THE WYSIWYG

September 2012 Volume 24, Issue 7

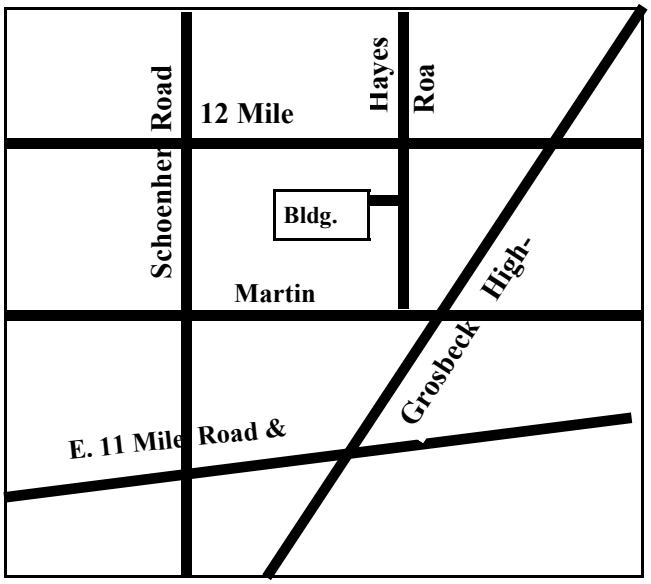
STERLING HEIGHTS COMPUTER CLUB

PO Box 385
Sterling Heights, MI 48311-0385

$3.00

MAIN MEETING: TUESDAY Sept. 4 7:30PM

Macomb Community College
South Campus
14500 E 12 Mile Road, Warren
John Lewis Community Center
(Building K)
(Enter from Hayes Road)



IN THIS ISSUE:

About SHCC	2
Door Prizes	3
The President's Pen	3
Book Review - Network Your Computers	4
Diskeeper 2011	4
Buying a Tablet	5
The Tip Corner	6
Office 2007's Magical Spelling & Grammar Checker	7
Too Scared to buy Anything Online?	8
WYSIWYG Web Watch	10

This month's Meeting Topic:

"Making your Internet connection faster, more reliable, and safer using OpenDNS" presented by **Mike Bader** of LAN Solutions

Guests and visitors are welcome. People can attend any SHCC meetings during two consecutive months before deciding to become a member or not. Meetings include the main meeting and SIGs. July and August don't count since there is no main meeting. Membership includes admission to all SHCC functions and the newsletter. Membership is open to anyone. It is not limited to the residents of Sterling Heights.

DUES: $25/YEAR

CLUB ADDRESS: PO Box 385, Sterling Heights, MI 48311-0385
CLUB E-MAIL ADDRESS: Info@SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org
CLUB WEB PAGE: http://www.SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org

Resource People:

Family Tree	Rick Schummer
Firefox	Don VanSyckel
FoxPro	Rick Schummer
General Computer Questions	Jack Vander-Schrier
Hardware	John Rady
MS Publisher	Rick Kucejko
MS Word	Rick Schummer
Spreadsheets	Rick Schummer

2012 SHCC Officers

President: Don VanSyckel
V. President: John Rady
Secretary: Rick Kucejko
Treasurer: Ed Trombley

SHCC Coordinators:

Associate Editor	Rick Schummer
Door prizes	Sharon Patrick
Greeter for visitors	Lindell Beck
Newsletter publisher	Rick Kucejko
Windows SIG	Jack Vander-Schrier
Program Coordinator	Jerry Hess
Publicity	Patrick Little
Resource People	open
Welcome & check-in desk.	Jim Waldrop
Web Page	Don VanSyckel

Four Month Meeting Schedule:

SEPTEMBER 2012
4 - SHCC—"Making your Internet connection faster, more reliable, and safer using OpenDNS" of LAN Solutions
5 - COMP meeting
9 - SEMCO meeting

OCTOBER 2012
2 - SHCC—Main Meeting
3 - COMP meeting
7 - SEMCO meeting

NOVEMBER 2012
6 - SHCC—Main Meeting
7 - COMP meeting
11 - SEMCO meeting

DECEMBER 2012
4 - SHCC—Main Meeting
5 - COMP meeting
9 - SEMCO meeting

Other Computer Clubs:

As a member of SHCC, you can attend meetings of other clubs where we have reciprocating membership agreements, at no charge.

