



THE BUG REPORT

A Publication of the Greater South Bay PC Users Group

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July 7

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How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives."

--Annie Dillard,
American author

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GENERAL MEETING

General meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the first Monday of the month at the Salvation Army Facility, 4223 Emerald Street (at the corner of Emerald and Earl Streets), Torrance.

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President's Thoughts

By U. A. Garred Sexton

The Interop Convention in Las Vegas last month was a pleasant experience. As in the past, it was well organized with an easy-to-follow layout. What was disconcerting were the new acronyms that I did not have a clue about what they meant until I could "Google" them. So much for staying up to date.

As you probably already know, on February 19, 2009, analog TV broadcasting will be no more.

Using the \$40.00 coupon that I had requested from the federal government, I purchased an RCA analog to digital converter box from Wal-Mart for just under \$14.00.

I installed the box on a small TV and ran the program that hunted for the available channels.

By using a 3-foot length of wire as an antenna I was able to get 38 stations. The picture was sharp, crisp and very stable. I was quite impressed in that this is a 15-year old color TV that has manual tuning and has had trouble, in the same location, getting more than one (1) channel stable with its built-in

antenna. Even then ghosting was a problem. The improvement was well worth \$14.00.

The converter box, pictured below, is only necessary if you get your TV programs over the air via an antenna on the roof or in the attic. If your TV signal is already digital, from cable or satellite, you have everything you need.

RCA



In case you need a converter box, you may get a \$40.00 coupon from the federal government by applying online at www.dtv2009.gov or by calling (888) 388-2009.

Coupons are not available at retailers.

At the General Meeting in June, Del McCulloch won a year's subscription to *Smart Computing* and requested that it be given to Joyce Oliver who does not subscribe to the magazine. I think that is a very nice gesture.

Thank you, Del!

Cell phone companies are charging \$1.00 to \$1.75 or more for 411 Information calls.

Since hardly anyone carries a telephone directory in his/her vehicle, the phone companies get away with such charges.

When you need to use the 411 Information option, simply dial 1(800) FREE 411 or 1(800) 373-3411. You will incur no charge.

This works on your home telephone as well. If you enter this number into your cell phone directory now, you will always have a way to get a phone number if you need one, without a service charge.

This is the kind of information people don't mind receiving, so pass it on.

Internet Talk

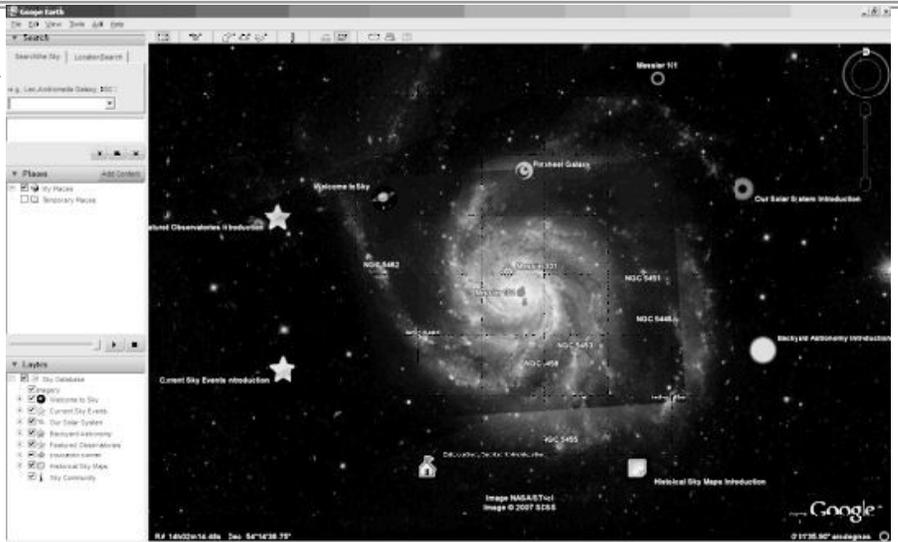
By Frank Chao
Member, GS-BUG

Welcome to the 105th *Internet Talk* article for *The Bug Report*, a publication of the Greater South Bay PC Users Group (GSBUG). Liz and I hope that you are having as much fun with your computer and its Internet connection as we are having with ours, especially during the upcoming hotter summer months.

