



The Award Winning Monthly Publication of the Mountain Computer User Group

Vol. 9, Issue #10  
October 2009

We give special recognitions to George Donegan, our Secretary/Treasurer. He is the only Charter member of our club, being a member since 1988. He has been president several times, our first Newsletter Editor and held other key positions in the club. Let's all give him a round of applause

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### OCTOBER MEETING TO FEATURE SOCIAL NETWORKING

We have all heard of Tweeting and Facebook, My space and Flickr. What is it? What's all the excitement about? What are we missing if we aren't into social networking? What are the risks if you try this out and how do we avoid them? And most of all, should we be taking the plunge?

These are just a few of the questions you may well be asking yourself as you watch the news and listen to the younger generations.

Our program for October will try to provide the answers. If you have become a social networker, plan to come and share your experiences with the rest of us. If you curious about the whole concept come learn about this new experience.



As a person that thought tweeting had something to do with a bird that Sylvester the cat was always chasing, I may not be the best speaker on this topic but I will try to lead us into the realm of social networking.

Plan to come and have some fun.

We still need volunteers to serve as board members and officers for next year. It is very important that we get some additional folks to step up. A successful club depends on active members.

Mountain Computer User Group  
P.O. Box 474  
Young Harris, GA. 30582



#### Officers for 2009

##### President

Jim Bell                    jbell1011@verizon.net

##### Vice President

John Yandell            jyandell@brmemc.net

##### Past President

Terry Oden              Terryo@brmemc.net

##### Secretary/Treasurer

George Donegan    gd0negan29@alltel.net

##### Publisher/Editor

Tom Allen                bunkerhilltom@yahoo.net

#### Board of Directors for 2009

Bob Greenhaw    bbgreenhaw@brmemc.net  
Rea Williams    reaw@brmemc.net  
Don Miller        dbmatchatuge@alltel.net  
Tom Allen        bunkerhilltom@yahoo.com

#### MCUG Monthly Meeting Schedule

The regular monthly meeting of the Mountain Computer User Group (MCUG) is held on the second Monday of every month, at 7 p.m., in the Wilson Lecture Hall (Room 201) of the Goolsby Building on the campus of Young Harris College in Young Harris, GA. All regular monthly meetings and SIGs are open to everyone regardless of membership status.

#### MCUG Membership

Annual dues are \$20 and extend membership privileges to two (2) members of a household. Membership privileges include: special discounts on vendor products, access to products for evaluation and review, and association with a great bunch of people.

#### Affiliation

The Mountain Computer User Group is a member of APCUG, a nonprofit international organization dedicated to promoting communications between PC user groups and the computer industry.

#### Group Purpose

The Mountain Computer User Group is a nonprofit, tax-exempt educational organization without corporate or vendor affiliation. Its purpose is the encouragement and advancement of computer information and knowledge through "users helping users".

## How can I Read Office (Word, Excel, etc.) Files Without Buying Expensive Office?

Written by Gabe Goldberg, Computers and Publishing, Inc.

Tiplet (at) gabegold.com

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While Microsoft's Office applications suite dominates the Windows landscape, it's expensive and not universally used. And if you only need occasional access to Office-format files, you surely don't want to spend hundreds of dollars to buy software you'll rarely use, and even then only in limited fashion.

Fortunately, several free alternatives let you read these files!

First, if you only receive occasional Office-format files and just need to read or print them but not to change/update them, ask senders if they can convert the files to PDF (Portable Document Format). That's an industry-standard format, easily created by many free alternatives to Adobe Acrobat, and easily read by Adobe's [free Acrobat Reader](#).

Second, if you only need to read and print Office files, Google the program name (e.g., Word, Excel, PowerPoint) with the word "viewer" to install the free Microsoft file viewer for the type of files you have. If the files were created by Office 2003 or earlier versions, you're done. If someone inflicts Office 2007 format files on you (file extension docx for Word, xlsx for Excel, pptx for PowerPoint, etc.) you'll also need Microsoft's free [Office Compatibility Pack for Word, Excel, and PowerPoint 2007 File Formats](#).

