



News Journal

L.C.A.C.E

Meetings are usually held on the second Saturday of each month.

Meetings are held at the Grayslake Library and start at 12:30pm.

At our August 9th meeting, representatives from:

Best Buy From Mundelein

They will discuss air cards, webcams, Skype, internet security, etc.



Robin's RAMblings

I hope you are all enjoying the summer.

We owe a big thank you to membership chair Linda Busch who has edited *The News-Journal* for the last few years. Linda, thank you so much. Vice president Mike McEnery is taking over the editorship as of this issue. Mike, thank you for stepping up to the plate. PLEASE send information and articles to Mike at vp@lcace.org.

We welcomed guests from The Lake County and Zion Genealogical Societies and the Grayslake Historical Society on June 14th when LCACE and the Grayslake Area Public Library co-sponsored "Sex, Murder, and Genealogy". Professional genealogist Mike Karsen discussed Dora Feldman McDonald who made Chicago headlines in 1907 when she ended her lover's blackmail with a pistol. Married to an important Chicago politician, Dora was acquitted (Some things never change.). Mike showed us some of the ways he used his computer to trace Dora's life after her sensational trial.

At our August 9th meeting, representatives from Best Buy in Mundelein will discuss air cards, webcams *Skype*, internet security, etc. LCACE vice president Mike McEnery will discuss Windows Live *One Care* on September 13th. Our October 11th program will feature one of our most popular programs, "Ask the Gurus". Plan to bring your questions, and our gurus will answer them. On Saturday, November 8th, LCACE and the Grayslake Area Public Library will co-sponsor Sue Walter's program, "Computerized Embroidery".

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Lake County Area Computer Enthusiasts
LCACE
c/o Group Ambassador
Mr. J.J. Johnson

Membership

Membership for LCACE is open to all individuals and families interested in personal computing. Annual dues are \$20.00 per individual/family. Associate membership is only \$10.00 (out of state, unable to attend meetings). Membership includes a one year subscription to the LCACE News Journal and access to all club libraries and functions. Applications for membership may be obtained at the monthly meeting, by request on the club Hotline, and are now available on our WEB site at - <http://www.lcace.org>.

Meetings

LCACE meetings are usually held on the second Saturday of each month at the Grayslake Area Public Library, 100 Library Lane, Grayslake, Illinois. The meeting room opens at noon and the formal meeting begins at 12:30 p.m. All meetings are open to the public. Bring a friend!

Advertising

Ad rates per issue: Full page - \$25, Half page - \$15, Quarter page - \$10, Business Card - \$5. Discounts are available on advance purchase of multiple issues. Please send camera-ready copy and payment to the club address by the 21st of the month preceding publication. For more information on ad pricing, please call our Hotline. Ads are FREE to all paid members.

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Sue will show us a design, then digitize it on her laptop, and use her computerized embroidery machine to stitch it. She will also discuss websites where one can download beautiful designs—often at no charge.

Donna Kalinoski recently welcomed her first great grandchild, Christian Kalinoski. Congratulations to Donna and her family.

Do you have news to share? Please send it to Mike McEnergy. Do you have ideas to improve our club? Please email me (president@lface.org) with your ideas.

Written on an Asus EeePC 900 (a/k/a “The Chihuahua”)



What To Do When . . . You Drop Your Notebook

by Rachel Derowitsch

Reprinted with permission from *Smart Computing*

Short of having it stolen, we imagine the worst thing that could happen to a notebook is dropping it.

The good news is that a dropped notebook doesn't always result in the worst-case scenario, such as a damaged motherboard or hard drive or shattered monitor.

So before you assume all is lost, carefully work your way through the following list to assess any damage your notebook has suffered.

The Checklist

You can examine some parts of your notebook without turning it on. Others you'll need to check after booting it up. And some features, such as the screen, you'll need to examine both with and without the power, as we'll explain.

1: The Case

Check the exterior of the notebook to see if any part of the case is cracked, scratched, or dented. If minor abrasions occurred and they bother you enough that you want to fix or cover them, try one of these quick fixes.

Use a car care product, such as Scratch Out by Kit (www.kitwax.com; \$5 online;). Put a small drop on a clean cotton cloth and gently rub it in. Or, simply “patch” the scratch with a small sticker—or a Schticker (www.schtickers.com), a skin for your laptop that covers up minor problems and simultaneously personalizes your

notebook.

However, if the damage to the case is major, take it to an authorized service dealer or repair shop, which we'll discuss later.