GOOGLE EARTH'S "SKY MODE"

Last month, we mentioned that you can explore the universe by using Microsoft's "WorldWide Telescope" at <http://www.worldwidetelescope.org/whatIs/whatIsWWT.aspx>

Several current and former GSBUG members stated that the use of "Google Earth" in "sky mode" is another good way to look at the universe. Here is how you can do so:



Start "Google Earth"

Click on 'View' on the Menu bar. (See below left)

Then click on 'Switch to Sky' (See above)

Now your view will be away from the earth and towards the far reaches of the Universe:

Then, you can do the usual activities of pan, zoom, and search

to find your way through the Universe and take advantage of the celestial photographs that our tax dollars have been paying for for the past 50 years.

For your information, in 'Sky Mode,' you cannot search for places on Earth. For example, if you search for Torrance, California, you get the following error message:



However, if you type "Saturn" into the 'Search' box and hit the 'Enter' key of your keyboard, you will be vectored to a nice picture of the planet Saturn.

Enjoy !



HP TECH SUPPORT

Liz and I keep running into owners of HP computers that have various less-than-satisfactory experiences, such as those described at: <http://www.pinoymoneytalk.com/2008/01/25/bad-experience-with-hp/>

or <http://allenmillercomputerconsulting.blogspot.com/2007/12/hewlett-packard-technical-support-aio.html> or <http://www.designnews.com/blog/460000246/post/1260022726.html>

Consumer Reports' surveys of computer owners continues to rate HP's tech support below that of their competitors:

See <http://www.macworld.com/article/133293/2008/05/consumer.html>

These dismal ratings have not deterred Liz and me from owning HP computers. We love the ones that we have bought. We just do not expect to get much competent help from the off-shore folks that answer the phone when we call HP for tech support.

Liz and I recently visited one of her friends who is a retired postmaster from Oregon. This lady bought a high-end HP computer and an HP Color Laser printer about 1 1/2 years ago. Despite 20+ calls to HP's tech support in the Asian subcontinent, she was unable to get the computer and the printer to work together correctly. Liz's friend stated that

whenever she phoned HP's tech support, they appear to be reading a standardized "script" and that this standardized problem-resolution procedure was not resolving her printer/computer problem.

To make a long story short, Liz and I visited this printer/computer setup and we did the following:

1) We removed about a dozen of unneeded applications and toolbars/browser add-ons that came with this fancy computer about half of which were "standard" items of software that were originally installed on the C: hard drive by HP

2) We increased the size of the *Windows* swap file, since it was set way too small for running the background software that an HP OfficeJet printer apparently requires

3) We uninstalled the HP "OfficeJet" software using HP's "uninstall" feature

4) We edited the *Windows* registry to remove some of the registry keys that HP's "Uninstall" feature failed to remove

5) We disconnected the USB cable connecting the printer to the computer since HP always wants you to install their "OfficeJet" software before connecting a new printer

6) We re-booted the computer

and

7) We re-installed the HP "OfficeJet" software.

After a few unexpected error messages from the computer, we completed the installation of the software, re-connected the computer and voila, the computer and printer finally work together now!!