Computer Club of Marysville and Port Huron (COMP)
Time: 1st Wednesday, 7:00PM
Place: Mackenzie Bldg, Room 201, St Clair Community College, Clara E McKenzie Library-Science Building, 323 Erie St.
Port Huron, (810) 982-1187
Web Page: http://www.bwcomp.org
Reciprocating: Yes

South Eastern Michigan Computer Organization (SEMCO)
Time: 2nd Sunday at 1:30PM
Place: The Engineering Society of Detroit 20700 Civic Center Dr. Southfield, MI 48076 Suite 450 4th Floor
Web page: http://www.semco.org
Reciprocating: Yes

The OPC (Older Persons Commission) Computer Club
Time: Every Tuesday at 10:00
Place: OPC in Rochester
248-656-1403.
Web page: http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Village/1904/
No cost for residents to join or attend meetings. $150 fee for non-residents
Reciprocating: No

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(Call Jack after noon)

Newsletter submissions are due 10 days before the club meeting, but the earlier the better. They should be sent to :
WYSIWYG Publisher
5069 Fedora, Troy, MI 48098
OR at the e-mail addresses: newsletter@SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org

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Door Prizes

The SHCC offers door prizes at most regularly scheduled club meetings. In June the winners circle included:

Lindell Beck won a flash drive

James Waldrop won a flashlight

Martin Brown won a Photoshop Elements book

Ray Forest won a flashlight

John Beauchamp won an optical mopuse

Paul Baecker won a Kindle manual

Last Month's Meeting

The last club meeting month, which was June, we were pleased to have Mr. Steven Gold present "The Birth of the Modern Internet - A Personal Recollection". Steven has worked in the network industry since the start and has many personnel recollection of events in internet history.

SHCC Emergency Cancellation

If a club meeting is canceled an email will be sent to members by an officer, at least an hour before the scheduled start of the meeting. If you have an issue with your email call one of the officers. Don't call too early, the decision might not be finalized yet. All members are encouraged to keep the club up to date with their email address.

The President's Pen

by Don VanSyckel

Here it is the end of August. It's been a great summer. I've heard some people complain about the weather we've had but for the most part I think this summer was pretty nice. I'm writing this column on an alternate computer. My main PC is being rebuilt just now, ouch!!

I've been using Open Office for a while and heard that Libre Office was better in some aspects so I loaded it. Libre Office also worked well and I was pleased. Open Office did have a couple features that I could not find in Libre Office.

This week I decided I would update everything so I checked the two office suites. I was already at Open Office 3.3 and up to date there. I had Libre Office 3.4 loaded and 3.6 is available on the web site so I downloaded the file and loaded the software. The load seemed to go OK but nothing in Libre Office would work. I tried uninstalling and re-installing. I tried uninstalling and installing 3.4 again. To my surprise this was now just as broken. I uninstalled 3.4. I had to go on to other things and soon discovered the PC was acting quite different. Things were slow to the point where some things timed out and difficult use.

Well now what to do? The software has been uninstalled and still something was wrong. I opened the Program Files directory and delete the remnants of the Libre Office Suite. Still not right. I opened the registry which I caution you not to do unless you are prepared for the consequences, like rebuilding your PC. I removed items referring to Libre Office. Instead of the desired speeding up to normal, the PC slowed down even more to the point of being unusable.

I attempted to recover the windows installation and the MS software didn't cooperate at all. As a last resort I attempted to repair the Win XP installation. After quite a while the repair was done but during the installation several files were complained about. Then after completion the operation was the same. I suspect that the registry was damaged in a way that repair did not touch the problem. So as a last last resort I'm reinstalling windows from the ground up, reformat the disk and all that.

So now I've wasted two nights messing with this because I attempted to upgrade. The good news is this is one of the few problems I've had with upgrades. The bad news is I needed to be doing some other things the last two nights, including writing this column. Well our newsletter editor will get this column but it's late. On the other hand, I didn't know what to write about and this disaster supplied a topic.

Now here's a third night, after loading service pack 3 and hitting windows update there are over 100 updates that want to load. This is taking the rest of the third night.

I suggest people document the PC they're using. What I'm referring to is record the manufacturer and model number of each of the following:
Computer itself
Network card
Video card
Audio card

I list the network card first after the computer because many times if you can get the network working the other drivers can be found on the Internet.

Better yet make sure you have a recovery disk to load if, when, disaster strikes.