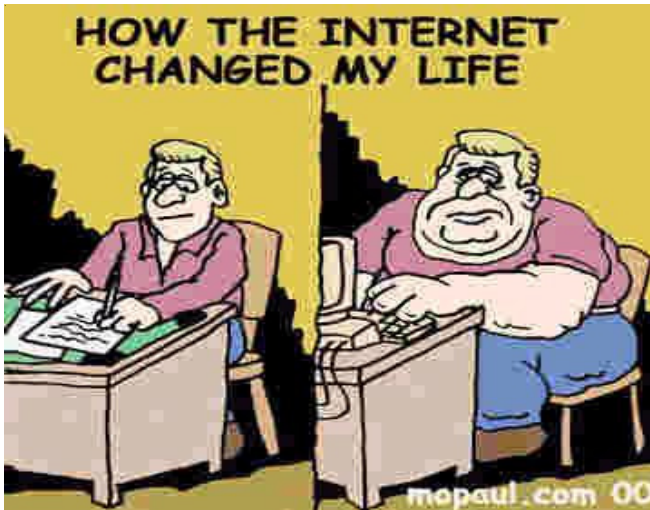
Third, if you'll need to change Office files, consider [Open Office](#), a free and reasonably compatible alternative to Microsoft's Office. It may not handle intricately formatted Word documents or convoluted Excel spreadsheets, but it's usually adequate for the sorts of

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documents, spreadsheets, and presentations mere mortals create and use.

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### Little Known Facts About Bill Gates

By the age of 17, Gates had sold his first computer program, a time-tabling system for his high school, for \$4,200.

Gates told his university teachers he would be a millionaire by age 30. He became a billionaire at age 31.

Bill Gates earns \$250 every second; that's about \$20 million a day and \$7.8 billion a year!

If he drops a thousand-dollar bill, he needn't even bother to pick it up because in the four seconds it would take him to pick it up, he would've already earned it back.

**Congratulations to John Lake for winning the Epson printer that was raffled off at the September meeting. We thank him for purchasing tickets which helps us in our fund raising endeavor. We also want to congratulate Bill Katz, Arthur Mott, Barbara Bates and Paul Filer for winning the September meeting door prizes.**



One picture is worth 128K.

The computer is mightier than the pen, the sword, and usually, the programmer.

Computer programmers do it byte by byte.

Computers can never replace human stupidity.

## Tom's Tip of the Month

If you would like to avoid one additional means of identity theft, here is a way to help. When emailing groups or more than one recipient, you can use the "Bcc" feature of your email application. To do this simply insert your addresses into the "Bcc" box as you would normally into your "To" box. For those of you who have no "Bcc" box on your "Create Mail" template (such as Outlook Express applications), you can click on the "To" box and a "Bcc" box will appear along with the "To" and the "CC" boxes. Just insert the addresses into the "Bcc" box of the template.

## How Can I Tweak Firefox and Thunderbird to Be As Great as People Say

### They Are?

Written by Gabe Goldberg, Computers and Publishing, Inc.

Tiplet (at) gabegold.com

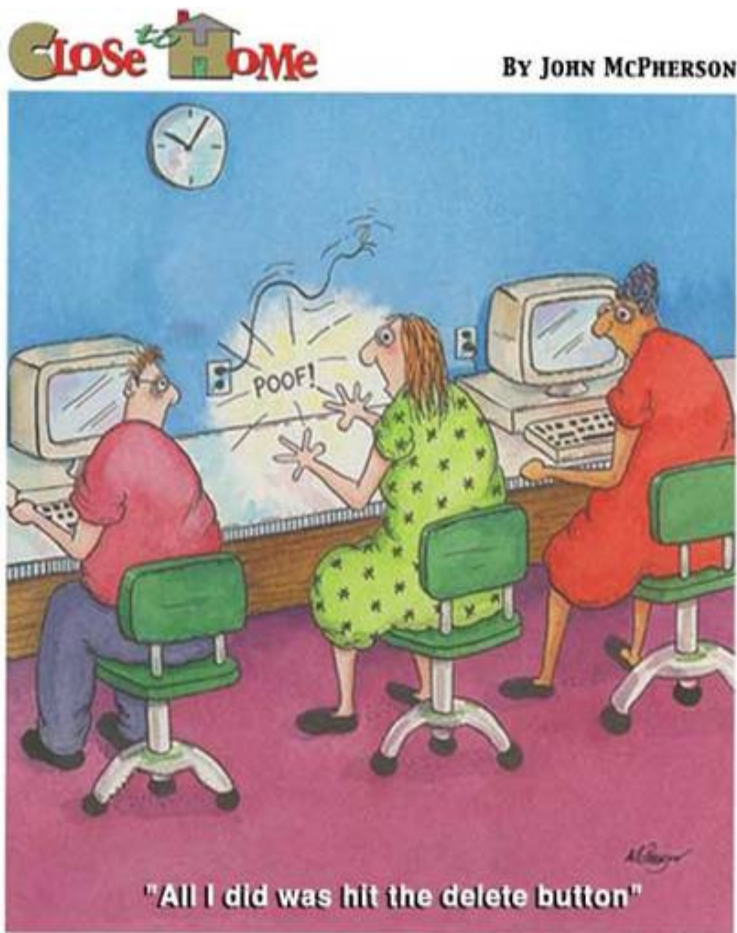
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One of the Internet's many beauties is the diversity of choices available — for everything. There are multiple search engines, Web browsers, ISPs (Internet service providers), operating systems (Windows, Linux, Mac). This means that no two people have precisely the same computing setup or online experience and leads to hours of fun-filled arguments about whose choices are best.