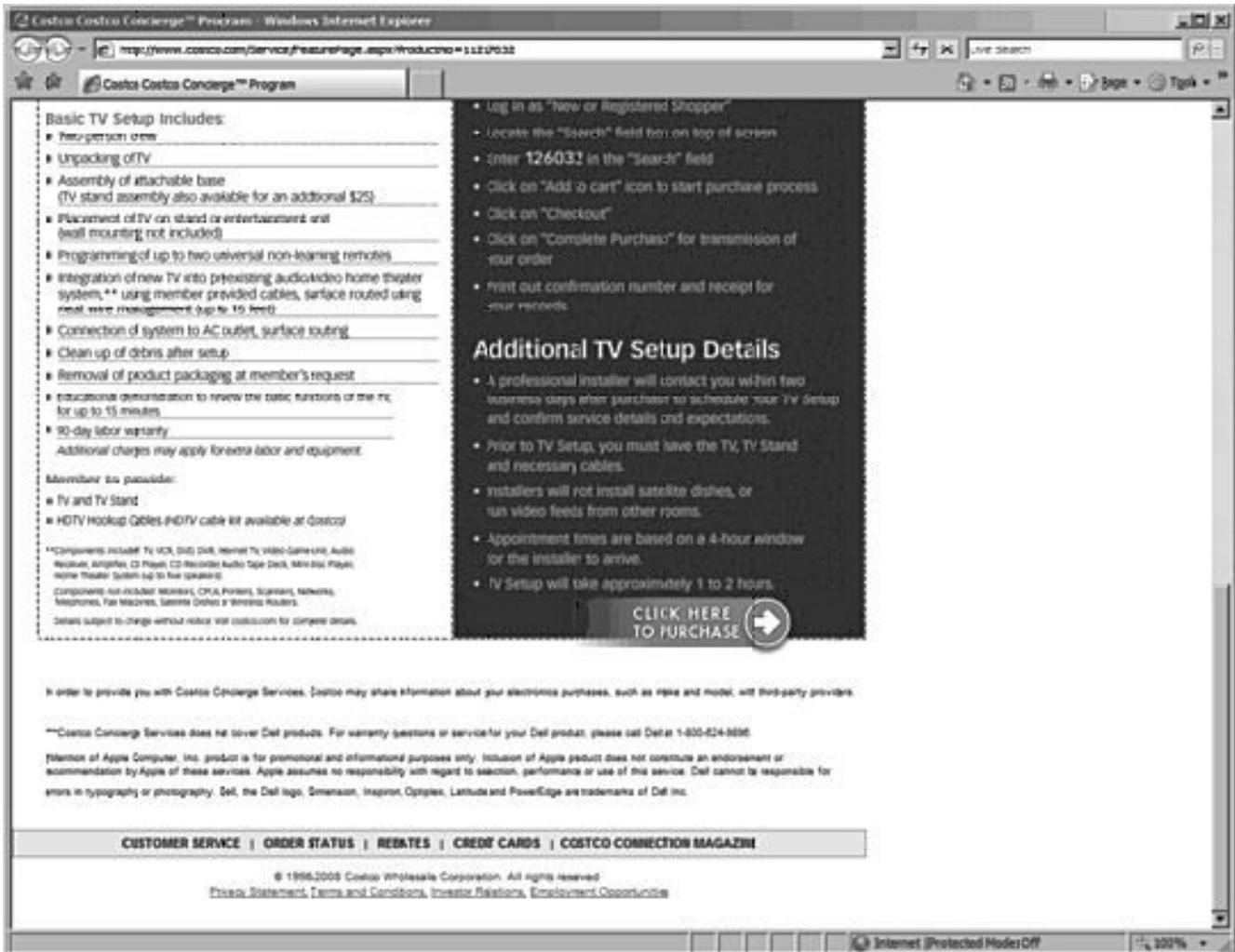
COSTCO CONCIERGE SERVICES

One reason that Liz and I have often purchased HP computers is because we can buy one at Costco and get a 2-year warranty from Costco called "Costco Concierge Services."

Costco Concierge Services extends the manufacturer's warranty to 2 years from date of purchase which is great if you keep buying computers (and televisions) with a lousy one-year manufacturer's warranty. We keep buying things that self-destruct at one or two months after their manufacturer's warranty expires. We suspect that lots of computers and televisions are engineered to fail at the 14 month timeframe.

But, caveat emptor!! You have to read the fine print. Look at the Web page at <http://www.costco.com/Service/FeaturePage.aspx?ProductNo=11217032>

In small print at the bottom of this Web page, it states that this 2-year warranty extension does



not apply to Dell products. This means that for Dell computers that you buy at Costco, you only get a 1-year warranty from Dell.

Any warranty or warranty extension that you get from Costco is subject to change at any minute, so be sure to read the fine print at the bottom of the above-mentioned Web page before spending your money on a new computer at Costco and do the right thing for any computer that you buy from any other retailer by going online and reading the entire warranty including the fine print and footnotes at the bottom of the Web page.

If you have any questions or problems, I can be contacted by the following methods:

1. Send me e-mail at: fchao2@yahoo.com
 2. Send "snail" United States Postal Service (USPS) mail to
Frank Chao
405 E. Wetmore Rd. #117-484
Tucson, AZ 85705-1792
- Or sell your computer and take up golf instead !!

Internet SIG

PURPOSE:
Fun and Learning

The June Sig investigated *e-Bay* and was an excellent learning experience.

At the July meeting we will look at Google Sky.

The time will be spent surfing the net so bring a favorite web site URL to share

Thursday, July 24, 7 to 9 PM.
Garry's Home

Article

PREPARE FOR HARD DRIVE RECOVERY

by Bob Hudak,
GSBUG Hardware SIG Leader

When you lose control of your computer due to a virus or some sort of malware, or your O.S. becomes corrupted for one reason or another, be ready to fix the problem.