Book Review : Network Your Computers & Devices - Step by Step

by Edward Zaremba of the Sterling Heights Computer Club
edz@comcast.net

Book Title : Network Your Computers & Devices ~ Step by Step
ISBN #: 978-0-7356-5216-3

Author: Ciprian Adrian Rusen and 7 Tutorials

Publisher: O'Reilly Media, Inc.

Number of Book Pages: 520
U.S.A. List Price: $29.99

Review:
This is an excellent book with the 520 pages divided into 15 Chapters:
1. Setting Up a Router and Devices
2. Setting User Accounts on All Computers
3. Setting Up Your Libraries on All Windows 7 Computers
4. Creating the Network
5. Customizing Network Sharing Settings in Windows 7
6. Creating the Homegroup and Joining Windows 7 Computers
7. Sharing Libraries and Folders
8. Sharing and Working with Devices
9. Streaming Media Over the Network and the Internet
10. Sharing Between Windows XP, Windows Vista, and Windows 7 Computers
11. Sharing Between Mac OS X and Windows 7 Computers
12. Sharing Between Ubuntu Linux and Windows 7 Computers
13. Keeping the Network Secure
14. Setting Up Parental Controls
15. Troubleshooting Network and Internet Problems

Each chapter is laid out in a four step process:
1. Follow the easy numbered steps
2. Use screenshots to check your work
3. Get helpful tips and pointers
4. Follow the book's practice exercises

An excellent feature of this book is the ability to have a fully searchable online edition with unlimited access on the web by using the enclosed voucher code to set up your account for this book. I love that feature.
I would recommend this book to anybody interested in teaching yourself how to use the networking features in Windows 7 to connect your home computers.

Diskeeper 2011

by George Harding, Treasurer, Tucson Computer Society, AZ
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One of the essential parts of your computer, the hard disk, is also one that can cause the computer to be unable to boot. The Windows operating system provides tools to keep your hard disk in good health. Fragmentation of files is one of the consequences of efficient space utilization. File deletion leaves portions of disk space available for use by another file, but only if the new file is the same or smaller size as the deleted file. If larger, a portion of the new file is stored in the deleted file's space, the balance somewhere else. This splitting of a file may result in a file being cut into several pieces. It takes longer to retrieve a file in this condition, than if it is stored as one contiguous piece.

Fragmentation can be reduced or eliminated by a special program that rearranges files so that each occupies only one spot on the disk. This produces more efficient file retrieval. The defragmenter in Windows can be operated whenever desired. In Windows 7, it is run every day at a specified time that can be changed by the operator. In earlier versions of Windows, though, the defragmenter must be run manually, requiring you to remember to do so.

Diskeeper uses a different approach. Its IntelliWrite feature prevents fragmentation before it occurs. When a file is saved, this technology prevents fragmentation from occurring. In the rare event that a file is fragmented, the Instant Defrag feature fixes it in the background. These operations occur without any noticeable degradation of performance. Boot-time defragmentation is a feature that can be used to defrag those files that are being used by Windows and cannot be changed while Windows is running. Instead, they are operated on before Windows starts. This may add a bit to start-up time.

You can, if you wish, manually defragment your disk, but Diskeeper does a more efficient job, so let it do its job.

Sold in different editions with prices to match, the lowest price is about $40, certainly reasonable for such a sophisticated program.

About: Diskeeper 2011
Vendor: Diskeeper
www.diskeeper.com
Price: $40 and up
Requires: Works with WIN XP/ Vista/7

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Buying A Tablet

by Vinny LaBash, Regular Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
www.spcug.org labash@spcug.org

The first thing you need to know about buying a tablet is that you are not going to get top dollar performance for a bottom dollar price. You get what you pay for. Buying one of these devices based on price is a guarantee of disappointment. Deciding on which tablet to buy, either for yourself or as a gift, should depend generally on what you plan to do with it.

Most people who buy these devices have some mixture of the following in mind: playing games or computer-specific tasks. E-readers do one thing very well; they are designed for reading magazines and books. Barnes and Noble's Nook Color has a seven inch multi-touch screen which is also great for web browsing and playing casual games. Bejeweled looks spectacular and the traditional Microsoft games work well. You can play Angry Birds too.

A nice feature is the ability to read magazines in full color. It's a much more satisfying experience than traditional black and white even though it doesn't improve content. The Nook Color is great for watching short videos. Even the biggest smart phone screen can't come close to matching it.

