

February 2007

The Official Newsletter of the Fresno PC Users Group

Fresno Personal Computer Users' Group General Meeting February 5th, 7:30 PM Program Is: *Internet Favorites*

There are "bazillions" of websites out there, and some of the best - the ones you *really* want - can be hard to find. Search engines and web portals can be helpful, but some of the best come to us by means of personal recommendation.

Each of us has our own prized collection of bookmarks that we carefully backup and move to each new computer.

That being the case, this month's topic pays tribute to those great places on the web that we'd hate to live without. Gary Gipson will start out the demonstration by sharing some of his favorite links, and the discussion will widen out from there to include links from *your* favorite stash.

So, bring the URL to one or two of your best, most used websites with you to the meeting to share with the group, and learn where your fellow PC users get some of their best resources!

Bills Tricks & Tips

Edit/Organize Your Start Menu Program Shortcuts

You can very easily add/edit/remove programs and groups from your Windows Start menu. Here is how:

1. Right Click on your **Start button**
2. Select **Open**
3. Go the **Programs folder**
4. Note: This is your personal start menu, if some program groups are missing, select **Open All Users** in step 2 instead of just Open. This takes you to the shared Start Menu group.
5. Manipulate the folders and shortcuts to how you want them
6. Close the folder window
7. Check your Start Menu and you will see the changes

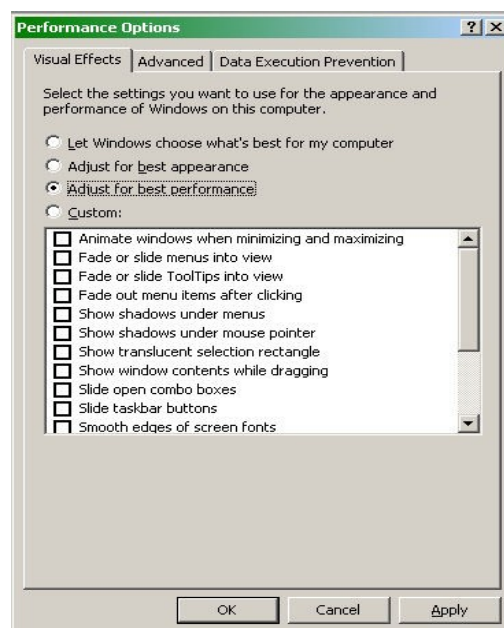


I always like to create a folder called "Antivirus and Antispyware" and place all my applicable program groups in that folder.

Optimal Windows XP Performance Mode

If you want to get a little more computing power out of your PC and free up some system RAM, then this tip is just for you. Please note that the execution of this tip will result in a change of XP's default appearance.

- 1) Click on **Start**. Then right click on **My Computer** and select **Properties**.
- 2) Click on the **Advanced Tab**.
- 3) Next, click on the **Performance Settings Button**, which will open up a new Window.
- 4) Choose either “**Adjust for best performance**” or manually set the various settings according to your preferences.
- 5) Lastly, click **Apply**. You may notice the normal Windows XP logo appear while the newly configured performance settings are configured.

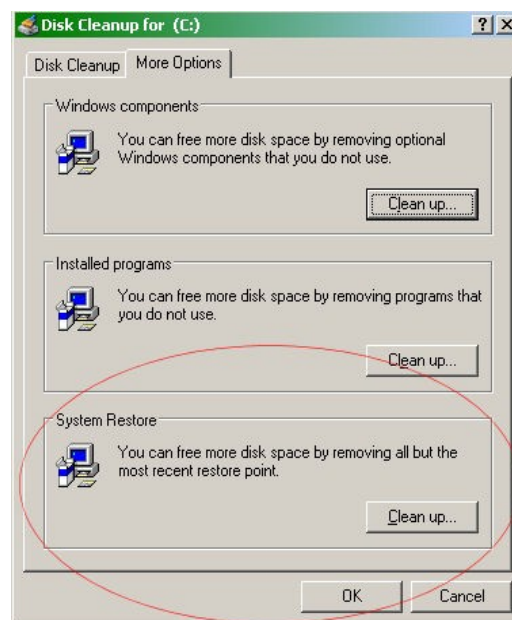


Now, if everything went successful, your start menu, task bar, buttons, and program windows will look stunningly like those of Windows 2000. Personally, I much prefer leaving Windows adjusted for best performance. However, if you aren't a fan of the new appearance, you can reset the options to how you had them before following the same steps as above and selecting either “adjust for best appearance” or let Windows choose which is best for you.

