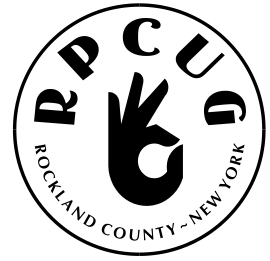




Published by  
The ROCKLAND  
PC USERS GROUP  
August 2004



# The Computer Connection

## Joint General Meeting

### Swap Meet and “Wi-Fi and Wireless Security”

Please join us for our combined summer General Meetings of the **Rockland PC Users Group** and the **Westchester PC Users Group** on Tuesday, August 10, 7:15 PM, RASO Community Room, 4th Floor, Palisades Mall, West Nyack, NY.

Every month you pay for a broadband Internet connection, and your favorite way to savor the lightning-fast downloads is via a wireless Internet connection. But danger lurks in this high-speed, free-range utopia. Just consider how many seedy online guides explain how to get free broadband by leeching off someone else’s precious Wi-Fi bandwidth! Stolen bandwidth isn’t the only problem. Once thieves can leech your Net connection, they can also get access to files on your PC, track the sites you browse, and even read your private e-mails and instant messages. Learn how to protect your home wireless network at this combined WPCUG/RPCUG workshop presented by Jack Barrett of the Westchester Group.

Everyone loves a bargain. One person’s white elephant is another’s treasure. Each August, RPCUG members and friends come to buy, sell, swap or browse at the annual Swap Meet. There are always terrific deals in hardware and software. Sellers are looking to recover a bit of their investments in computer-related products that they have become tired of or outgrown. Prior to the main presentation, members can bring and swap hardware and software. We will have tables for members to display their wares.

Click here for Swap Meet Guidelines:  
<http://www.rpcug.org/swapmeetrules.htm>

JOIN the FUN!

#### WORD OF THE DAY: Wi-Fi

[http://searchmobilecomputing.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid40\\_gci838865,00.html?track=NL-34&ad=488884](http://searchmobilecomputing.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid40_gci838865,00.html?track=NL-34&ad=488884)

Wi-Fi (short for “wireless fidelity”) is a term for certain types of wireless local area network (WLAN) that use specifications in the 802.11 family. The term Wi-Fi was created by an organization called the Wi-Fi Alliance, which oversees tests that certify product interoperability. A product that passes the alliance tests is given the label “Wi-Fi certified” (a registered trademark).

MEETINGS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC *with newcomers especially welcome.*  
For directions and up-to-date meeting information, visit RPCUG’s Website at [www.rpcug.org](http://www.rpcug.org)

# WEB SITES editor's picks:

D'OH!

**The Most Disastrous E-Mail Mistakes:**  
<http://aolsvc.pcworld.aol.com/computercenter/aol/article/0,aid,93283,00.asp>

**INTERNET CLOCKS, COUNTERS, AND COUNTDOWNS:**  
[www.panaga.com/clocks/clocks.htm](http://www.panaga.com/clocks/clocks.htm)

**BOOK CROSSING** It's a global *book club* that crosses time and space.  
[www.bookcrossing.com/home](http://www.bookcrossing.com/home)

**GET IN TOUCH** with your soul - fly a kite!  
[www.windweavers.com](http://www.windweavers.com)

**WANT TO TOSS SOME FOOD AT SOMEONE?**  
[www.virtualfoodfight.com](http://www.virtualfoodfight.com)

**GOT A FAVORITE?**  
email the editor!  
[mcbaade@aol.com](mailto:mcbaade@aol.com)



## THE ROCKLAND PC USERS GROUP

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### NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Marian Baade ~ [mcbaade@aol.com](mailto:mcbaade@aol.com)

### The Purpose of the Group:

To exchange computer-related ideas and information among its members; to engage in computer-related activities for the benefit of the membership and the community at large; to increase understanding and utilization of the personal computer; to provide an opportunity for the formation of special interest groups (SIGs), to provide a medium for the exchange and propagation of public domain software, freeware, and shareware.

—(From the RPCUG Constitution & Bylaws)

## MEETING SCHEDULE

**GENERAL MEETING**  
7:15 PM

**MULTIMEDIA WORKSHOP**  
6:00 PM

Tuesday, August 10th, 2004  
The Palisades Center Community Room  
Palisades Center Mall, West Nyack, NY

**Multi-Media Workshop** meets on the second Tuesday of the month, prior to the general meeting at 6:00 PM in the Raso Room in the Palisades Mall, West Nyack

**Windows XP Workshop** meets on the third Tuesday of the month in the Pearl River Room at the Pearl River Library, 7-8:45 PM.

