



January in Tampa

A Monthly Publication of the Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.

Vol. 20 No. 1 January 2007

## Meeting

### Building Websites

With Microsoft's  
Expression Web & Visual Studio  
Presented by  
William LaMartin

Wednesday, January 10, 2007  
6:30 PM  
Art Pepin Hospitality Room  
Pepin Distributing Co.  
4121 N 50th St  
Tampa, Florida

**Meeting Preview:** William LaMartin will demonstrate how to create and manage a web site using Microsoft Expression Web and Visual Studio. Expression Web is just now available and is the replacement for FrontPage.

We will also have the usual half-hour Windows SIG.

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## Editor's Comments

*By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group*  
[lamartin@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:lamartin@tampabay.rr.com)

As noted above, I will be doing the presentation this month. It will be an introduction to Microsoft's new web site creation and management program, Expression Web. I have just used it to give my personal site, <http://www.lamartin.com>, a new look and will use that as a basis to demonstrate how to create pages with a consistent look and feel, where this look and feel can be easily changed by changing the layout of one master page.

Additionally, I will show how Visual Studio can be used to make the sites much more powerful, with interactivity, programming and database connectivity. Also, we will see what needs to be implemented to make the pages render properly in different browsers and even in hand-held devices. ◆

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Meeting Preview	1
Editor's Comments	1
Minutes	2
Buying a Notebook	3
Links	5
SIG Report	7
Map	8

**February Meeting: To be announced**

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**Minutes of the December Meeting**

By Doug Mullis, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group  
[dmullis@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:dmullis@tampabay.rr.com)

President John Witmer opened the meeting at 6:40 pm by welcoming Mike Hodges, who has served as our Treasurer for several years. Due to his work schedule, Mike is unable to attend many of our meetings and has announced a desire to turn over his duties at year's end. John then introduced a visitor, Nancy Norton.

President Witmer then turned the meeting over to Bob LaFave to conduct the Windows SIG portion of our meeting. Bob asked if anyone had computer problems to present. Ed Snow wanted to know how to enlarge the screen print on his laptop. Bob explained how to change screen resolution.

Another member wanted to know how to eliminate paragraph symbols that popped up on her email this afternoon. Mary Sheridan suggested going to Outlook Tools, then Views and uncheck Paragraphs. Someone else asked which file format he should use. Merle Nicholson said NTFS wins "Hands Down" over FAT32.

Some discussion followed on security settings. Bob LaFave said the security programs are now so complex he recommends selecting the manufacturer's default settings in most cases. On the question on how to convert VHS material to DVD, Bob suggested using the \$30 DVD Santa program. William LaMartin said he connects his VCR to his PC via three wires (left and right audio and yellow video) and a Dazzle adapter and captures the content. Bob said if you are having problems playing DVDs you've created, get a new inexpensive DVD player, as they are now compatible with many formats.

At 7:10 pm, Member at Large Mary Sheridan took control of the meeting for the election of officers for calendar year 2007. The slate is as follows: John Witmer has agreed to continue as President. Kevan Sheridan agreed to continue as Vice President. Doug Mullis agreed to assume the duties of Treasurer. Jim Purcell agreed to become our Member at Large. The votes in favor of all were unanimous

*(Minutes.....Continued on page 7)*



Member of  
The Association of  
Personal Computer User Groups

## Buying a Notebook Computer & Other Stuff

By Merle Nicholson, Tampa PC Users Group  
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Notebook sales have exceeded desktops this year, and they've been very close for several years. Part of the reason for this is that notebooks have become very competitively priced and, also at least technically, as capable as desktops. Also, I think that most universities have completely embraced the technology, and high schools and grade schools have followed, and notebooks make sense in those environments.

In this article, I want to offer what I've observed in the notebook market that may help in deciding what to buy.

**The big compromise.** Keep in mind that a notebook is a very severe compromise, balancing energy use (battery), weight, computing power and file storage. You can't have a very large, powerful desktop replacement and expect it to run more than an hour and a half on the battery! You can however have a small lightweight notebook that will run five hours!

All things are affected by this compromise: Screen size, battery capacity, hard drive speed and overall dimensions and weight. Every element that goes into the notebook is affected. It's up to you to find the balance of these elements consistent with your intended use. If I make it sound hard; that's intentional. It isn't a decision that you can make in a half hour of looking at notebooks at a store. Do your homework first.