When examining the exterior, don't forget to open the notebook to see if the hinges work properly. Also, test the latches to see if they still secure the lid tightly.

Trying to repair a broken hinge or latch yourself can be time-consuming. Your best bet is to let a service center fix it.

2: The Screen

One of the most fragile parts of a notebook is the monitor. After opening the notebook, see if the screen is intact. If it's damaged (but still displays an image), you could get some temporary use out of your laptop by hooking it up to a desktop computer's monitor.

If the screen appears intact, boot up the notebook and see if there are any lines or dead pixels on the monitor. If the screen is completely black or you see lines, then the problem could be a broken connection between the monitor and the motherboard. You can remove the case to see if any of the cables are disconnected.

There's no quick fix for dead pixels. Perhaps you can live with a couple of them. But eventually, you'll need to replace the entire monitor to get rid of dead pixels. Though it's possible to replace the monitor yourself, this can be tricky and expensive, especially if you don't do it right the first time. We recommend letting a professional handle the process.

Another possible problem is that the backlight is broken. Normally, a notebook backlight, like a regular bulb, wears out gradually after many hours of use. But a drop could permanently damage the backlight or jar it out of place. You can buy a replacement backlight for about \$10 to \$15, but installation is beyond the scope of this article. Unless you're confident in your abilities, we recommend letting a pro handle the task.

(NOTE: Before attempting to make any repairs on your notebook, always make sure you remove the battery and/or unplug it first.)

Don't overlook the possibility that a nonworking screen is due to a loose or damaged video adapter or that one or more of the pins on the video cable are bent. If this is the case, you may even see a message, such as “No signal source,” on the screen. It's possible to straighten out a bent pin or replace a video card by yourself.

3: CD/DVD Drive

Open and close the CD/DVD drive to make sure the tray ejects smoothly. If it doesn't, push a very small pin or

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wire into the hole on the front of the drive and try to unlatch it. If the problem persists, however, you'll need to replace the drive.

4: Battery

When you power on your notebook for the first time after dropping it, try using battery power first. If it works, you've ruled out a damaged battery. If the battery won't power on the computer (and you know it was charged before the drop) but your AC adapter will, then you likely have a damaged battery, which you can easily replace yourself.

5: Fan

A damaged fan can trick you into thinking your hard drive is the problem, even if it's fine. That's because the fan performs the essential work of keeping the interior of your notebook cool. If the fan stops functioning, your computer can over-heat and then perform sluggishly or shut down.

After you turn on your notebook, wait for the fan to turn on, as well. If you don't hear it, or if it sounds overly loud, as if it's working too hard, turn off your computer, let it cool down completely, open the case of your computer, and examine the fan.

You should be able to tell right away if the fan has been damaged from the fall. If it appears intact, at the very least clean it. One simple way to do this is by blasting the fan with a can of compressed air; it won't leave anything

foreign behind in your notebook.

If the fan is damaged, let a repair service replace it.

6: Hard Drive/Motherboard

If you can't get a component to work, whether it's a drive recognizing a disc or a peripheral such as a printer, the motherboard might have been damaged.

If you detect damage to an easily replaceable component, such as a memory module, you can replace that. But if you can't pinpoint the problem, let a professional run it through diagnostics and replace the component(s)—or the entire motherboard—for you.

Like the monitor, the hard drive is extremely sensitive to being dropped. If the drive has effectively been killed, first try to recover the data, either through a data-recovery program (check out the products at www.runtime.org) or by sending your notebook to a company that can extract the data for you, such as Salvagedata (www.salvagedata.com).

Depending on your level of comfort, you can try to replace the hard drive in your notebook yourself.

Repair Service Centers

Although you can repair some of the types of damage we've mentioned, sometimes the wisest course of action, especially for monitors and motherboards, is to let the pros handle it.

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Your first step is to check your users manual and/or warranty that came with the notebook. Either of those—or the manufacturer's Web site—may direct you to an authorized service dealer for your notebook brand in your area.

You can also see if the store from which you bought your laptop offers in-store repairs or in-home service. Best Buy, for instance, offers in-home and in-store technical support through the Geek Squad (www.geeksquad.com).

Another option is to ship the notebook to a nationwide repair center. For example, both Laptoprepair.com and Laptopservice.com perform repairs on all makes and models of notebooks. You can get an estimate for the work before you ship your notebook.

Regardless of which service option you choose, ask beforehand if the repairer guarantees its work and then get it in writing.

