

MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP

July 2001 Newsletter



Quips N' Tips

by Rick Howell

Recently, AT&T and AOL reached an agreement to team up to provide wireless customers with internet services including e-mail, instant messaging and web site content. Recent developments in 3G wireless technology have spurred interest in delivering web capabilities to wireless customers. Now if the government could get off their butts and provide broadcast frequencies for 3G providers, we would see immediate advances in capabilities of portable wireless systems. I like the idea of my wife being able to send me a shopping list while I am on my way home from work or being able to check movie schedules while I am having dinner at a restaurant. Instant messaging will allow me to always be in touch in case of emergency. And, if I just happen to be in the mood to watch the trailer for Tomb Raider just one more time.....

AMD and Intel are continuing with their processor speed race with AMD scheduled to introduce 1.5 and 1.6 GHz processors next quarter and Intel coming out with a 1.8 GHz processor in the same time frame. Apparently they are racing toward a 2GHz machine by year's end. Both companies are planning to utilize .13 micron manufacturing technology in their laptop processors which will result in less power-hungry processors yielding much longer battery life. Compaq is planning to announce a new mini-notebook based on a low-power version of the Pentium III-M. The mini-notebook weighs in at 2.5 pounds and will run for eight hours on a single battery charge.

Web security is becoming an issue with a lot of people these days. Many web vendors use covert tactics to gather information about their customers' browsing and buying habits. Internet Explorer 6, which

Microsoft will be releasing with Windows XP in October, will support P3P or Platform Privacy Preferences, which will allow you to automatically determine whether you will allow a web site to collect information about you via cookies. Cookies that are not P3P compliant will not be allowed to be installed on your machine, thereby blocking non-compliant web sites from your access. Many companies are now scrambling to make their cookies comply. Along with P3P, there is another TLA (three-letter acronym) with which you should be concerned, BHO. A BHO, or **Browser Helper Object**, is a special add-in for use with Internet Explorer version 4.0 or higher. BHOs are being utilized by some web sites to gather information about where you go on the internet. If you use IE, then you might want to check out how BHOs are being used and what you can do to stop them. PC Magazine has a great shareware utility called BHO Cop that will allow you to monitor and control the BHOs on your system. Another great utility is called WebWasher. This one allows you to control pop-up ads, provides site blocking and a variety of other privacy, content and access tools. You should be able to find this one on the major shareware sites.

MEETING NOTICE

by: George Miner

When: Tuesday, July 10th, at 7:15 PM

Where: Old Bedford School (in 1800 block of Bedford Road)

Program: Our guest speaker for July will be Richard Marple from Advanced Micro Devices (AMD). Richard will have a Powerpoint presentation for us. This will be a very interesting and informative meeting. Bring a friend!

Last week, I began construction on my file server for my home network. In an appeal to my frugal side, I decided to base the server on a used Celeron 500 processor and motherboard which I procured at a substantial discount from a local dealer. The motherboard has audio and video controls built in so I did not have to buy extra cards for them, however in order to use the new UltraDMA ATA-100 hard drives I was required to purchase a controller for them. I installed a CD-ROM

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drive and an 8 GB Fujitsu hard drive I had laying around the house using the original IDE connectors on the motherboard, and loaded the hard drive with Windows ME. I let the system burn in for a couple of days to be sure there were no problems and then installed two 72 GB IBM 7200 RPM hard drives and the ATA-100 controller. Installation was almost completely plug-n-play. All I had to do was install the proper drivers which were included with the card, and format the drives. The really cool thing about using a separate controller card for the ATA-100 drives is that I have the extended capacity to install two more drives on the same controller! That means I can upgrade later on when I save up enough money to buy two more drives. And if I so desire, I can install another controller card for a total of eight ATA-100 devices. Remember, this is in addition to the original IDE devices (the 8GB hard drive and CD-ROM) already installed on the motherboard connections. Actually, I could add two more devices to these, and bring it to a total of 12 IDE devices running from this one machine. Pretty cool, huh? The last thing I did was to plug in a NIC (network interface card) and hook the file server into my home network. I now have an additional 152 Gigabytes of storage space available to play with.