The **Executive Board** meets last Thursday of the month  
West Nyack Library, 7:00 PM

The **Rockland PC Users Group**, a tax-exempt educational organization, meets monthly, usually on the second Tuesday. Meetings begin at 7:15 PM. The latest information about meeting programs and dates is available on the Internet at  
<http://www.rpcug.org>



# Message From The President

**PC** Renew was established in April of 2001.

The first work benches were built in May and by June things were beginning to come together. Computers were coming into the workshop in New City and our members were working on them fast and furious. At the end of July the workshop looked organized and ready for business. During the summer months the place was buzzing with members coming and going. Everyone involved in what had become one of the best projects that our Group has ever participated in.

The project has taken us down many paths, from helping out with a networking installation at Nino's Restaurant after the World Trade Center tragedy, to giving a computer to a child that has never owned one. As the project became larger, so did the need for more space and money to fund it. We were fortunate to get space donated to us by the Town of Haverstraw that we have been using to store equipment in. Another workshop was open in Pearl River for about a year and a half. The expenses grew larger as software licenses and new modems needed to be purchased for the refurbished computer. Every computer that was given away needed a licensed copy of Microsoft Windows installed in it. We were fortunate to receive a United Way Grant that kept us going and allowed the project to grow.

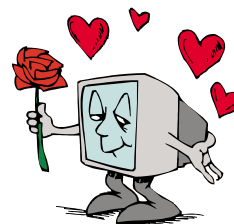
After many months of hard work, PC Renew became one of the first "Authorized Microsoft Refurbishers" in the country. This allowed us to purchase Microsoft's Windows 98 SE operating system software at very preferred pricing. This operating system software is now being installed on all our refurbished computers.

The majority of the computers are given away by County Agencies that PC-Renew has become affiliated with, People to People, Department of Social Services and United Way in Rockland and Westchester, Volunteer Counseling Services of Rockland, Rockland Independent Living and more.

This past month we receive a grant from Provident Bank which has become our first Corporate Sponsor. Our thanks go out to them for helping us to help others. With there contribution we are able to continue with our efforts and give away a quality product.

Today we are approaching our 1000th computer. Many thanks go out to the members that have worked so hard to make this all possible. This is truly the home of "The Big Hearts."

Personally, I hope that this project keeps growing and that through PC-Renew our Group will become stronger then ever before.



Remember...A Group is only as good as its members!

**"JOIN the FUN!"**

Ken Herbig, President

## PCRENEW at New City

Join us to learn how to fix and assemble donated computer equipment. We have knowledgeable individuals who can teach you how to salvage equipment and assemble it into working PCs.

These working units are then donated to needy individuals in the local community.

We can also use your help in cataloging and tracking incoming and outgoing equipment.

Contact us at: [info@pcrenew.org](mailto:info@pcrenew.org).

# SOFTWARE

## available for REVIEW

Email **Roberta** at [Roberta316@yahoo.com](mailto:Roberta316@yahoo.com) or **Ken** at [hobbikat@hobbikats.com](mailto:hobbikat@hobbikats.com)