Joke of the Month

Submitted by : Donna Kalinoski



I was having trouble with my computer. So I called Richard, the 11 year old next door whose bedroom looks like Mission Control, and asked him to come over. Richard clicked a couple of buttons and solved the problem.

As he was walking away, I called after him, 'So, what was wrong?' He replied, 'It was an ID ten T error.'

I didn't want to appear stupid, but nonetheless inquired, 'An, ID ten T error? What's that? In case I need to fix it again.'

Richard grinned.... 'Haven't you ever heard of an ID ten T error before?'

'No,' I replied. 'Write it down,' he said, 'and I think you'll figure it out.'

So, I wrote down: **ID 10 T** ... I used to like the little @&%*

iPod Replacement

by Sandy Berger,
CompuKISS

www.compukiss.com

[sberger\(at\)compukiss.com](mailto:sberger(at)compukiss.com)

Too many technology stories are sad tales of aggravation and obsolescence. So today I'm going to tell you a story about a digital device with a happy ending.

About 2 years ago, I decided to purchase an iPod. After shopping around, I found that the iPod nano was selling for \$149 just about everywhere. However, the Sam's Club in Cary had it for \$138.77. So why pay more? When I made the Sam's Club purchase, the store clerk offered me a service policy, which I immediately rejected. When he asked why I wasn't interested, I told him that I had learned from past experience that most of these insurance policies were a waste of money because they were expensive and didn't cover the problems that I might actually have with the item. He assured me that this policy was different. For just \$14.88, I could get a 3- year policy that gave me a new iPod for most anything that went wrong with my iPod, including a battery that ran out of juice. My husband suggested that since I am a heavy-duty iPod user, I should go ahead and purchase the policy. Since I use my iPod in the car and at home in a dock every day, I was fairly sure that the iPod battery would give out before the 3-year deadline, so it seemed like a logical move. I purchased the policy. Yet all the time I was wondering if the clerk was just a good salesman or the policy was really that good.

Last month, I found an answer to that question. My iPod started acting weirdly. It was completely freezing up. No matter what button I pressed, it gave no response. Although I had encountered problems like this with computers, I was surprised to find my iPod acting just like a Window's computer. In computer world we call it the blue screen of death. I don't know if it has a name on the iPod, but it turned out to be a similar type of aggravation.

At first it didn't seem like much of a problem because Apple had a solution. Just turn the Hold button on and off a few times, then press and hold the Menu button and the center of the scroll wheel at the same time. Hold them down for about 10 seconds until the Apple icon appears on the screen. This worked great, restoring the iPod immediately, without losing any of my audio programs and music. Unfortunately, the freezes became more and more frequent. I was having to perform this reset 4 or 5 times a day so it became a real pain.

It was time to go back to Sam's Club, but I agonized with that. How could I show them the problem since it happened only sporadically? My discomfort turned to glee when the Sam's Club clerk didn't even try to duplicate the problem. She asked me for the receipt and earbuds and charging cord that came with the iPod. Once I produced those, she promptly refunded the price of the iPod plus the price of the insurance policy. I could have just kept the refund, but instead I headed over to the electronic aisle to pick out a replacement.

My old model iPod was no longer available, but I was also pleasantly surprised to find that the new models were selling for exactly the same price I had paid for the older model. On top of that, the new iPod nanos had twice as much memory, larger screens, and the ability to play videos. This was turning out to be really good! For exactly the same price, I was able to purchase a new, more capable iPod with a new 3-year insurance policy.

Talk about a happy ending..... I am now enjoying watching video podcasts on my new iPod in addition to using it for audio podcasts and music. If anything happens to it in the next 3 years, I can get another replacement. While I don't usually purchase insurance policies for digital equipment, this one turned out to be a real winner.

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From the Editor



Guess who's back - that's right, you'll be seeing Mike's thoughts again. Could be scary!

I would like to give a big thank you to Linda Busch for a job well done for these past two years as the Editor of L.C.A.C.E. News Journal.

I am looking for a 'Club Historian'/assistant editor. Duties would include writing a monthly article on what happened at the meeting, as well as taking pictures. The Club camera will be made available to you for this assignment. Please contact me at:

vicepresident@lcece.org
or
(847) 571-7258

As always we are in constant need on articles for the Journal. If you receive a new toy (technology-related) and would like to write a few sentences about it, please send it to me by the 1st of the month. I will do all I can to publish it.