It seems like we are all benefitting from the advance of technology. It is great to have such a wealth of information available to us at the touch of a keyboard or click of a mouse. It was only a few years ago that I was amazed at the new worlds that were opening up on my computer when I was dialing in directly to online bulletin board systems. The online BBSs had a more personal feel than most web sites today. BBSs were customized and named by the system operators to reflect their personal interests. Although the ANSI graphics we used on BBSs were crude by today's

standards, they were interesting and challenged the creativity of the system operators. Today's HTML far surpasses anything we could produce back then. So, why is it that there are so few web sites that have the personal appeal that BBSs brought to cyberspace? It may be that commercialization of cyberspace has made us stop having fun and start looking at the internet as just a place to find information or products. Now, don't get me wrong, like I said, I love having all this information available to me at the touch of a button, it just feels like something is missing. Corporations can't project the warmth and camaraderie the system operators of the past instilled in their online projections of their enjoyment of the hobby. Or, maybe I should be staying away from the dot-coms and looking more at the dot-nets. Hmmm.

I must say those of us who attended the picnic last Saturday had a lot of fun swapping stories and enjoying each other's company. The hot dogs and burgers were great and the watermelon just topped off a perfect day. The weather cooperated after what looked like a doubtful start on Saturday morning, by the time for the picnic, the sun had come out and a nice breeze was blowing down by the lake. I think a fun time was had by all. Thanks to Robyn for putting together a great event! I was however, saddened to learn we will be saying goodbye to Pat and Nancy Hester who are moving to Tennessee this month. I have always enjoyed seeing them at the meetings and they have always been a great asset to the MCPCUG family. Nancy has agreed to continue to publish the newsletter all the way from Tennessee, so they will continue to contribute to our group, even though they can't be with us physically. You guys will be missed.

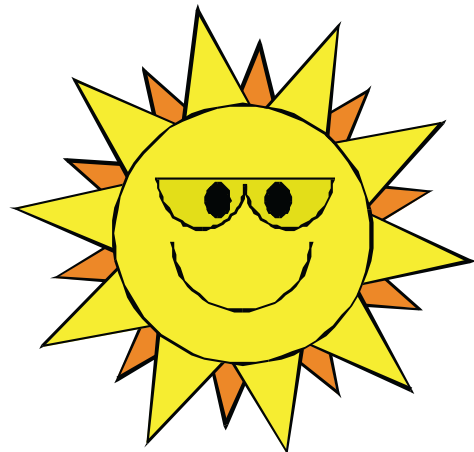
See y'all at the meeting.

PC Users Site

Recommended by Don Helyer

Here's a great PC users site that Don Helyer found and recommends highly:

<http://www.karbosguide.com/>



Are Smart Tags part of an MS plot?

Taken from an article by David Coursey of ZD Net

It's a shame the first thing many people will read about Smart Tags isn't what they are or what they do. Instead, the first thing they'll learn is that Smart Tags are the linchpin in a fiendish plot by Microsoft to "re-edit" other people's Web sites--and send you to Microsoft properties instead.

Where would people get such an idea? From no less than Walt Mossberg and his influential Wall Street Journal Technology column. A champion of the user, Walt regularly skewers companies that deserve it--including Microsoft.

Walt is hardly ever wrong, but, this time he jumped the gun. Here's the deal: Walt got hold of a Windows XP beta that implements several Smart Tags in Internet Explorer. The tags highlighted words on the Web pages displayed in the browser and offered to take people to related information on Microsoft-owned sites. In this way, Walt sees Microsoft as trying to use other peoples' content to lure Web surfers to its own sites.

Before you join Walt's camp of conspiracy theorists, you need to understand what Smart Tags really are, how they work, and what they do.

Smart Tags are a new feature in Office XP that associates an Office document with other resources. It is very much like a hyperlink, except Smart Tags can link you to applications or information other than what resides on another Web page.