- ✓ **ACTIVE SCREEN LOCK**, (\$25)  
A secure and reliable application, protecting your computer from unauthorized access  
Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP.  
*DMVSoft*  
[www.dmvsoft.com/](http://www.dmvsoft.com/)
- ✓ **ALCHEMY EYE 5.2** (\$299)  
A professional system management tool, designed for both corporate local networks, as well as external Internet servers.  
Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000.  
*Alchemy Lab Software*  
[www.alchemy-lab.com/products/eye](http://www.alchemy-lab.com/products/eye)
- ✓ **CLICK2PDF** (\$49)  
Turn any Windows files into virus-free, non-editable, portable PDFs that can be viewed across a wide range of platforms.  
486+ Processor, 64MB RAM  
*Blue Squirrel*  
[www.bluesquirrel.com](http://www.bluesquirrel.com)
- ✓ **DeviceLock 5.5** (\$35)  
a powerful tool that will let you restrict access to local devices running Windows NT/2000/XP and Windows Server 2003.  
Windows NT/2000/XP/Server 2003; *SmartLine, Inc.*  
[www.protect-me.com/dl/](http://www.protect-me.com/dl/)
- ✓ **EFFECTIVE FILE SEARCH 3.0** (\$29.95)  
An effective, powerful and flexible file search tool with numerous features that will simplify your work and save you time. Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP  
*SOWSoft*  
[www.SOWSoft.com](http://www.SOWSoft.com)
- ✓ **HARVEST DESKTOP 2.2** (\$199)  
an integrated file and desktop management tool which revolutionizes the way in which people access, secure and use information.  
Windows 98/ME/NT4/2000/XP  
*Back Office Solutions, Inc.*  
[www.harvest-desktop.com](http://www.harvest-desktop.com)
- ✓ **OE-MAIL RECOVERY** (\$45)  
Advanced tool which lets users recover lost emails from damaged Outlook Express d-base files. Supports formats MS Outlook Express 5/6  
Windows 98/NT/2000/XP  
[www.oemailrecovery.com](http://www.oemailrecovery.com)
- ✓ **PHOTO EDITOR 7.5 PRO** (\$29.95)  
An image editor with an original easy-to-learn interface and a variety of features. Windows 98/ME/NT/2000/XP  
*VicMan Software*  
[www.vicman.net](http://www.vicman.net)
- ✓ **PURERADIO 2.1** (\$19.95)  
An Internet Radio Player that revolutionizes the way you listen to worldwide radio stations.  
Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP  
*InKline Global, Inc.*  
[www.InKlineGlobal.com/products/pradio/index.html](http://www.InKlineGlobal.com/products/pradio/index.html)
- ✓ **RED BOX ORGANIZER 5.0** (\$39.95)  
The Swiss-Army Knife of personal organizers.  
Windows 95/98/ME/NT 4.x/2000/XP  
*InKline Global, Inc.*  
[www.InKlineGlobal.com/](http://www.InKlineGlobal.com/)
- ✓ **STARSHIPS UNLIMITED 3.0** (\$34.95)  
A real-time strategy game set in space, the sequel to its award winning Starships Unlimited: Divided Galaxies.  
Windows 9x/ME/NT4/2000/XP  
*Apezone*  
[www.apezone.com](http://www.apezone.com)
- ✓ **SPAM SLEUTH** (\$29.95) )  
Monitors your e-mail box behind the scenes and analyzes e-mail messages for spam and virus characteristics.  
*Blue Squirrel Software*  
[www.bluesquirrel.com](http://www.bluesquirrel.com)  
downloadable trial version / 50% off Users Group discount.
- ✓ **THUMBNAIL CREATOR 1.6** (\$39.95)  
An image utility that lets users create professional looking online image galleries with ease.  
Windows 95/98/ME/NT 4.0/2000/XP  
*ExpressSoft, Inc*  
[www.express-soft.com/etc/](http://www.express-soft.com/etc/)
- ✓ **VCW VicMan's Photo Editor 7.5 - FREWARE**  
A versatile image editor with intuitive interface. This award-winning application is free of charge and comes with a wide range of essential features for both novice users and professional designers.
- ✓ **WebPrint Plus for Windows** (\$39.95)  
A powerful and versatile utility that allows users to save and/or print selections of text of any size from web browsers and most other programs.  
Windows 98, 2000, XP, NT, or ME  
*MacEase*  
[www.watznew.com](http://www.watznew.com)

# BackupPLUS

## Version 7.1.2

*reviewed by Steve Weinberg*



**B**ackup! There's that vile word that everybody knows or hears about, but generally ignores. Here's a program, **Backup PLUS** from Avantrix, Inc., that will ease the pain of doing that time-wasting, dreaded, non-productive task. Please, realize that I am being sarcastic here. Backing up your critical data files is one of the most important and productive things you can do in your computing life. All you need is an instance when you removed a file or changed it and you will have to spend hours upon hours recreating or re-installing. This will convince you of the worth of a recent backup.

Three years ago, I reviewed Avantrix' **Backup Plus** Version 6. Version 7 offers an improved interface, many fixes, improvements and some niceties.

Installation was quick and easy. Note that the format of the backup files has changed from Version 6 and is not compatible with Version 7.