Amazon is scheduled to release an updated version of its Kindle e-reader in time for the holidays. It's not available now so we can't comment on it. What we can say is if an e-reader is something you are interested in, be sure to check out Amazon's new product before buying.

If you are sure you want a tablet, resolve to get a good one or don't bother. If you end up with a cheap underpowered unit with too little processing power or memory to save money, you will end up frustrated for as long as you own the device. You want a processor with a speed greater than 1GHz, lots of memory, and a responsive touch screen.

Good specifications are a must, but they are not the whole story. The decisive factor should be about how the tablet fits to the way you want to use it. If you're considering an Android device, get your apps from the official Google Android Market (Google Play). It's the only way to be sure that the app is properly integrated with the Android software.

With seemingly every manufacturer on the planet trying to knock off the iPad, new ones are appearing in the marketplace almost daily. There is no way to keep track of all of them, so if you're dying to know what your options are, here is a general overview of the tablet landscape.

The iPad is king and unlikely to be dethroned in the near future. This tablet requires almost no learning time, and its ease of use remains unsurpassed. The number of apps, games and media available for it far exceeds that of any other competitor. It was designed as a cloud computing device, which means that data is not stored on it, making it inherently secure. You should try it before making any final decisions.

Android-based tablets offer the next most widely available set of alternatives if the iPad's price, size or capabilities fail to meet your requirements. They are also cloud based devices making them perfect for retrieving information anywhere an internet connection is available.

Tablets running Windows software have been around for over a decade. They continue to improve and evolve, but they are still inferior to the iPad and Android systems. They resemble laptops more than anything else with their wide variety of physical keyboards. If a Windows environment is what you're looking for, look no further. Microsoft plans to release Windows 8 sometime next year, and perhaps that will be the catalyst to propel these systems to a more prominent place in the minds of potential customers.

Before being carried away with the immersive experience of a tablet, it may be wise to consider why they might not be right for you. If you like the portability of a smart phone especially the ability to carry it in your pocket, that's an experience you won't get with a tablet.

Laptops have far more horsepower than the most powerful tablet. If power is what you need, a tablet may let you down. If computer power is your heart's desire, an inexpensive laptop is probably a better choice.

Common shortcomings among most laptops are lack of a replaceable battery, poor printer support, and awkward virtual keyboards. In addition, lousy business software smudgy screens, and compatibility problems with Adobe Flash are often cited among tablet users.

If your typical work day finds you heavily involved with creating and editing lengthy documents, large spreadsheets, PowerPoint presentations, and lots of email, visions of using a tablet productively may be delusional.

A high end tablet can go for around $800. A decent laptop or smart phone can be picked up for less and probably do more. Forget price for a moment and take the time to evaluate what you expect from a tablet. Is it really a better value for you and a better fit than a good smart phone or laptop? If the answer is yes, then go for it.

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The Tip Corner

by Bill Sheff, Lehigh Valley Computer Group, PA
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Fixing USB hard drives
Regardless of what kind of repair work you do, a good idea is start with the easiest and cheapest. So if you run into trouble with devices plugged into your computer via a USB cable... let's start with the cable.

Make sure there is a good connection. Remove and reinsert the cable into a different USB slot on the computer. Swap the cable for another USB cable.

Still not working? Double click My Computer in Windows XP or Computer in Windows Vista. The plugged USB hard drive is the removable disk on the list. Right click Properties and see if there is something wrong. If the drive is not listed turn the computer off. If the USB device is not recognized a message appears and unplug all other USB devices on the PC. These may not be compatible with the USB hard drive. Reboot the computer once all the other USB devices are disconnected.

Finally, if you are utilizing a USB hub, unplug the device and connect it directly to the USB port. If still not recognized or working the device unfortunately is that the hard drive is very likely defective.

Burning DVD discs in Windows 7
First let's review the two different DVD formats there are. They are DVD- and DVD+. DVD- (dash) was developed by Pioneer in the late 1990's, while DVD+ was developed by the DVD+RW alliance which includes Sony, HP, Ricoh, Yamaha, and others. Just note that all DVD burners now produced support both formats, which makes it easy for the consumer.

However, it should be noted that all things being equal the DVD dash burns slightly faster.