Remove Old Restore Points

Windows periodically creates restore points, such as before a driver installation or new software installs, in case something goes wrong and the user has to 'restore' their PC to a previous time. For many users, the restore points are never used and do nothing more than take up hard drive space. This tip will show you how to clean out all but the most recent restore point by using the system's Disk Cleanup Utility.

- 1) Click on **Start** and then on **All Programs**.
- 2) Start the **Disk Cleanup Utility** by browsing through - **Accessories > System tools >** and clicking on **Disk Cleanup**.
- 3) If needed, select the appropriate drive with your Operating System installed on it. Else, skip to the next step.
- 4) Allow the program to completely finish analyzing, then click on the **More Options Tab**.
- 5) At the bottom you will see a **System Restore** frame. Within this frame, click on the button which



says "**Clean up...**".

6) Lastly, click **Yes** (saying you agreed to delete all but the most recent restore point) and wait until it finishes.

Congratulations, you have now successfully cleaned out many unnecessary and old system restore points.

Google as a Calculator and Dictionary

Google has some neat features in addition to their search. You can also enter arithmetic formulas and words you want to get definitions for.

For example, try searching: "**11*12**", Google will interpret this as a formula and give you the answer (it's 132 by the way) as the top search result. Next try searching "**zyzzyva**". If you don't know what it means look it in the upper right corner of your search results for a link to the definition. If you misspell it, Google will correct you by offering a "**Did you mean ...**" link.

Copy Shortcuts From Your Start Menu

Program installations usually make a nice group in your Start Menu for launching the installed application, however if you do not shortcut on your desktop and you would like to have one, try this:

1. Click **Start**
2. Go to **All Programs > [name of the application]**
3. Right click on the the icon which launches the application
4. Select **Send To > Desktop** (create shortcut)
5. You will now have a shortcut on your desktop

This is much quicker than finding the target executable in your Program Files directory and it does not prepend "Shortcut to" in front of the icon.

Open Via Drag & Drop

Did you know a lot of applications allow you to launch it by dragging a recognizable document over a shortcut to the application? For example, you can open a Word or Excel file by dragging a DOC or XLS file over a shortcut to the applicable program. If you already have an application open, you can simply drag the document into the application workspace and the document will be opened.

Tip: this also works great for opening those files with no extension in Notepad.

What is RSS?

by Madison Lockwood, Customer Relations associate for Apollo Hosting

RSS is technology - a simple software program - that allows you to access web and blog content automatically. The acronym's most popular translation is "Really Simple Syndication. Once your browser or computer has an RSS reader on board, you can subscribe to any number of RSS "feeds." A feed is simply a way in which a reader may subscribe to website content - most commonly blogs or news sites. A news site, for example, may list their latest headlines or entire articles in their feed every time a new article is published. A blog would publish this feed as a series of recent posts.

Feeds are published by millions of publishers, from small individuals to large organizations like Newsweek. The value of a feed is that it brings the most current site content to you in a format that is easily scanned; further, you are spared the task of visiting each source site each day. This is typically done through the use of what is called an 'aggregator' or 'feed reader'.

Feed readers or RSS readers, are software programs that run on your computer (or PDA or phone); let you easily subscribe to feeds, and allow you to read through them efficiently. Some are relatively simple, showing the headline and summary. The fancier ones often work with (or in) your browser to make viewing the material look much like the source page. Once you have a reader on your computer, subscribing to a feed with is an easy click or drag from your browser. Sites that provide RSS feeds will usually have a button for that purpose.

There are several RSS feed formats as well as one with an entirely different methodology called Atom. Atom has become popular with some bloggers and blogging tools. Some aggregators can read both. The other acronyms you will see in "feedspeak" are XML, which stands for 'extensible markup language' and is the code standard for these simple text feeds. An 'OPML' file is a format for indexing hierarchical feed lists. If you dive into this web habit in a big way, your aggregator or reader may keep your subscription list in an OPML file.

An RSS feed is a great method for staying abreast of issues and topics that interest you. There are a number of feed "libraries," so to speak, from which you can learn what's out there in your areas of interest. Google has a built-in reader that makes the subscription process easy, as does Yahoo. Firefox has a downloadable extension for the purpose of aggregating RSS feeds, as well as a default ability to save RSS feeds as "live bookmarks" that update via the RSS feed. You can download a number of stand alone readers and aggregators; you can find them through a simple web search.

The whole RSS "movement" is a step towards utilizing the Internet more efficiently. The trick is to avoid overloading your email inbox with daily reports that you end up ignoring most of the time. For that purpose, there are sites like Feedster that will search millions of RSS feeds for articles that are relevant to your interests. Like any search tool, however, these services are hit and miss. They are still working off keywords and sometimes what they find is relevant, sometimes not. But if you want daily news broken into categories, it's great technology once you learn how to make it work for you.