Happy Computing
Mike McEnergy

A "STRESS-FREE" PC



*Jim McKnight, Director,
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As you know, there is no such thing as a totally "Stress-Free" PC, but there are many things you can do to reduce the stress and worry of owning one.

As we use our PC's, many of us worry about losing our data files, losing our email, losing our Music, our iTunes, our connectivity to the Internet, losing power in the middle of a critical activity, losing our ability to boot the PC, losing control of our PC to hackers, Spy-ware, etc. Wow, we worry a lot! It's a wonder we dare use our PC's at all.

To help solve and minimize these worries, here is a collection of ideas to help protect your computing environment. These steps are not really that difficult or expensive. In fact, many are free. There is lots of help available to you from User Groups, Friends, Internet Googling, PC Magazines, etc. to implement these suggestions. Details for implementing many of these suggestions are in the various self-help documents on my website at: www.jrmcknight.net

Will it take a lot of time and energy to implement these ideas? Yes, at first, but once you have these processes in place, the regular time spent is minimal. Will I see a payback? You will only see a tangible payback for your time and energy if you experience some kind of catastrophic situation. Just like house insurance; if everything keeps running smoothly you will never know if it was worth it. You do get the warm fuzzy feeling of being protected, and you will sleep better at night.

Here are the three main areas of action. First: Protect your PC from bad things happening. Second: Prepare your environment so you can recover if bad things do happen. Third: Practice Secure Behaviors.

PROTECT YOUR PC FROM BAD THINGS HAPPENING:

1. Buy yourself Hardware Router *(Even if you only have one PC)*
 - a. The Router acts as a hardware Firewall.
 - b. Put it between your PC and your Modem.
 - c. Be sure to change the Admin Log-in password from the default to something private.

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If you do not see your name, something is misspelled or wrong please let Mike McEnery Know.

As much as we try, we do make errors. Please advise us if there is a mistake in your E-Mail address or if it is not included in this listing. Send E-Mail to Ms. Dorothy Sutherland at membership@lcace.org with the additions and/or corrections. Thank you. This listing last updated Sept. 23, 2006.

LCACE HOTLINE

Web Site: <http://www.lcace.org>

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LCACE CLUB PICTURES at:
<http://lcace.org/PhotoAlbums.htm>

TIME TO RENEW

All memberships will now be renewable annually on April 1st. This change in the paying of annual dues will allow the Treasurer to budget our money more closely. If you haven't already renewed your membership, see Dorothy or Winnie to find out your pro-rated amount.

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- d. Either disable the Wireless feature and hard-wire your connection, or lock-down the Wireless using WPA Encryption and a password.
2. Make sure the Windows Firewall is active.
3. Make sure Windows "Automatic Updates" feature is active and all your critical/important Windows updates are installed.
4. Install and activate an Anti-virus Program. Set it up to scan incoming e-mails.
5. Install and activate Windows Defender and other free Anti-Spyware programs. Defender will continually scan your PC for harmful activities (Note: Vista comes with Defender built-in).
6. Firefox (free) browser is generally safer than Internet Explorer.
7. Install McAfee Site Advisor (free) on each of your Internet Browsers. It helps identify risky sites. (Note: It is not related to McAfee's Anti-virus or security suite.)
8. Buy yourself a Battery Backup Power Unit (unless you use a Laptop), so if you lose power at a critical time, you can gently close the PC down.
9. E-mail:
 - a. The best single thing you can do to secure your e-mail is to pick a good password. Do not use a single word, but a short phrase, and include some numbers. ie: appy2cu4now" or "my5kidsrgr8". I avoid passwords that include I, l, 1, 0, o, or O. Too easy to confuse my memory. I prefer to stick with all lower case for ease of entry, but if you like finger exercise, you can include UPPER CASE and special characters to make it even more secure. Be creative: "C@@@LDUDE" could work and easy to remember.
 - b. Set up your email program to block images, unless OK'd by you.
 - c. Using "Plain Text" e-mail is safer than using "HTML" e-mail, but not as pretty.
 - d. Note: Your anti-virus program can scan incoming e-mails, but does not fully protect you.
 - e. Thunderbird is a more secure e-mail client than Outlook, Outlook express, or Windows Mail.

PREPARE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

(so you can recover if bad things do happen.)

1. RESTORE/INSTALL DVD/CD's: Make sure you have your "Windows Install" or "System Restore" DVD/CD's on hand (or kept safe off-site). You need these in case of a catastrophic failure. If you do not have them, many manufacturers have instructions on how to burn your own Restore DVD/CD. Do it!