Whenever I mention a CD or DVD below it means either a dash or plus format. DVD-R formats are for a one time burn, while DVD-RW discs are used for both reading and writing data and can be formatted over and over again.

Today there are many types of multimedia files, including data, audio, and video, and each could require different ways to burn it to a DVD disc correctly.

We will discuss common file types, the disc format they should be created in, and the type of blank disc to use for best results.

For Home Videos (from a camcorder or downloaded video) they should be created with an Authoring software such as Windows DVD Maker in a DVD-Video project and it's recommended to use DVD-R media.

Digital Photo files can either be backed up using a standard DVD burning software as a data project or be created as a digital photo slideshow by using a compatible software using DVD-R media.

Most Recorded TV shows from Windows Media Center should be Authored with windows DVD Maker in a DVD-Video project and burned to DVD-R media.

Music or audio files can be burned to blank CD-R discs using Windows Media Player. However there are two ways to go about this: First you can create a standard Audio CD which usually holds 74 minutes of music by creating an audio project or you can burn mp3 files as a data project to get more music on a disc. (Just make sure you have a mp3 disc player for proper playback).

A recent burn I did holds 182 music files on one CD+ disc, and it plays in my car.

Disc Image Files or ISO files require Windows, Roxio or Nero Disc Image Burner to burn the format correctly on either a blank CD-R or DVD-R disc (it just depends on the file size).

Recording Home Videos to DVD
By utilizing the free Windows DVD Maker already included in Windows 7 installs you can simply and easily create home movie discs from your videos. The software will not make a Hollywood type film but will get you creating a DVD movie that you and your family can enjoy on your TV sets in the living room.

You simply start the software, load in some video that you captured off of your camcorder, create a custom DVD menu and burn away. You now have a DVD movie disc that you can watch on any standard DVD player.

Recording TV Shows to DVD Disc
In the old days, if your Windows PC came with a TV capture card you can hook up your cable line or satellite TV box and watch TV on your computer screen, but today with digital signals being encrypted you now need at least a separate cable box or DVR. If you use Windows Media Center you also have a built in DVR where you can record the shows you want. The best part is that you can also now burn them to a DVD disc and watch them on your TV set just like it was intended. To do this in Media Center all you do is insert a blank DVD, then click Burn CD/DVD and choose the Video DVD option. Then select a tit le name for the project and select the video clips or TV shows you want to burn from your media library and click the burn button. Media Center will handle
the rest and give you a DVD disc that is properly formatted.

Sharing Digital Photos the Easy Way
One of the easiest ways to preserve,

backup, and share your digital photos is to back them up to a blank CD-R or DVD. You can easily accomplish this by using Windows Explorer and choosing the Mastered format. All you do is insert a blank CD or DVD and on the AutoPlay box choose the "Burn files to disc using Windows Explorer" option. When the burn a disc dialog box opens choose a Disc Tit le and tick the With a CD/DVD player and click Next. Then simply browse to the digital photo folder you want to backup/burn and drag it into the empty disc folder. When ready to burn click the Burn to Disc box and you are good to go.

Burn a DVD From an Image File

If you come across an image file such as .iso you can watch it using Magic ISo or burn that image to a CD or DVD to see the contents in the file. Since .iso is a container for a file structure you need to extract it and by burning it to a disc will accomplish this. In Windows 7 you can use Windows Disc Image Burner. This is as easy as right clicking on the .iso file and choosing Burn Disc Image...yes it's that easy now in Windows 7.

(For some additional data take a look at BurnWorld.com.)

One Column Excel Tip

If you ever prepared a spreadsheet that consisted of hundreds of lines and only one or two columns and then decided to print it out, can you do it without running through a ream of paper for just the one or two columns? Well, yeah! But don't look for a simple solution.

Actually, the simplest way is to copy your entire data table (all 100s of rows) to the Clipboard and paste it into Word. You can then format the information in Word to use columns and print as desired. (You can also place headers and footers on your data easier within Word than you can in Excel.)

But if you are a purest and want to do it in Excel here are a couple of ways to print the data in columns on a single sheet of paper.

Let's assume you have data that is only one column wide by 100 rows deep.)

1. In cell B2, enter the formula "=A26".
2. In cell C2, enter the formula "=A51".
3. In cell D2, enter the formula "=A76".
4. Copy cells B2:D2 down to row 25.

Your data is now in four columns, without the original data being disturbed. Format your columns to the necessary width, place a page break just before row 26, and print just the first page of your data. You can also save the file as a template for future single column files.