Hidden Secrets of Software

By Jeffrey Colin Edwards, Director of Gracious Coding Ltd.

Most people that use computers tend to know the ins and outs of a small number of software applications. Some can even claim to be experts in them. As software progresses, there seems to be more and more options at our disposal.

Do you know your applications inside out?

Have you ever heard of Easter Eggs in Software?

You may now be thinking of a nice big egg shaped piece of chocolate, covered in foil. You'd be wrong. I agree that it would be good if your application spat chocolate at you, but the Easter Egg I'm talking about doesn't contain chocolate.

You may think you know everything there is to know about your software, but there is a time honoured tradition with programmers to throw a little something extra into the applications. Very often it is something that is personal in nature, and sometimes there can be games too. There are some applications that have 1, or maybe 2 Easter Eggs. Some have many.

Let me explain. Easter Eggs are hidden words, pictures or games in software, that can only be accessed by using certain procedures with the keyboard and/or mouse. Don't bother rushing to the manual or help file because you won't find any information about them there. They have been inserted into the software by the programmers during the development process without management knowing.

Here's an example for users of Windows. Most versions of Windows come with the card games 'Solitaire' and 'Freecell'. It is claimed that all Freecell games are possible to win. This is not the case. I'd say there were all but 2 games that you could win. If you click on the 'Game Menu' and then click on 'Select Game', it will allow you to type in a game number to play. However, there are 2 game numbers not mentioned. These are the impossible games. The game numbers are '-1' and '-2'. Try your hardest. You'll never win them. You'll also find a cheat for Minesweeper on my site.

I've come across many Easter Eggs. Here are some of types of Eggs I've found:

- Controversial statements.
- Developers names.
- Pictures of developers, developers girlfriends, developers pets.
- Games, such as space invaders etc.
- Links to little known web pages.

If you think that Easter Eggs are only likely to appear in small applications by small companies, then you are wide of the mark. They appear in nearly every application on the market. That includes products by Microsoft, Adobe and every other major corporation you can think of.

I've been fascinated with Easter Eggs for several years now, and have built up an enviable collection of over 900 Easter Eggs. They are available to view at

<http://hiddensecretsofsoftware.hammocksurvivalguide.com/>

Finally, you might ask yourself why the programmers go to the extra lengths to hide these Eggs in software. That's something I could only guess at. I can think of several reasons, and they probably all apply:

- Boredom.
- Rebellion against the company.
- A desire to be famous.
- Some kind of Viral Marketing ploy.
- Because everybody else is doing it.

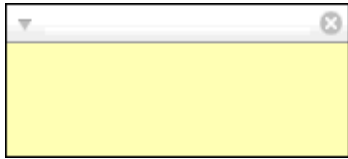
Whatever the reasons, I'm glad they are there. Visit <http://hiddensecretsofsoftware.hammocksurvivalguide.com/> and discover elements of your software that you never knew existed.

About The Author: *Jeffrey Edwards is a Director of Gracious Coding Ltd. Feel free to reprint this article in its entirety in your ezine, newsletter or website as long as the article's content is not modified and all links are included.*

Software Review: 'Stickies'

By Ronnie Ugulano

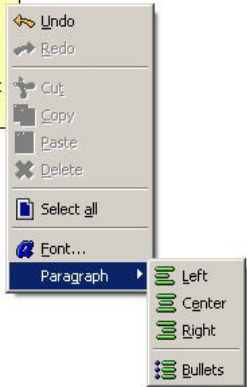
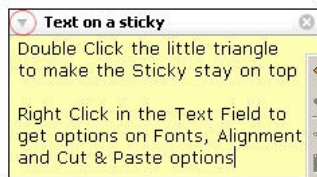
Post it notes have made themselves nearly essential in offices everywhere.



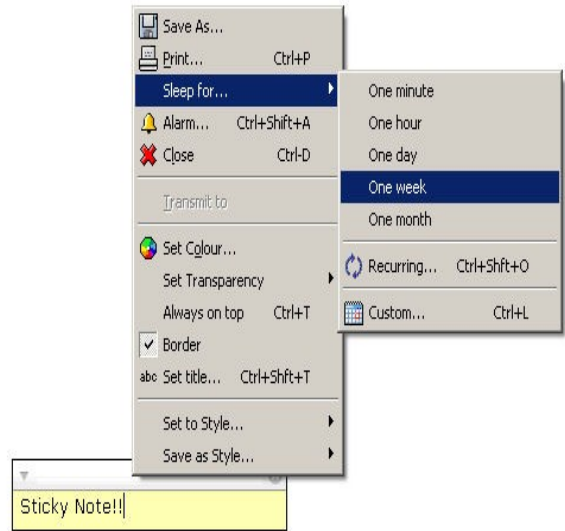
Office Suite programs even have digital versions built into them so you can make little notes for yourself there. But what about something that works from your

desktop? Ta Da! *Stickies!* by Zhorn Software.