1. Start by setting up your hard drive with 2 partitions at least. Put all programs on 'C:' & all Data on 'D:'

2. When hard drive is clean and all programs are loaded, it is time to make an image file of 'C:.' Use Acronis *True Image* to do this or whatever program you like. Put it on 'D:' drive in the root. Name it using date. Remember you do not have a backup till you have two copies in two different places. So now copy this image file to an external USB drive.



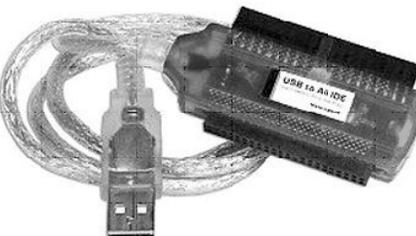
The reason is if 'C:' goes bad you can reformat it and start

over without losing any data. If your computer will not boot and you did not put all your data on another drive or partition, you will want to save your data before reinstalling your operating system. What can you do?



A. Open computer case and remove drive. Install drive as a slave drive in another computer. Now you can copy and paste your data or burn to a CD. This means opening two computers and moving the drive in and out and resetting the jumpers.

B. Hook up the drive you removed from your computer to a second computer using a USB adapter, like the one we have at the Hardware SIG, to another computer and copy and paste or burn the data you want to keep.



C. Here is my first choice in a case like this. Use a Live Linux CD to boot up. Plug in a USB drive before booting. After booting, mount your 'C:' drive and your USB drive. Copy your data from 'C:' drive to the USB drive. With this option there is no case to open and drive to remove.

3. Backup your data as necessary to a CD or another drive. Use a USB drive. This drive can also fail so putting backup on a CD or DVD is better way to go. Also, there is an on-line service at Carbinite.com that will automatically back up your data. This service costs \$50.00 a year for unlimited backups. How important is your data?

Here are a few key folders to have on 'D:' drive:

Data — In this folder make sub folders for each application you use. Include one called **Pictures**. Under this folder have another sub folders for different events. Like: Christmas07, Vacation08, Dog, etc.

D/L — Use this folder for all your downloads. Then you will always know where your downloads are. Set it up so the last thing you downloaded is on top.

E-Mail — If possible, you want your e-mail off the ‘C:’ drive.

My Stuff — Cut and paste documents that you want to keep from ‘My Documents’ on ‘C:’ (items that were sent there without asking you where to send them).

Using Acronis True Image

Use Acronis to backup to your USB drive. Make a full backup the first time.

This is going to be pretty easy because all your data is in one folder on ‘D:’ called **DATA**. If you want to backup your downloaded items, back up the ‘D/L’ folder. E-Mail is not something I backup but you may want to. Once again it should all be in the ‘E-MAIL’ folder.

You already loaded the Acronis program and made a rescue CD that is bootable. Right?

Now open your CD drive and insert the CD. Do not close the drive. Shut down your computer. Close the CD drive. Wait a minute and then reboot.

If you have your BIOS set to boot from a CD first, you are good to go. If not you will need to enter into your setup screen at boot-up and change the boot order.

After booting up with Acronis, follow the prompts to select what you want backed up. Practice this before you need to use it.

Make notes on how to select each step. Acronis will not do anything until you give it the final OK.

(Power Supply Tips Continued from Page 9)

Keep the PC off the carpet or other surfaces where it may suck in particles and clog the fan.

Cooler is always better with electronic components.

Periodically, blow out the fan and case with compressed air to get rid of dust and other particles that may clog up the fan and overheat the system components.

Add up the wattage of the components in your system to see if you are near the maximum of the power supply. E-mail us at dan@greatlakesgeek.com for a list of Estimated Power Requirements of common PC components.

If that is too difficult for you, look to see if most of the slots in the back of your PC are filled and if the drive bays in the front are being used. Those are indications that you may be close to maxing out your power capacity.

If you have a need, you can buy and install (or have someone else install) a new, heavy duty power supply. They come in several standard form factors to fit in most PCs. Warning: this may not be a project for beginners.

Get more tips at www.GreatLakesGeek.com

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Article

Power Supply Tips

By Dan Hanson,
the Great Lakes Geek, Computers Assisting People, Ohio
www.capinc.org

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We have all experienced the computer crashing seemingly for no reason. When it does, we blame *Windows* or a hardware problem or maybe a power surge or under voltage.