**Backup PLUS** is a solid performer with an easy-to-use interface that covers all the bases for most of us. It can be used to backup your data files, not a complete system for disaster recovery. You can backup to just about any media except tape. I backed up my critical data files to my CD on a CDRW disk and then restored to a new location to compare files. Quick and easy with perfect restoration of the originals. Good compression is achieved using the standard ZIP compression. A single file is produced that contains all of your backed up files with a choice of compression. There is an option to password protect the backup, as well. The more compression used, the slower the backup. I even used WinZIP (WinZip Computing, Inc., <http://www.winzip.com/>) to examine and restore a selection of files from the backup set. How convenient! Note that this is not necessary as the program provides a very useful "Restore" tool that lets you select files or whole directories to restore and place in the original location or a new location. The latter functionality is good for comparing versions of files that have changed.

For large backups, or those larger than the removable media, **Backup PLUS** has the ability to span multiple disks.

New in this version is the ability to save a default backup location/destination. This saves having to specify this each time you use it. Better progress bars show what's going on more accurately than in the past. Overall speed is good though I'm using a faster CD burner than I've done on the past. It took about 20 minutes to burn a CD with 606 megabytes of data including compressing them prior to burning.

A "wizard" is included that helps to create backup sets (a definition of which files and folders should be backed up). It worked well in creating the backup set. A nice feature is the programs memory of your tasks. I have several tasks defined and can tell the last time each was completed. Some of mine include backup of: e-mail, documents, website sources, pictures and financial data. One of the great features is the ability to create incremental backups. This refers to the "freshening" of the files on a backup disk. For example, let's say I backup all my web source data to a CD-RW disk today. It might take 10 minutes. During the next week, I change a couple of links on one of the RPCUG website pages. When I use Backup Plus a week from now it only writes the changes that have occurred to the files. Consequentially, it might take only 30 seconds to "freshen" the CD-RW with the changes which puts it in sync with the latest data on my hard drive.

Installation was a snap—manual not required. This program has a very unusual Help feature: It actually has information that is useful in contrast to most of the programs I've used! It seems as though many vendors treat the Help functionality as a necessary evil and just through lots of information in a searchable help file most of which never seeming to fit your needs. When I wanted to find out how to turn off the “Tray Icon” for the “Timed Backup” functionality, it took me mere seconds to get to the information via Help.

You should have and use a backup of some sort. **BackupPLUS** should be a strong contender to consider in your strategy for saving your critical data. Consider how long it has taken you to create your data and you might reconsider not backing it up. Note that this is not meant or recommended as a means to backup your entire system. It's all about backing up your personal data files. Documents, financial data and other critical information is now on your computer instead of written down somewhere. If you lose it, you'll be hard pressed to get it back again without lots of time and energy spent to do so.

I used Backup Plus on a Pentium 4, 1.5 gigahertz system with 384 megabytes of RAM running Windows XP. Minimum requirements are considerably less than that.

Order **BackUpPlus** for \$39.95 at: <http://www.backupplus.net/>.

There is a free trial version available on the website, [www.avantrix.com](http://www.avantrix.com)

**M**ember groups of the APCUG has been invited by a market research firm to participate in a research study on computer book publishers. As an incentive for completing the survey, the research firm is offering 3-month free trial subscriptions to several valuable publications. Our members are invited to take part in the survey and have the opportunity to receive the trial subscriptions. The deadline for completing the survey and signing up for the subscriptions is midnight, August 14th.

The survey should take about 10-12 minutes to complete. Paste the link below into your browser. Be sure to enable javascript in your web-browser for optimal performance with the survey:

<http://websurveyor.net/wsb.dll/10430/Computerbooksurvey04.htm?id=10>

Three Month Trial Subscriptions to:

- PC Magazine, Digital Edition
- NET Developer's Journal
- ColdFusion Developer's Journal
- Information Storage & Security Journal
- Java Developer's Journal
- LinuxWorld Magazine
- MX Developer's Journal
- PowerBuilder Developer's Journal
- Web Services Journal
- WebSphere Journal
- Wireless Business & Technology
- WLDJ- The Leading Independent Magazine for WebLogic™ Professionals

A systems engineer, mechanical engineer, and a software engineer are in a car careening down a mountainous road without brakes. The driver is furiously pumping the pedal while he steers the speeding car around the treacherous turns - stones flying and passengers gasping. Finally, he finds an incline and the car coasts to a stop. All three get out and, thanking their lucky stars, begin to assess the situation.

“Oh,” says the mechanical engineer, “the brake lines are leaking - lets patch the hole, bleed the brakes and be on our way!”