Some Smart Tags offer help with commonly used applications features while other look at the content of the document and offer a specific function when it finds the sort of information it knows about.

Content-based Smart Tag:

When I type in a telephone number in Word XP, a dim red line appears under the digits, telling me a Smart Tag has been created. When I roll my cursor over the tag, a small icon appears, offering a menu of tasks related to the telephone number. This particular Smart Tag allows me to look up the number online. The result takes me to an MSN Web page with the information

Function-based Smart Tag:

There are function-based Smart Tags too. They work like this: When I copy text from a Web page into a Word XP document, a Smart Tag gives me the choice of

keeping the source formatting, matching the format of the destination document, or just inserting text. This is great because it keeps me from pasting HTML code into a Word document, unless that's what I intend to do.

And this is just the beginning. Companies are developing their own smart tags to link information in their application--a sales force automation package--into Microsoft Office applications. Already, one third-party smart tag looks at documents and, if it sees something that looks like a legal citation (Coursey vs. Mossberg), it finds the relevant case.

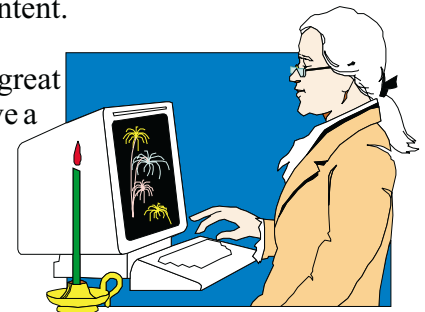
Now I appreciate Walt's concern that Microsoft is going to use Smart Tags to poach. But, there are several things working against this: First, as Walt's column reports, Smart Tags are turned off in a default Office installation. Second, also from Walt's column, Web site administrators can add code to each page that will turn off Smart Tags. Users can also select the specific Smart Tags they wish to use on an application-by application basis, which cuts the potential for Smart Tags cluttering up your screen.

But, there's the kicker: Since anyone can develop a smart tag, how long do you think it will be until Walt's own *Wall Street Journal* offers smart tags--especially since Microsoft already offers a tag that looks for stock information. Microsoft already has a site dedicated to distributing both its own and other people's Smart Tags.

Maybe someday ZD Net will offer a tag that brings you here for computer-related terms. Or perhaps Fed EX will create one to link you to tracking reports.

Smart Tags can be developed by anybody, are completely under the user's control, and can do some very useful things. Of course, Microsoft is out promoting Smart Tags and, not surprisingly, its tags lead to Microsoft-owned content.

Smart Tags are a great invention and deserve a fair shake.



THE MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP

The Mid-Cities PC Users' Group is a not for-profit organization whose objectives are:

- * to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and experience,
- * education in the form of seminars and programs, and
- * community as pertains to the computer industry.

Annual membership is \$24.00 per family with one vote per membership. Members are encouraged to notify the Membership Chairperson of any change of address as soon as possible to continue receiving their monthly newsletter. Please address any notifications to: Mid-Cities PC Users' Group: Attn. Membership Chair, P.O. Box 54141, Hurst, TX 76054

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THE MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP NEWSLETTER

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CONTRIBUTING ARTICLES

Article Style: Type all copy flush left without justification; use word wrap feature for your paragraphs. This includes headings, by-lines, and the first line of each paragraph. Place a credit by-line (author's name) between the title and first paragraph. Leave no blank lines between paragraphs. Use only one space between sentences.

File Formats: MS Word or Word Perfect is preferred. If formatting is crucial and you do not have access to the above programs, send a hard copy to show the layout.

Submitting Articles: You may use one of two methods. Uploading the article to Nancy Hester at newsletter@mcpcug.org or you can hand them to her on diskette (3.5" preferred) during the general membership meetings.



Thanks a lot!

Deadline: The last Friday of the month prior to intended publication.

Advertising Rates:

7½ in. x 9 in.	Full Page	\$40.00
7½ in. x 4 in.	Half Page	\$20.00
3¼ in. x 4¼ in.	Quarter Page	\$12.50
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