Do not consider any notebook without finding good, up-to-date product reviews. They test things like how long the battery really took to run down. That's so very important. Just Google the model number and add "review".

**First you must try to classify how you intend to use your computer 90% of the time.** Classifications that I can think of are:

1. Desktop replacement next to a power outlet
2. Powerful computer most always in range of an

- outlet (business presentations)
3. Carry around all day (to classes)
4. Outdoors at Starbucks and occasional outlets
5. Entertainment (Play an entire DVD movie or play games for hours on a plane on battery)
6. Ultra light portable
7. Ruggedized (See Panasonic)

Most of these classifications are mutually exclusive. My own powerful notebook will just barely play a short DVD movie all the way through. I knew that when I bought it, knowing that I am almost always near an outlet. Remember that a battery six months old does not have the same capacity as new, and, if you use it a lot, may be ready for replacement after a year. Replacement batteries are typically \$150. Sometimes they cost much more.

**Next is screen size.** If you're near an outlet 90% of the time, and you don't carry it a lot, you can go for both size and power. You can pick a 15.4" widescreen or 17" screen. With a mostly portable notebook with some outlet availability, you can pick a 14" or 15" screen and, if portability is paramount, pick a 12" to 14" screen.

So here's Merle's notebook rule one: Analyze your intended use (size and capacity vs. portability) and then pick a screen size consistent with that use. Remember that the big compromise prevents you from having both. Go to a big box store and look at screen sizes and the relationship to physical size and ignore the details until you have that down pat. Write down the model numbers, then find Internet product reviews to see what expert testers think of it.

**Screen resolution.** Find out what it is, not always an easy task. Let's say you pick the very popular 15.4" widescreen. Look at the vertical resolution. I've found five different sizes: 768, 800, 900, 1024 and 1080. In my opinion, a 15.4 vertical resolution should be at least 900. Anything less and you're looking at a cheap computer. A 768 is acceptable for a 12 to 14" standard screen on a lightweight notebook, but not 15".

**Operating System.** The choices right now will be XP Home, XP Pro and Windows Media Edition (WME). Also they're usually bundling a later Vista upgrade,

(Notebook.....Continued on page 4)

*(Notebook.....Continued from page 3)*

and, believe it or not, there are options to get an operating system CD for \$10 or so (TAKE IT!).

I cannot think of one reason to buy a computer with Windows Media Edition that doesn't also have a TV tuner built in, but so far I've not found one with a tuner, and who'd want one anyway? And external USB tuners are poor. What are they thinking? Enough said about that.

The only real debate is between Home and Pro. If you connect in any way to a corporate system domain server (either locally or remotely through VPN), or wish to control the notebook with Windows Remote Desktop, you need Pro. Otherwise Home has everything you'll need. If you want to control another computer using Windows Remote Desktop from this notebook, Home is fine for this. The software is available for download even for Win 98.

**Hard Drive.** Be realistic. Look at your needs now, and determine if those needs are going to change. If you need to save the money, don't be afraid to get a standard 60G hard drive and supplement it with an external USB backup drive for your archived stuff or pictures that you don't need online. I'm using about 90G on my desktop right now, but my 60G notebook computer has only 40G used and I can easily clean some of that off. In the notebook world, the price per megabyte is much higher than for desktops.

**Hard Drive speed is important.** They come in 4500, 5400 and 7200 RPM. Believe me, the notebook takes quite a hit in performance if you have 4500 RPM drive and you are trying to do something intensive that requires a lot of pagefile activity. If you're doing just Internet, email and word processing, the standard drive is fine. Stray out of that arena, and you'll appreciate the faster drives. What's the downside? Battery life.

**Battery.** There are choices here, too. The standard Lithium-Ion battery has six cells. But most makers also offer 9- and 12-cell batteries for very little more, and they offer significant run time improvements, as much as a 50% increase. Be careful if you're ordering online, and don't mistakenly order a second battery instead of a replacement. I've never seen this option

in a store, only online.

**Wireless.** All notebooks have Ethernet and Wireless/g built in. Do not be tempted to buy "pre-N". It'll be years until that becomes useful. An additional choice is built-in Bluetooth. After using a Bluetooth "dongle" sticking out the side of my notebook and worrying about breaking it off in there, I'd buy the internal Bluetooth in a heartbeat. I've bent the dongle so badly that I'm just amazed that it's still functional. I use Bluetooth for GPS, external keyboard and mouse, and, when I find a good Bluetooth headset, I'll use that for my Gizmo VoIP use and leave my large USB unit at home.