The systems engineer said “maybe we should consult with the manufacturer and the dealer to ensure that is really the problem.”

The software engineer said “why don't we get back in and see if it happens again?”

# Get Rid of Spyware and Popups

by Ira Wilsker, APCUG BOD;

Columnist for *The Examiner, Texas*; *Radio Show Host and Police Officer*

Next to spam mail and viruses, one of the most irritating facets of web surfing is the annoying popup ads that so many of us receive. What many may not be aware of is that about 80% of the popups that we get while online, and many that may also appear if we are offline, are generated by spyware that is unknowingly installed on our computers.

Spyware are software programs that typically install without our knowledge or informed consent, and may also be a part of a program that we purposely installed. Spyware, as its name connotes, is software that often gathers information on our surfing habits and may send that information to third parties. At its worst, spyware may also be used to gather personal information from our computers, including passwords, user names, and other information, and send it to persons unknown who may illicitly use that information to empty our bank accounts, charge goods in our name, and commit other various forms of identity theft. Spyware can get on our computers by visiting some unethical websites, or by installing some downloaded or commercial software. Several forms of spyware can infect our computers via viruses and Trojans. Among the most notorious sources of spyware are popular file sharing utilities such as Morpheus and KaZaA. Some of the "cookies" or small text files placed on our computers by some websites can also be used to create personal profiles on us, and distribute that information to third parties. It should be noted that some software titles will no longer function if their attached spyware is deleted, as the spyware is intended to provide a continuing revenue stream for the software publisher.

Fortunately, it is generally easy to detect and kill spyware, or otherwise render it inert. It should be understood at this point that as a general rule, even the best antivirus programs, while effective at detecting and preventing virus and Trojan infestations, are generally ineffective at dealing with spyware. Firewalls, if properly installed and configured, can prevent many

spyware types from sending information from the computer, but many spyware programs utilize known security weaknesses, and other vulnerabilities in our operating systems. Contemporary thought is that we all need a good anti-spyware program properly installed, configured, and updated, every bit as much as we need updated antivirus software and a firewall on our computers.

One of the top rated anti-spyware programs is the recently updated "Spybot Search and Destroy", version 1.3, available for free (donations encouraged) at [www.safer-networking.org](http://www.safer-networking.org) and other major download sites. Spybot can detect and destroy over 13,000 spyware products, and immunize our computers from future infection by almost 1800 types of spyware. Spybot can also prevent some pesky websites from changing our "home" or browser startup pages, and make it difficult for spyware to write itself into our Windows registry. An integral utility makes it easy for Spybot to check for, and install the periodic updates necessary to detect and kill the latest types of spyware.

Another popular anti-spyware utility is "Ad-Aware", available for download at [www.lavasoftusa.com](http://www.lavasoftusa.com). The free version of Ad-Aware, the "Standard Edition", is possibly the most widely used anti-spyware program, with over 42 million copies downloaded since July, 2003. Ad-Aware comes in several versions ranging from the "free for personal use" Standard Edition, the \$27 "Plus" edition, and the \$40 "Pro" version. Ad-Aware frequently releases updated "reference files" which contain lists of newly created or revised spyware information.

A popular commercial program, which is a "Swiss army knife" type of program comprising many different utilities, including an excellent spyware (parasite) detector and killer is the "SpyHunter" included with System Mechanic, version 4. System mechanic is available locally

at retail (about \$49), and for download at [www.iolo.com](http://www.iolo.com). A fully functional 30-day free trial version is available for download. As does its free standing competitors, System Mechanic's SpyHunter also checks for updated spyware listings, and installs them seamlessly. SpyHunter has been proven to be an effective spyware detector and killer, and the other utilities included in System mechanic make this a most useful program.

While not directly marketed as an anti-spyware product, "STOPzilla" is a very effective spyware remover that specializes in those spyware products that produce about 80% of the annoying popup ads that we may get while surfing the web. A recent update to STOPzilla also includes an integral utility that can detect and kill most other forms of spyware, including tracking cookies. With almost daily automated updates, and excellent 24/7 free tech support, including toll-free numbers, STOPzilla is available for \$30 at [www.stopzilla.com](http://www.stopzilla.com).