2. BACKUP PLANS: Put multiple Backup processes in place that include:

- a. DATA BACKUPS: Plan regular backups of all your personal data to CD/DVD's (and kept safe offsite).
- b. IMAGE BACKUPS: Plan regular "Image" back-ups of the entire hard-drive, preferably to an external Hard drive. *This is a full image of your main Hard-drive that can be used to completely restore the PC back to normal.*
- c. TESTING: Test your back-up process to make sure it can restore the system. This is less risky if you do it when you first buy a PC, because you have your system restore DVD's (hopefully) to put things back as they were when you bought it.
- d. ONLINE BACKUPS: If you like, sign up for an on-line automatic backup service like Carbonite, Jungledisk, or Mozy.
- e. RESTORE BOOT DISK: Create a Boot-Disk (using your Backup Program), so if you need to restore from a backed-up image, you are ready to go. This disk should be tested for "bootability" and then kept off- site.
- f. FLASH DRIVES: **Warning:** Do not trust Flash Drives as your only means of data backup. They are prone to unexpected catastrophic failures. Having 2 or 3 duplicate Flash Drives would possibly be a reasonable alternative to DVD/CD's for your personal Data.

3. HARD COPY BU: Write down or print out all your critical info, passwords, access info, log-in ID's, etc. and save off-site. Print out a hard copy of all your email contacts and save off-site.

4. PASSWORD FILE: If you keep a list of Passwords on your computer, make sure the file is hidden and/or protected by encryption. Name your password file something that only has meaning to you. Do not name your file; "passwords.doc". Duhh. Use something off-beat, like Recipes.doc or Flowers. doc. Also, there are "Locker" Programs that are free or cheap that will hide, encrypt, and password protect your personal data files.

PRACTICE SECURE BEHAVIORSE-MAIL:

1. Never open e-mail attachments from strangers.
2. Never click a button or link in an email. If desired, copy & paste the link into your browser and make sure it is going where you think it is going.
3. Be cautious about opening attachments & links from friends and family. Especially if it is something that was forwarded from someone else.

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ANTI-VIRUS ~ ANTI-SPYWARE SCANS

1. Run a full Anti-virus Scan at least once a month.
2. For each of your Anti-spyware Programs, run updates and a full scan weekly or at least monthly.

SECUNIA SCANS

Once or twice a month, run a Secunia "Software Inspector" scan to make sure your most common programs are up to date against vulnerabilities. This runs from their website. You do not have to download any programs.

BACKUP, BACKUP, BACKUP

1. Do your planned backups regularly. At least once a month, backup all your personal data files, emails, pictures, etc. to CD/DVD's, and put them somewhere off-site. (A safe-deposit box or a friend or relative's house).
2. At least monthly, backup an image of your main Hard Drive to an external or second Hard drive.
3. If possible, physically take the external hard-drive containing your backed up image off-site so you can recover easily in case of fire, flood, theft, etc. (A safe-deposit box is good). *There are now many small cheap external Hard drives that will easily fit in a Safe-Deposit box. Buy two and alternate them.*
4. Periodically printout a hardcopy of your passwords and contacts. Save off-site.
5. Keep your external Hard-drive powered off when not in use.

HARD-DRIVE SURFACE ANALYSIS SCANS

Run a maintenance scan quarterly or semiannually on all your hard drives using a utility like "Spin-Rite". This helps assure you against a surprise hddrive failure.

REFERENCES & RECOMMENDED PROGRAMS:

MOZILLA Products:

- Firefox Browser - Free: www.mozilla.com/en-US/firefox/
- Thunderbird E-mail Client - Free: www.mozilla.com/en-US/thunderbird/
See Thunderbird Step-By-Step setup at: www.jrmcknight.net/

ANTI-VIRUS ~ ANTI-SPYWARE Products

- McAfee Site Advisor - Free: www.siteadvisor.com/
- AVG Free Anti-virus - Free: <http://free.grisoft.com/doc/downloads-products/us/frt/0?prd=aff>
- Defender - Free: www.microsoft.com/athome/security/spyware/software/default.msp#

- AVG Anti-spyware - Free: <http://free.grisoft.com/doc/downloads-products/us/frt/0?prd=asf>
- Ad-AWARE 2007 - Free: www.lavasoftusa.com/products/ad_aware_free.php
- SpyBot Search & Destroy - Free: www.safernetworking.org/en/spybotsd/index.html

SOFTWARE SCANS & BACKUP:

- Secunia Software Inspector - Free: www.secunia.com/software_inspector/
Requires the latest version of Java to run: www.java.com/en/download/index.jsp
- Spin-Rite Program: www.grc.com/sr/spinrite.htm
The SpinRite Storage Utility Program is not free, but is money well spent.
- Acronis True Image Backup Utility www.ugr.com/
This program is available at a discount at the above listed site and includes a free Tutorial CD.
- Automatic Online Data Backup sites: www.carbonite.com/ & www.jungledisk.com/
Carbonite is currently \$50.00 per year for unlimited storage. Jungledisk is variable priced on usage but cheap.

