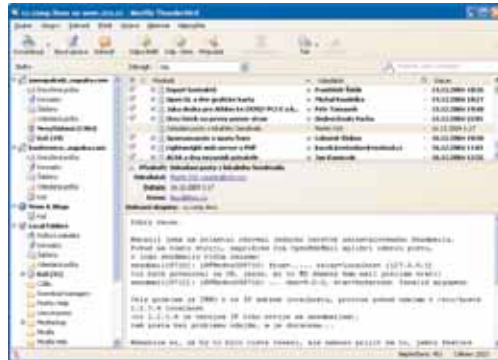
This remarkably well-designed calendar and address book application will appeal to users who don't even have a PDA.

Download the perfect desktop companion for managing your life

at the office or on the go. Palm Desktop 4.1.4 for Windows lets you quickly add or update your contacts, appointments, to-dos and memos at your desktop computer. Then synchronize to your Palm® mobile device with the touch of a button.

<http://www.palm.com/us/software/desktop/>

Mozilla Thunderbird



This cross-platform, standalone mail client uses the XUL user interface language. The intended customer is someone who uses Mozilla Firefox

as his or her primary browser.

The program includes features such as intelligent spam filters and a built-in spell checker. It supports a wide number of extensions, as well.

Note: You must delete your old Mozilla Thunderbird directory (which is not the profile directory) rather than just overwriting the files there

http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,23161,00.asp

IT Helpdesk

Computer Humor

- ◆ Tech Support: "How fast is your modem?"
- ◆ Customer: "I don't know, it's got a Pentium chip in it."

Out for Review

Here is a list of software, books, or other products you can expect to see reviewed here in the coming months. These members checked out items to review for the benefit of all.

Teach Yourself GoLive 5 in 24 Hours
TIVO Hacks
Home Theater Hacks
Windows XP in a Snap
Windows Security Handbook
Smart Home Hacks
The Little Web Cam Book
Microsoft Works 7.0
How to Use Microsoft FrontPage 2002
The Complete Idiot's Guide to Starting A Business Online
User Interface in C#
Creative Computer Crafts
Photoshop Restoration & Retouching
Windows XP Pro (book)
Create Your Own Website
Macromedia (book)
Windows XP (book)
Photoshop Fine Arts Effects Cookbook
Create Your Own Digital Photography

Allison Banks
 Jacob Burke
 Osborne Burks
 Vicki Dabney
 Dorothy Drum
 Megan Hefner
 Mike Heinrich
 Jim Ingram
 David Levine
 David Levine
 Jim McGee
 Vanessa Muldrow
 Vanessa Muldrow
 Daniel Notowitz
 Jesse Strauch
 David Stowell
 Terry Thomas
 Jin Yang
 Qihong Zhou

Thanks to all who checked out products for review.
Let us keep the Group vital and provide value for membership.

continued from page 2

what Web browser they use.

There's the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" crowd who tend to stick with the browser that's included with their operating system -- Microsoft's Internet Explorer on Windows and

Apple's Safari on the Mac.

There are the "I've just gotta be me" folks who prefer lesser-known browsers, such as Opera from Opera Software. And there are the "live free or die" open-source true believers who champion Mozilla's Firefox above its commercial counterparts.

Then there are those people who simply demand the best browsing experience there is. They'll defend their favorite browser to the death because they think it kicks all the other browsers' butts in terms of ele-

gance, features, security and so on. But if a better option comes along, they'll happily switch and speak out just as loudly for their new browser of choice. At Computerworld, we fall into this camp, always looking for the Next Great Browser.

In terms of market share, the winner is obvious. Most estimates show Internet Explorer commanding between 80% and 85% of the browser market, with Firefox trailing at somewhere between 8% and 13%.

Safari is the third most popular browser, with approximately 2% to 4% market share, followed by Opera and AOL's Netscape, with around 1% each.

But in terms of quality, there's no clear winner right now. For years, Internet Explorer lagged far behind

the competition in both features and security, but the October launch of IE7, a fairly radical overhaul of the aged browser, has brought it up to par with the rest. Almost simultaneously, Mozilla released Firefox 2.0, a less ambitious update that nevertheless made some important and well-thought-out improvements.

Meanwhile, Safari (currently in Version 2.04) and Opera (in Version 9.02, with 9.1 on the way) have been quietly improving and innovating away from the spotlight. Thus, for the

first time in years, the top browsers are roughly equal. (Note: We chose to leave Netscape out of our browser roundup. In our testing, we found it too buggy and unstable for serious consideration.)