One of the most comprehensive spyware detecting and killing programs on the market is PestPatrol (\$40), available at [www.pestpatrol.com](http://www.pestpatrol.com). This is an excellent program that can both detect spyware, and block many types of infection. PestPatrol has an integrated utility that enables all parts of PestPatrol to be updated on a regular basis in order to maximize the detection and removal functions. PestPatrol offers a free online scan that will detect, but not eliminate, almost all known forms of spyware.

While there are several other decent anti-spyware programs available, one caveat is appropriate here. There are some unethical purveyors of some anti-spyware programs that use spam emails, popup ads, and deceptive sales practices, including telling you that your computer is infested with spyware, and charging a fee to remove it.

Any of the titles referenced above will do a reasonable job of reducing popups, and securing your computer from spyware, provided they are frequently updated and run.

*The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.*

## THE TOP 9 KITCHEN FIXES FOR COMPUTER GLITCHES

9. Bugs go well with a nice Shiraz or marinated in a vintage tequila. It may not fix the blasted computer, but after a few bottles, they'll certainly not be bothering you anymore!
8. If you receive a kernel.dll error, place affected kernel in corn oil and cook until all popping sounds have stopped.
7. Toss chips with spaghetti-wires, saute until logic fails.
6. Show the computer canned SPAM. Explain this is what happened to a pig with a glitch. The computer should straighten right up.
5. Some problems are a result of the computer overheating. Keep a few frosted memory chips and cards in the freezer for those warm days.
4. Stuff in the oven and bake at 450 degree for 30 minutes. For higher altitudes, reduce free memory by 500 MB and allow ten extra minutes.
3. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place computer on a Silpat-lined jelly roll pan. Bake about 20 minutes, or until the DVD-ROM drawer pops open and the computer waves a tiny little white hot pad, indicating it's now willing to comply. Remove from the oven, being careful not to burn yourself on the molten plastic. Cool to room temperature. Call customer support for shipping instructions.
2. Crack open case with one sharp blow and flip the memory from one half to the other, allowing the RAM to fall into your mixing bowl while keeping the ROM in the shell.

And the #1 Kitchen Fix for Computer Glitches...

1. Cook at 11111010 degrees for 101101 minutes, or until golden brown.



# Akvis Retoucher 1.3 by Akvis LLC

reviewed by Ken Herbig

**W**e all have old photos of family, pets and vacations that we would love to preserve. They sit in albums, envelopes and are even laying loose in draws getting scratched, creased and accumulating dirt. Don't think that they are lost for ever, there is help waiting out there—**Akvis Retoucher 1.3**



I haven't used many third party plug-ins with my graphics programs, so when I received the request to review Retoucher, I thought I would give it a try.

Installation was quite straightforward. **Retoucher** is compatible with *Adobe Photoshop*, *Photoshop Elements*, *Jasc Paint Shop Pro* and *Corel Photo-Paint* and other digital imaging software that support third-party plug-ins. I used the program in *Paint Shop Pro 8.1* for this review. I used a digital image that was scanned from a 35mm slide at 2400 dpi for my test photo. The photo, like many old photos, showed an abundance of scratches, spots and specks.



I opened the photo and clicked the "Selection" tool on my toolbar, opened the tool options and for "selection type" and chose the round option. I then proceeded to begin selecting all the spots and specks in the photo. I even used the freehand tool to remove a couple of long scratches. After making all the selections I went to the "Effects" dropdown menu, went into "Plug-ins" and

selected Akvis / Retoucher. When the program starts it displays the photo and now comes the hard part...You click on the Green Arrow. That is all there was to it. Really, I couldn't believe how simple and user- friendly the program was. I normally spend hours using the clone tool and paint brush tools to do what I accomplished using **Retoucher** in about 30 minutes. I then cropped the photo and printed it, framed it and gave it as a gift.

The Help Menu (F1) was easy to use and very informative. It showed in detail how to use the plug-in.

I recommend this program to both amateurs and professionals who want to retouch or restore old photos. There is a 10-day trial version available for you to download at <http://akvis.com>.

**Akvis Retoucher 1.3**, \$87.00

System Requirements:

Windows 98, Me, 2000 or XP

Pentium II 233 MHz or above

Minimum 96 MB RAM

Minimum of 5 MB HD space required.

## **BUSTING PC MYTHS:** *"Turning off your PC daily to save power shortens its life."*

**HERE'S A TOPIC THAT PROVOKES DEBATE.** One side argues that turning the PC on and off stresses components. The other side says it's a good thing; even the best programs and the OS can get cranky without occasional shutdowns.