BATTERY BACKUP POWER UNITS

(also called a UPS: Uninterruptible Power Supply)

- When buying a UPS, I suggest you add up all the power ratings on all the PC equipment you plan to connect to the unit, then pick a unit about 1.5 times that amount. ie: If your usage is 300 Watts, buy at least a 450 Watt UPS (equal to about a 700 VA unit).
- The VA rating (Volt-Amps) vs Watts rating is confusing. With PC equipment, 1 Watt is about 1.6 VA. I go by Watts. If the tag on your PC says 2.0A and 120V, then calculate 2.0 Amps x 120 Volts or 240 watts for that device. (VA would be about 400)
- A UPS that is rated too small will fault when first powering on all your equipment at once. The first 30 seconds or so is when the highest power usage occurs.
- The most reliable brands seem to be APC and BELKIN. Triplet is OK.
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Look Ma No Hands



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This article was not typed. I dictated it using the speech recognition feature in Windows

Vista Ultimate.

I have been using this feature on and off for certain applications for a while and it has its good points and its bad points.

The intent of the software is to allow the user to speak words into the computer and for the computer to recognize those words, understand that some of them are commands, and also understand that some of them are input to programs. In other words, when I say the words "please save me", the computer must decide whether to add the words to the document I am editing as if I had typed them, or add the word "please" to the document, and then bring up the save dialog box to save the document with the name "me".

The program that is attempting to do this has two major hurdles to conquer. It has to recognize the spoken words correctly. This is helped by the training exercises. But it has its limitations.

It must also understand "in context" which of those words are commands and which of those words are to be part of my document. As time goes on, you learn to pause before speaking a command. So in the above example of "please save me", I would say the words altogether relatively quickly in order to enter them in my document. If I wanted to add the word "please" to my document then save the document, I would speak the word "please", then pause for a few seconds, then save the word "save." This would bring up the save dialog box and I could continue as if it was a command.

As far as the good points are concerned: If I'm working off printed list or when I know for sure what I want to say clearly, it can be a much faster way of inputting text than for me to type it. Some of that is due to my typing speed being somewhat slow. I am a faster typist than most hunt and peck folks, but I would never be able to keep a job as a secretary. It is also much better at spelling than I am.

If I don't know what I'm going to say in advance the program does not facilitate me speaking what I want to say and then recomposing it later. Some of this may be my fault. I find that I can type up an article by hand and

maintain enough control so that in the end I have something coherent. When I just speak out what I want it does not always make sense. I spend way too much time revising it.

One of the disadvantages is that you need to spend a little bit of time training the voice recognition system. The system works best when you are running a very simple application such as WordPad or Notepad. It can even be used to some extent in Microsoft Word. However when using an application such as PowerPoint, the program spends so much time trying to figure out what possible commands you might be wanting to perform and not enough time actually realizing that you are trying to enter words.

Another problem is homonyms. These are words that sound the same but they have different meanings in English except for the possibility of some contextual clues. There is no way for the speech recognition software to know whether I want "2", "two", "to", or "too." During setup the program asks you if they can look at the contents of documents on your hard drive to help you determine what word you used most often and in what context. This does help it guess which homonym you want.

The final problem I wish to discuss is the editing features. Whenever I create a text document I will want to fix mistakes. There are some commands in the software that will help fix mistakes, but they are limited and clumsy. Some of them will even (in theory) help prevent mistakes by the voice recognition software in future. All that being said, I find that editing documents using the voice recognition software is very frustrating. I always resort to using the arrow keys and the mouse to navigate through the document.

Vista speech recognition is a helpful tool when transcribing printed text or when words have been spoken into a tape recorder. However for initial composition of documents or editing I do not find it useful. I do not believe that I could ever learn to use it as a complete 100% substitute for the keyboard and mouse. I would not consider it a replacement if I was disabled.