Another approach is to copy the row and column(s) to a different worksheet. This is quick and easy to do using the keyboard (Ctrl+C to copy and Ctrl+V to paste), but there is a drawback. If the row or column you are copying contains formulas that rely on other areas of the worksheet, the copied data may not show the proper results. Thus, the best "cut and paste" approach would be to use the Paste Values command rather than just Paste.

This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

Office 2007's Magical Spelling & Grammar Checker

by Nancy DeMarte, Columnist, Office Talk, Sarasota PCUG, Inc., FL
www.spcug.org ndemarte@Verizon.net

Among the hundreds of tools which are part of the Word, PowerPoint, and Outlook programs within the Microsoft Office 2007 and 2010 suites, none is as useful and under-utilized by home users as the Spelling & Grammar Checker. For one thing, it is not on the Home tab, but instead is the large button on the left end of the Review tab. (Certain tools are assigned over-sized buttons, by the way, because they were found to be used most often in the workplace). It's time we home users catch up, especially since this tool has been improved in recent versions of Office.

How it Works

Spelling & Grammar Checker works in two ways to find your errors and help you correct them. You may have noticed the red, green, and more recently, blue wavy lines appearing under words as you type. These are the alert signals that a word is misspelled (red), the grammar is incorrect (green), or in recent versions, a word doesn't fit the context of the sentence (blue).

The traditional method of using the checker is to let it search from beginning to end of your finished document, stopping at every error. Then you decide whether to accept one of the suggested changes or ignore them all.

Begin by putting your cursor at the start of the document. Click the Spelling & Grammar checker icon to open a dialog box. (Adding this icon to your Quick Access bar will make this step quicker). The box displays a snippet from your document at the top with the first error highlighted. If the problem is a spelling error, a list of related words and spellings appears with the recommended correction

listed first. Click 'Change' to make the recommended change in your document. 'Change All' will change all instances of this word in the document. The options 'Ignore Once' or 'Ignore All' result in no change. If the word is unique, as with a proper name, but is spelled correctly, click 'Add to Dictionary' to include it in the large Office dictionary. Checking an entire document is a good last step after completing a document where accuracy is important, such as a report or article.

A new and quicker way to check spelling is to go through your document and right click each of the underlined errors. The drop down menu gives you similar choices to those in the dialog box as well as other options, depending on the error. Left click your choice, and your document will be corrected.

Using AutoCorrect

You'll notice that one of the choices both in the dialog box and the right click menu is "AutoCorrect." Office includes a list of common misspellings of words in the Options sections of the Office programs. As long as the AutoCorrect function is enabled, these words will automatically be corrected as you type. One example is "teh," which will immediately change to "the" as soon as you hit the space bar.

If you have a word that you type often and constantly misspell, adding it to the AutoCorrect list makes sense. To do this in Word, click the Office (File) button, then 'Word Options'. Click 'Proofing' in the left pane. Here you will find a number of check boxes for adjusting spelling and grammar-related functions. You can, for example, have the spell checker ignore the spellings of Internet addresses or have the program stop checking grammar errors. Next click 'AutoCorrect Options' at the top of the right pane. Here you can adjust more check boxes to change how the checker works. At the bottom of this box is the AutoCorrect list. Symbols appear first, so scroll down to find the list of misspelled words and their corrected counterparts. To add a new word, type your misspelling of it in the box under 'Replace'. Type the correct spelling under 'With' and click OK. This word will now automatically be replaced with the correct spelling as you type.

Correcting Grammar

If you haven't adjusted the Proofing options in your program, the Spelling & Grammar checker will identify grammar errors well as spelling. This function has always been a weak link in the checker. As a veteran teacher of English, I sometimes disagree with the checker's opinions. Perhaps it's because 'grammar' needs to be taken loosely in this context. For instance, if you leave an extra space between words, both words will underline in green, indicating a grammar error. It is good to remove extra spaces because they will be blatantly visible when the Word document is printed or the PowerPoint slide show projected on the screen. But I wouldn't define it as "grammar." The checker will also underline real grammar problems, such as sentence fragments, run-on sentences and subject-verb agreement. It is smart to look carefully at these sentences and make improvements as needed. The checker is not perfect, though, so proofread any important documents.