There's no definitive answer. Most authorities, however, lean toward the idea that shutting off does more good than harm--plus it saves power. Kevin Krewell, editor in chief of the *Microprocessor Report*, supports that side of the debate. "Processors typically have a ten-year life span," he says, so a PC will be dead weight before switching it on and off could affect the CPU.

**Tip:** If you're using Windows XP, right-click the desktop, choose New, Shortcut, type "shutdown -s -t 00", click Next, give the shortcut a name (for example, Shutdown), and click Finish. Next time you need to shut down, click the shortcut icon.

# ThumbsPlus Pro

*Guest Reviewer, Leighton Jones, CorelDraw Users Group; Calgary, Alberta, CANADA*

There probably isn't a PC user alive who hasn't at some point another called a *computer friend* and asked the age old question: "My computer won't view a picture a friend sent me. What's wrong?" What usually follows is fifteen painful minutes of conversation where the file extension or originating application is discerned. If you're new to computing – or quite rightly simply just don't care, then this whole format madness is best described as "infuriating."

Digital photography, scanners and digital video have all brought imagery forward in leaps and bounds without really doing much to address the underlying problem of managing masses and masses of visual data. Anyone who's bought a digital camera has probably been given the line "You won't have piles of photographs lying around waiting to go into albums." Sound familiar? Truth be told, what you now have is tons and tons of family pictures, scanned documents, amusing animated gif's, and perhaps even a couple of faxes all lying around your hard disk – and you've no idea what to do because they're all in different formats.

**ThumbsPlus Pro** provides a single conduit through which you can view anything and everything. In a familiar structure of partitioned windows, something akin to an 'Explorer' view of your hard disk, **ThumbsPlus** will transform bland filenames into miniature renderings of their contents – coping with over 100 formats. Then, with a click of the mouse, you can rotate, view full-screen, add text directly onto the image, set the image as background, email and many other operations without the need for excessive fiddling or needing to import into a dedicated art package. **ThumbsPlus** provides you with the ability to also "patch in" file definitions that it doesn't know about, which is particularly helpful if you do have something obscure.

The question therefore becomes "How well does it do all this?" The answer is: very well. The first thing that I noticed is that it will continue to read a folder behind the scenes after you've moved on to another location. This is great, because if you go back, chances are it'll have completed, so all the thumbnail will now be available without further waiting. If you

want to parse a whole directory structure you can use *Scan Tree* and walk away, or view something else, and **Thumbs** will quietly work at generating thumbnails for all files it finds recursing subdirectories. Folders in the tree view change colour according to whether image files are found – which is great for an "at a glance" view. The status of all this multi-tasking is discretely displayed on a multi-function panel at the bottom of the screen that can also be configured to review file information as well as a large preview.

In order to speed reviewing of files, **ThumbsPlus** caches the images it generates when reading and stores them in its own internal database. All optimization is configurable right down to memory use and the amount of database held in RAM at any one time to further speed things along – and it's fast!

**ThumbsPlus** was able to handle the mpeg movie files my digital camera took, as well as doing an excellent job of previewing a font folder containing 1,300 fonts. **ThumbsPlus** will produce as a preview the full character set – which was a nice surprise, instead of simply rendering the font as a thumbnail. An even more pleasant surprise is that **ThumbsPlus** will load and unload the fonts as you desire – giving you some added functionality for those who have large collections of fonts.

Most of us have images that are on CD's and not readily available 100% of the time – IE, "off-line." **ThumbsPlus** provides facility to retain thumbnails of media that aren't necessarily available, prompting for the appropriate disk or CD if you try to view the whole image. This is particularly useful if you don't want to have to feed each CD into a computer in order to locate a birthday party. You can simply browse

through your offline CD or floppy disk collection, locate the image and then go hunting for the correct disc when prompted.

Printing allows you to group selected images – or fonts, for arrangement on a single page, which is great if you don't want to waste paper, or you simply want to cram as much info as you can onto a single sheet.

The package functions without frills and those users who are used to curves and smooth textured menus may find **ThumbsPlus** to be very no-nonsense – which is fair enough if you're into that kind of thing. However, for those of us who want total command over settings that they didn't even know they wanted, this product offers it all.