In fact, competition works to everyone's advantage: no matter what your choice is for a given function, the vendor or manufacturer knows that you have alternatives and must hustle to keep your loyalty. The "browser wars" — first when Microsoft pushed Internet Explorer (IE) development to catch innovator Netscape and more recently with Mozilla Firefox stealing market share back from IE (and, of course, with contributions from Opera, Chrome, and other contenders) — have generated beneficial innovation and evolution.

Recent reports show Firefox taking market share from Internet Explorer — but Microsoft is introducing Internet Explorer Version 8, so the horse race continues. So it's worth exploring (pun intended) why software like Firefox, which must be added to Windows systems which by default include IE, can be so successful.

In addition to speed and security superior to at least earlier IE versions, Firefox and its Mozilla sibling email client Thunderbird provide powerful customization tools. In Firefox, click Tools and then Options. Explore the tabs: Main, Tabs, Content, applications, Privacy, Security, and Advanced; within Advanced, subtabs address different functions. For each options group, the Help button displays specific



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information describing choices available.

You needn't study and learn all options at once but it's worth occasionally browsing what you can tweak. Firefox defaults are certainly pleasant and workable but by making your own decisions, you can customize the browser to accommodate your unique preferences. On the Advanced/Update tab, I recommend checking all three boxes to check for updates, and then selecting "Ask me what to do" about updates. That way you'll find out about available updates and control when they're

downloaded and installed.

But there's more! Click Tools, then Add-ons, then Get Add-ons, to open a wonderful catalogue of small tools you can add to perform new functions. These are available because Firefox is open source software, meaning it's developed, supported, and maintained by volunteers. While the most important browser functions are included in the basic browser, hundreds of developers produce add-on modules to extend it.

You'll initially see a few Recommended add-ons; click See All Recommended Add-ons to visit the Web site of all-things-add-ons. On the left, you'll see broad categories (e.g., Appearance, Bookmarks, Search Tools); the main display shows the most popular tools.

Explore categories in which you're most interested. But before installing any, browse for alternatives, since several add-ons may perform similar functions. Look at ratings (number of stars) and number of downloads reported — obviously a highly-rated add-on being downloaded 150,000 times a week is a safer bet than a less-popular

lesser-rated choice. And read reviews for real-people descriptions of how add-ons work — or don't. Note which Firefox versions an add-on supports, since some may need a relatively new version and others may not have yet been updated for them.

Thunderbird handles options and add-ons in a similar fashion. For perspective, I have 15 Firefox and 9 Thunderbird add-ons installed and occasionally shop for yet more to improve my browsing and email experience.

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### Tech News That Affects Everybody

Written by Sandy Berger, CompuKISS

www.compukiss.com

sandy(at)compukiss.com

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Some of us scour the technology and business sections of the newspaper and the Web to get the latest news. Some of us head for the lifestyle and community sections, without much of a care about technology. Yet, today's technology news is often news that will affect everyone's life in one way or another.

Let me give you a few examples. The Pope recently announced opening of the Vatican YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/vaticanit) which will feature short video clips of Pope Benedict XVI's activities and links to news and information about the Catholic Church. The Pope is posting two or three videos each day. Most are short clips showing the Pope's speeches, activities, and participation in important events. In a recent speech, the Pope praised the Internet as offering rich opportunities for dialogue, friendship and spreading the Christian message.

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# Googlepedia

A review by George Harding, President, Tucson Computer Society, AZ

www.aztcs.org

georgehardingsbd(at)earthlink.net

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This book is the greatest! If you are interested in anything Google, this is the place to go to find out about it.

This is a Que book, the 3rd edition, by Michael Miller, who is a prolific author for Que. He's written some 80 non-fiction how-to books, mostly about computer-related

subjects.

The book has over 700 pages, including a comprehensive index, a very complete Table of Contents, 46 chapters and 3 appendices.

I suspect that a 4<sup>th</sup> edition is not far off, because Google is constantly developing new

tools that you will want to know about.

The best known Google tool is the Web Search engine. In the olden days, say five years ago, there were several search engines, all of which produced a list of results that contained many duplicates and may not even have produced something useful to you.

Google took a new approach to produce search results that do not have duplicates, are up-to-date and are sequenced by probable usefulness to you. They do this by the following process:

Periodically, usually every few weeks, their GoogleBot crawler searches the web for each page, tracks every link in the page and saves a copy of each page it encounters on its servers.

Google creates an index to each of the saved pages, storing every important word on each page.