Next time you buy a PC, don't just get a cheapo system with a sub-standard power supply

All are possible culprits but one often overlooked possibility is the power supply of the computer.

The power supply is the metal box with a cooling fan next to it. Typically it's in a back corner of the case and you plug your power cord into it. When you plug the power cable into the wall, the power supply converts the AC (alternating current) that runs through your home or office into the DC (direct current) that the computer needs.

If you bought your computer from a superstore or discount

retailer it may have low-cost, low-capacity power supply installed which may not be enough to handle all the things you do with your PC.

If you have upgraded your PC with newer or additional components (like another CD or DVD player/burner, more RAM or another hard drive) then the power supply that came with your system may not be up to the task.

The physics of power supplies (ambient temperatures, 3.3V vs. 5V vs. 12V, etc) make it so that a power supply rated at certain wattage, say 300W, may not really provide that maximum wattage load.

Some experts claim that power supplies are most efficient at 30-70% of their maximum capacity. So if you are nearing that maximum, you can be in for trouble.

Because the power supply gets a rush of AC (alternating current) when the computer is turned on and it heats and cools each time it is used, it is more prone to failure than many other components in your PC. You may notice a slight burning smell before it shuts down.

Sometimes the cooling fan stops working and the system overheats.

Newer systems let you monitor the status of the power supply from *Windows*. Servers and other mission critical computers often have more than one power supply so that when one dies, the other kicks in and the system stays operational.

So what can you do?

Next time you buy a PC, don't just get a cheapo system with a sub-standard power supply unless you never plan on adding memory, drives or other components to the machine.

Newer systems let you monitor the status of the power supply from Windows.

Take care of your power supply by keeping the cooling fan away from the wall or anything else that might block the air flow and make the fan work harder (and die sooner).

(See *Power Supply Tips* on page 8)

Article

Careful What You Ask For!

By Richard Kennon, Newsletter Editor
 Amador Computer Users Group, California
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This last Christmas I asked Santa for a nineteen inch wide-screen, thin, flat display for my computer.

Santa, being busy and not knowing a thing about computers, asked our son to make the purchase. He decided that nineteen inch was for wimps so he picked up a twenty-two inch wide-screen.

It is a beauty with 1680x1050, 96ppi resolution. That is super good... except. Wouldn't you know, my old Dell has a video card that does not go that high. So, buy a new video card, right? They are not so expensive. It turns out my old Dell does not have a slot to unplug the card and plug in a new one. I am not sure of the technicalities, but one tech suggested a new mother board as well. They are not too expensive either.

Then his partner says, "If you are going to spend that much, why not let us build you a new computer for just a little more?"

Golly, what a great idea. The old Dell is getting so slow, I am frustrated every time I use it. So,

why not get a new supercharged dual processor and two gigs of RAM so I can really sail? We discussed specifications for a while and came to an agreement. Then I said I would want the *Vista Home Premium* operating system. One of the partners said, "Why don't you stick with *XP*?"

What follows is not what he said but I figured out later that this is what he was thinking. "This old geezer is probably not going to outlast *XP* so why burden him with a new operating system that just eats up processor power and RAM without offering any benefit? He is going to continue to do the same things he has always done on the computer so why not let him enjoy the benefits of all this new horsepower without the burden of having to learn about a new operating system?"

Out loud he said, "This will allow you to use all the software you now have and won't require you to download all new drivers, etc."

I had already decided I could not afford a new version of *MS Office* and would convert to *Open Office*, instead. There is no *Publisher* in *Open Office* so I would have to do something, I hadn't figured out yet to continue publishing the newsletter.

This idea gave me a great sense of relief – I could reap the benefits of the newer, faster hardware without having to give up software I have grown used to. A little extra icing on the cake is that they will transfer all my *Outlook Express* folders and address book to the new box so I won't have to figure that out.

Also, I have an 80 GB second hard drive in the old box that they will mount in the new. I use it for backup. The new main hard drive will be a 250 GB SATA drive and the second drive can remain an IDE drive. I haven't the slightest idea what that means except that SATA is supposed to be faster and they can mix the two types on one machine.

I am anxiously awaiting delivery of the new computer and will report next month on how it all works out.



So, I have spent our Federal rebate already. You can't say I am not patriotic!

Watch for Part 2 Next Month!

The Bug Report

The Greater South Bay PC Users Group

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Torrance, CA 90505

July 2008

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