New: Contextual Spelling

A new feature of the Spelling & Grammar Checker in Word 2007 is the option to check contextual spelling. This involves flagging of homonyms, words which are pronounced the same, but have different meanings. Some examples are *to - too - two* or *there - their - they're*. This function is not automatically enabled because it uses quite a bit of memory. If your computer has less than 1 GB of Ram, the option will be disabled automatically. It also doesn't always catch errors, but it's a start and will probably be improved in future versions of Office. If you wish to turn on this option, go to Word Options - Proofing and click the check box, "Use contextual spelling." If it slows down your computer, I recommend turning it off.

One last thing: If you use one of the Windows email programs (Outlook Express in XP, Windows Mail in Vista, or Windows Live Mail in Win 7), the Office Spelling & Grammar checker will automatically check your composed messages if you have the option, "Check spelling as you type," enabled.

This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

Too Scared to Buy Anything Online?

by Lee Seidman, Vice President, Business Professional Microcomputer UG, CT
www.bpmug.org Lseidmanyahoo.com

Lots of consumers find purchasing goods online intimidating; news reports of identity theft, online piracy, and privacy concerns only deteriorates people's confidence in buying things on the Internet. Using free software tools combined with some education and common sense is all one needs to build to become a savvy and safe e-consumer.

The secure e-consumer first needs to recognize when a web site represents a reputable merchant. Using online reviews from epinions.com, bizrate.com, resellerratings.com, or even just a search on Google will help one gauge a vendor's trustworthiness based on the experiences of others. Peruse the commentary and read what people say and how they rate their transactions with that supplier; what

may initially be perceived as a negative review may be little more than someone griping about something irrelevant or inconsequential (like it was delivered a day later than expected, which may be the responsibility of the transporting service instead). If there appears to be a pattern of complaints about a particular vendor, it is sensible to take that into account before ordering anything.

In the above example, we are "window shopping" on a popular technology vendor web site called newegg.com. Note what the address bar reads at the top: http://www.newegg.com. This means the site offers no security presently; no sensitive information is being exchanged at this time.

When we decide on an item to procure, most web sites (like newegg.com) will request for the purchaser to sign in (some sites will offer an opt-out area for this, but many do not). IF YOU CREATE AN ACCOUNT ON THESE SITES, DO NOT USE THE SAME PASSWORD AS YOU WOULD USE TO ACCESS YOUR E-MAIL. Note the address bar has now changed to read https:// and a lock appears in the browser as well (at least with Internet Explorer).

Clicking on that lock reveals information about the web site and its security.

This tells the consumer that this web site has been verified as who they say they are and that the connection is encrypted (we are no longer just "window shopping"). VeriSign and a handful of other similar companies are the Internet's certificate authorities (CA), which substantiate the identities of companies on the web. By viewing the certificate (which is how the web browser on your computer knows to trust the web site it is displaying), you can see its validity and when it expires. Once that certificate expires, your web browser will alert you that the site is no longer trusted as it once was (this should rarely happen with the big-name sites). Note that web sites that request any form of identification (like logging into a webmail, bank, or paystub account) or financial transaction should use https:// and certificates.

When it comes time to actually buy an item online, a credit card offers the best peace of mind available. Most of the major credit card companies offer "zero liability protection" for unauthorized purchases (read the fine lines carefully, MasterCard states on its web site that one's account must be "in good standing," the consumer "exercised reason- able care in safeguarding" the card from unauthorized use, and that there must not be more than two unauthorized events reported in the past twelve months). While the legal verbiage may present a chill, many issuers offer temporary credit card numbers specifically for use online (Citigroup calls their "Virtual Credit Card" while Bank of America markets it as "ShopSafe"). These temporary credit card numbers expire quickly or have whatever transaction limit you wish to assign. When it is time to purchase an item from an online merchant, open another web browser, log into your credit card issuer's web site, and look for the section to open the tool for a virtual credit card.

This virtual card number appears and functions as an authentic credit card to the vendor; its purpose is to keep its use limited to that particular transaction and to keep your actual credit card number a secret from that vendor. If the virtual credit card is compromised by an unscrupulous third party, it is not as much of an intrusion into one's financial existence as if the actual credit card number was used (there is no need to replace a credit card, change accounts, etc.) Using this tool satisfies the card issuer's requirement for "exercising reasonable care in safeguarding" the authentic credit number, limits the amount of uses it can be tried (usually just once), and makes online shopping less frightening. The web may present dangers, but using your savvy skills and online tools should take the fear out of shopping.