Once a search of the pages is complete, the results are ranked by methods known only by Google.

The rankings are displayed on the search results page in order by what is likely to be the most important to you, to the least likely. There are many techniques to making a successful search, and these are described fully in the book. Using quotes or operators can significantly improve the accuracy of your search.

What's most interesting, though, is all the other services provided by Google. I suspect you, like me, are not aware of many of these:

GOOG-411. Search for businesses by voice from your cell phone. Dial 1-800-GOOG-411 to try it out.

Google Desktop. Create a home page environment that has just what you want on it.

Google Docs. Word processing, spreadsheet and presentation documents on the web, sharable with others.

Google Earth, Sky and Mars. Tools to explore these areas.

Google Gmail. An email portal.

Google Groups. Create and join specific discussion groups.

Google Maps. View maps and driving directions.

Google Notebook. Store web information you come across.

Google Reader. Display articles and headlines from blogs and RSS

feeds.

Google Scholar. Read and search scholarly journals and articles.

Google Transit. Plan your trip using public transportation.

Google News and Web Alerts. Be advised of new material that meets

your criteria.

And more...

Each chapter tells you about a Google service and how to use it. Each description is described simply to begin with, but continues with more details about how to make use of special features. You can easily be an expert user of any of their tools through this book.

All of these services came out of the Google Labs, which is essentially an R & D facility. It is constantly on the search for new, useful tools for users. One recently announced service is Google Voice that gives you free phone calls within the US, but also forwards calls to your cell phone and land line and transcribes voice messages into email.

I found this book fascinating, because it opened my eyes to all the things that are available from Google. It will take me some time to learn about the ones in which I'm interested.

About: Googlepedia

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(Continued from page 5)

There is a lot of irreverent stuff on YouTube, but the Pope's participation shows how mainstream this popular video website has become. YouTube, FaceBook, MySpace, and other social networking websites have become more and more popular. If you haven't yet visited any of these, YouTube is a great place to start. (www.youtube.com)

Another recent news announcement was the Palm Pre, which is a smartphone that will be available in a few months through Sprint. You might think that this is just another phone, and you would be right. But the implications for cell phones are quite dramatic. Palm has developed a totally new version of the operating system for this phone. Google now has their own cell phone operating system as do Microsoft, BlackBerry, and Apple. These are some pretty big name and you will notice that the software that runs these phones is called an operating system. That's because these phone are really mini-computers that can do email, surf the web, and perform many other functions. Cell phones are changing dramatically. They are turning into handheld computers that will change the lives of those who use them.

We also should not overlook Apple's recent announcement that they will be dropping the DRM (digital rights management) for all songs in their iTunes store. The DRM crippled the songs so they had limited use. For instance, they could only be played on a certain number of devices or be copied a certain number of times. So music lovers the world over will be rejoicing to see that by April of this year, all of iTunes 10 million songs will be DRM-free. There is one caveat. Those who have previously purchased music and/or videos on iTunes that included Apple's DRM will now have to pay to get the DRM removed. Apple will be charging 30 cents a song. iTunes has sold six billion songs since going online in 2003. They did not offer any DRM-free music until recently. So most of those six billion songs had DRM. If every purchaser pays Apple 30 cents for taking away the DRM, Apple would make \$180,000,000. A boon to Apple, a pain-in-the-rear for honest music lovers who previously used the iTunes store.

Microsoft was also in the news recently with their announcement that the beta testing version Windows 7, their next operating system could be downloaded and tried for free. Their website was inundated by curious Windows users. So many came, that they had to add more servers and download services. They originally said that they would limit the downloads to 2.5 million, but recently removed that restriction and will continue to offer the beta trial until February. Don't think that you will be getting something for nothing, though. The beta of Windows 7 will stop being functional on August 1, 2009. At that time you will either have to reinstall your previous operating system or pay for Windows 7.

Last but not least in the technology news is the announcement that Western Digital has created a 2 terabyte hard disk drive. Believe it or not, this may have one of the biggest effects on individual users. As we can store more and more digital data at reasonable prices, more and more data will be digitized. We are already living in a digital world, but that world gets more reliant on technology every day.



# Mountain Computer User Group October 2009 Calendar

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 Donald Carter Hatch Hatchell	2	3
4	5 Cathy Pearce	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14 Donald Miller  Laura	15 Art Frenz	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 Betty Rose Shope	23 Cissy Williams	24
25 Sandra Royals	26	27	28	29 Jo Anne Allen	30	31



## OCTOBER ANNIVERSARIES



Bill & Vivan Heath	10/30/1959	50 yrs
Larry & Bonny Garrett	10/05/1969	40 yrs
Art & Diane Frenz	10/31/1973	36 yrs
Carole & Clifford Kasa	10/20/1985	24 yrs