I just love this little program! The Stickies program shows itself in your system tray, and a new Sticky can be summoned by double clicking on its icon. From there, they work much like their hardcopy cousins - you can



write on them in plain, bold, or italic, stick them where you want them on your computer screen or stack them up.



But these digital versions have a few other options available as well. You can change their color, resize them, command them to always stay on your topmost window, save them as files, print them, or one of my favorite uses, put them to sleep. Sleep mode causes the Sticky to disappear from your desktop, and reappear at any time you designate, from preset times ranging

from one minute to one month, or you can specify a particular time of your own choosing. I run several in sleep mode to help me remember various different things, such as meetings, upcoming tasks, and to change my contact lenses. <g>

The program is small (less than 600k), and is non-intrusive towards your operating system - you'll never have to consult a manual on how to disentangle it from your registry, because it never goes there. Just one little handy program that once you use it, you'll never want to be without.

FPCUG Board of Directors Meeting Summary

The following items were discussed or decided upon:

- The board is considering buying a laptop for the use of the FPCUG. Two things are motivating this possible purchase. Fewer companies are willing to send representatives out to do demonstrations, so more of our programs will have to come from members. Our group has been using Bill Myers' laptop up till now, and it is hoped to increase the number of software demonstrations that can be done without the continuous wear and tear on Bill's business equipment.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

If you are a PC Users Group member, join a Special Interest group--a great way to share information with others having similar interests. Special Interest Groups are subgroups within Fresno PC Users Group that meet on their schedules to discuss specific topics. Bring items to share, programs, hints and blank disks. *Email SIG leaders ahead to verify meeting times and locations.*



Digital Photo SIG:

The **Digital Photo SIG** is held on the first Saturday of the month at CompUSA on N. Blackstone at 10:30am and is hosted by **Nancy Mason** and **Jo Townley**.

Sanity Savers

Sanity Savers are members who have volunteered to help other members with their computing problems. SIG Leaders are also a valuable information resource.

Do not expect long term counseling, house calls, or to get pirated copies of software recommended to you. Also do not expect any of the volunteers to help you if you are not the legitimate owner of a software package.

If you have any experience in an area of computing, feel free to add your name to the Sanity Saver's list. You do not need to be an expert to be listed as a Sanity Saver--patience and willingness to help count for a lot.

DOS	Dean Mason & Krikor Geyoghlian
Desktop Publishing, Graphics, Adobe Acrobat	Susy Ball
Excel	Krikor Geyoghlian
General Computing	Bill Myers
Internet Help	Dean Mason
Audio Help	Robert Caraway
Linux	Ben Lutes
Lotus 1-2-3	Krikor Geyoghlian
Medical	Cecil Bullard
MS Word	Krikor Geyoghlian
Office 97/2000/XP	Krikor Geyoghlian & Laura Barnard
Windows 3.x	Krikor Geyoghlian

The Fine Print

The Fresno PC User's Group (FPCUG) is a non-profit organization run by and for users of IBM compatible computers. The only membership eligibility requirement is an interest in computers.

FPCUG meetings are generally held the first Monday of the month at:

Hope Community Center
364 E. Barstow Avenue
Fresno, CA
(Fresno and Barstow)

FPCUG Officers:

President	Bill Myers
1st VP	Dean Mason
2nd VP	Jo Townley
Secretary	David Smith
Treasurer	Wilda Moller

Directors At Large:

1. Regles Bellamy
2. Gary Gipson
3. Monica Braun
4. Brian Fulk

This newsletter was prepared using Macromedia HomeSite 5.5. Ronnie Ugulano is editor.

Contributions. While there's no guarantee that submitted material will be used, contributions to the FPCUG Newsletter are appreciated. Articles of 200-500 words should be submitted in MS Word doc or rtf format. Contributions can be in the form of an article written by a member or an article found on the internet with permission to reprint. Any screenshots or photos should be sharp and high resolution, and sent as jpgs, bmp, or tiff files, preferably *not gifs*. Files submitted as pdfs are likely to have their text and graphics extracted as separate entities so that they can be converted to html format. Graphics might be cropped or reduced to fit into available space. Contact Ronnie Ugulano for further information.

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