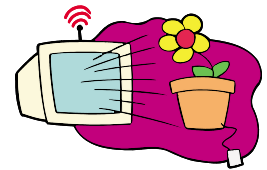
**ThumbsPlus** is an incredibly tweakable product, and most people when they start using it are going to be taken aback with just how much it has to offer. Just about anything you can think about is configurable – right down to being able to exclude certain drive letters from the folder view. To describe it as a *power users* image viewer is to not do it justice, because the way that the menus work, and the product functions sufficiently masks its underlying complex workings enabling its use for those people who just want to view their holiday snaps. For example: gamma correction – this is presented as simply making two boxes identical colours; a simple operation that most people could handle, but one that may be either missing, or unnecessarily complex in other software. I was also particularly impressed to see that you can load colour profiles so the image will adjust to appear as it would based

on a specific printer or monitor. **ThumbsPlus** supports EXIF, Digimark, IPTC data.

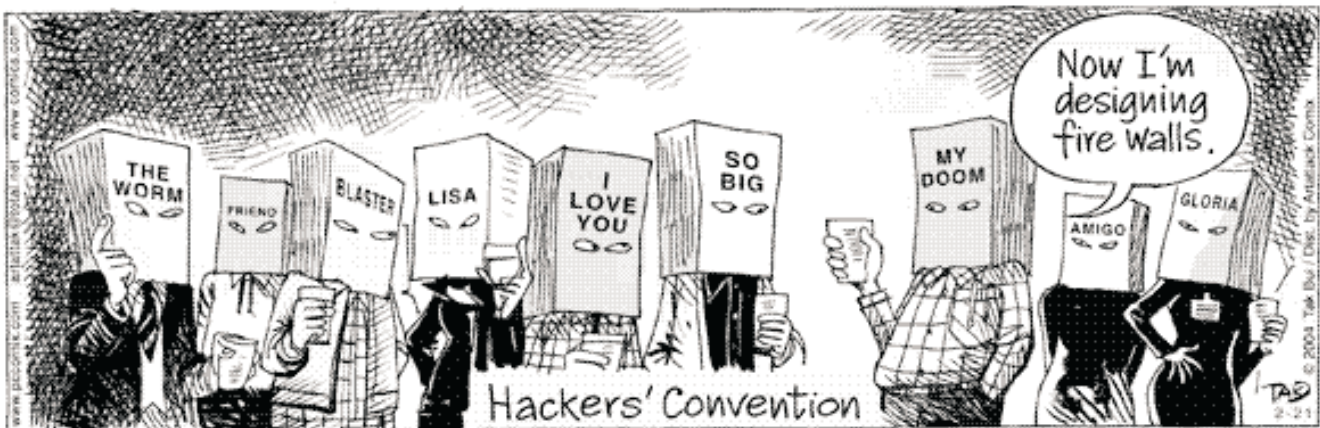
Functionally, I could find no fault with the product. It viewed all files that I subjected it to, which not only included some post-script, but also native Corel Draw files – both of which are somewhat tricky. Windows Metafiles rendered perfectly, as well as .tif fax images – both of which other viewers have a tendency to squish vertically.

As for pricing, almost-\$90 for the *Pro* version is probably more than most home-users will pay, so the \$49 standard version is excellent value. The Pro version offers native camera format support for a wide range of manufacturers as well as image formats for specialist scientific and the ability to work with Photoshop plug-ins – most of which home users wouldn't require. The Pro version allows you to place your thumbnail database on a server if you have a corporate or home network, as well as providing command-line support. All other functionality is available in the standard version.

First impressions of **ThumbsPlus Pro** are excellent – a very powerful tool that can cope with simple viewing, or complex management of your collection.



**Thumbs Plus Pro**, version 6.0, \$ 49.99  
Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000 and XP  
[www.cerious.com](http://www.cerious.com)

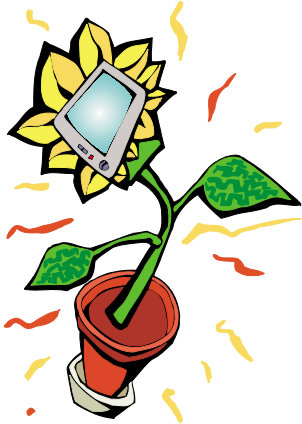




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RPCUG at PO Box 802, New City, NY 10956. (PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION)

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INDIVIDUAL \$ 35	JOINT \$ 40	FAMILY \$ 45	STUDENT \$ 15	CORPORATE SPONSOR \$ 100	RENEWAL: Member # _____
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