This article has been obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

Presenters Wanted

The officers invite any member to make a presentation at the main meeting.

If there is some software you have been using and think others may be interested as well, or there is a computer topic you would like to present to other members, please call or e-mail Don VanSyckel. Making presentations is not that difficult. The hour goes by before you know it and there is always enough material to cover in a software package so that the hour is easy to fill.

If there is a topic you are interested in or something you would like demonstrated, please see any of the officers. They are always interested in what the members would like to see.

Club Record Changes

To update your e-mail address, phone number, etc., please e-mail the club secretary at: Secretary@SterlingHeightsComputerClub.org. Using this address will provide the smoothest and quickest venue for any changes.

WYSIWYG WEB WATCH (www)

By Paul Baecker

webwatch@sterlingheightscomputerclub.org

This column attempts to locate sites containing valuable, amusing and free content, with no overbearing pressure to purchase anything. Send your favorite entertaining, helpful or just plain useless sites (a description is optional) to the e-address noted above, for inclusion in a future WYSIWYG issue. Also check the SHCC web site ("Web Page Reviews") for previous gems.

Real-life interactive video situation forces you to make critical choices and walks you through saving a life.
http://www.heartrescuenow.com

Tune your digital guitar and learn/play chords and progressions, or jam away with your own new creations.
http://www.all-guitar-chords.com

Select an exercise type, or select a body type to strengthen/tone, and view appropriate videos for your choices.
http://www.exercise.com/exercises

Penn and Teller explain sleight of hand.
http://www.5min.com/Video/Penn-and-Teller-Explain-Sleight-of-Hand-5311492

Use this USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map to determine which plants will grow well in your region. Click on your state or enter your zip code.
http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/

Cryptogram and hang-man games. Click on 'ciphers' or 'men'.
http://www.madglibs.com

Collection of ten tribute videos dedicated to the late, great Carl Sagan, with breath-taking cinematography.
http://saganseries.com

Fast and easy free open-source graphics application for digital painters, including a large brush collection of charcoal and ink to emulate real media.
http://mypaint.intilinux.com

Free interior design application that helps you place your furniture on a house 2D plan, with a 3D preview. Download or use on-line version.
http://www.sweethome3d.com

Over 13,000 railroad videos for train enthusiasts. Search by locomotive type, railroad, location, more.
http://rail-videos.net

Upload an animated GIF to play it back in reverse.
http://reversegif.com

Scientific reviews of the latest ovens from every major brand. Search by type, brand, price or need.
http://www.oveninfo.com

Over 5,000 maps representing many different time periods and regions, some dating back to the 1700s.
http://etc.usf.edu/maps/

Game of 'Deal Or No Deal'.
http://www.nbc.com/Deal_or_No_Deal/game/dond.swf

View the universe from largest to smallest entity. Best viewed in full screen. Click on 'Sizes of the Universe poster' to download complete image.
http://www.numbersleuth.org/universe/

A series of videos which promise "30 Days to Learn HTML & CSS".
http://learncss.tutsplus.com

Forgotten places and urban curiosities. Search among abandoned, architecture, military, art, travel.
http://www.urbanghostsmedia.com

Toggle squares on and off to create musical sounds.
http://img44.imageshack.us/img44/6182/music.swf

Control helicopter around barriers using only the left-mouse button. But crashing is inevitable.
http://www.helicoptergame.net

For your next curiosity visit to a library: Dewey Decimal System – a guide to call numbers. Includes a link to "How to Read a Call Number".
http://www.library.uiuc.edu/ugl/about/dewey.html

Ever-shrinking circles.
http://www.cesmes.fi/pallo.swf

Make music online with audio workstation synthesizers and live effects. View "Features" tab to get acquainted, then "Open Studio" to start playing.
http://www.audiosauna.com

Various animations show how to prepare clothing and accessories in the art of packing three sizes of luggage.
http://www.louisvuitton.com/front/#/eng_US/Collections/Men/Travel/stories/The-Art-of-packing

Alphabetical list of all 55,000+ articles on the 'How Stuff Works' website.
http://www.howstuffworks.com/big.htm?page=1

Search among 10 million Creative Commons images on Flickr by color. Select up to 5 colors at a time.
http://labs.tineye.com

Cameras of yesteryear.
http://www.prismyard.com