**USB.** My notebook has only three USB ports, and I wish it had more. I carry a tiny powered hub on the road, but it's just adding more to my collection of power cubes. I have finally resorted to applying labels on every cube I have, so I can't mix them up. That's pathetic.

**Processors:** There's too much on this subject to write about, so I'll try to give you my own summary.

Forget these: Duron, Sempron, Celeron, Pentium 4, Pentium D, AMD XP.

Celerons and Semprons are still being sold. Pass them by unless you need a really cheap, slow computer. These are the \$600 computers you see advertised.

You'll especially find a lot of Core Duo (not to be confused with Core 2 Duo which is an entirely different CPU). Dell is selling systems with a 1.66GHz Core 2 Duo for only \$108 more than a 1.6GHz Core Duo. Pass the Core Duo by if you can.

Look for these: Pentium M (older, but with Centrino, very good on battery life), Turion and Turion X2, and Core Solo, Core Duo and Core 2 Duo. The Turion X2 and Core 2 Duo are dual processor low power CPU's. Dual processor CPUs are a very good idea for extending battery life. It's a way to get very good powerful CPU's when needed but be able to partially shut down when not needed.

If you play games or use some specialized intensive

*(Notebook.....Continued on page 5)*

## Internet Picture of the Month

*(Notebook.....Continued from page 4)*

software, and it's very important to you, consider Turion and Core Solo, but at higher speeds (above 2GHz) than is available with 2 cores. The 2-core processors are faster overall, but almost all games and many graphic and movie editors and renderers are optimized for single-core. That's changing, but not very fast, and notebooks tend to have a shorter useful life.

**Memory:** Windows XP runs best with 512MB and up. It's a real mistake to cut corners here, because the lack of memory forces the OS to swap to the pagefile, and on a notebook with a slow hard drive, you take a real performance hit. To make matters worse, most notebooks' videos use a part of system memory. 1 GB memory, is best. You may also find that, if you want 1GB memory, it's cheaper to get it at the onset. Many 512MB systems use two 256 chips that fill all possible slots, so there's no way to just add 512!

**Windows Vista:** I would never, ever never upgrade an XP computer to Vista. That's my opinion. Notice I say "upgrade". That means that I'd expect all my installed applications to stay installed and all my data to be intact. Fat chance. BUT .. Replacing the entire system, maybe I'd do. I've read the offers that Dell and HP make which include a Vista coupon. It isn't clear whether the disk they will send you is a system restore or an upgrade. If it was a complete system restore (which effectively reformats your drive), and I was willing to reinstall all applications and data after the replacement, I might do it. ... but it wouldn't be worth it. If I just *had* to have Vista on a notebook,

*(Notebook.....Continued on page 6)*



### Gerald Ford?

From the site <http://www.tommcmahon.net> at [http://www.tommcmahon.net/2005/05/world\\_premiere\\_.html](http://www.tommcmahon.net/2005/05/world_premiere_.html) we have what is possibly our 38th president working as a model.

From the site: "According to Carole Conover, in her book Cover Girls, President Ford also posed with Ms. Brown for a Cosmopolitan cover, issued in April 1942." And from the Ford Library: "....., we at the [Ford] Library cannot confirm or deny that it is President Ford in that cover."

## January's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)  
Chowhound  
The Museum of Hoaxes  
Microsoft Expression Web

<http://www.tpcug.org/>  
<http://www.chowhound.com/>  
<http://www.museumofhoaxes.com/>  
[http://www.microsoft.com/products/expression/en/web\\_designer/default.msp](http://www.microsoft.com/products/expression/en/web_designer/default.msp)  
[http://www.nytimes.com/ref/us/20061228\\_3000FACES\\_TAB1.html](http://www.nytimes.com/ref/us/20061228_3000FACES_TAB1.html)



Faces of the Dead in Iraq

*(Notebook.....Continued from page 5)*

I'd wait until it was available, and even ... I doubt it. Give it a year first.

**Accessories:** One thing I hate about my HP is a monster charger cube that is about 1/3 the weight of the notebook! What are they thinking? Targus and others make smaller replacements. I have several "notebook mice," two of them with ZipLinq retractors. Also I have a good collection of other ZipLinq cables (try Amazon and TigerDirect). Targus makes an astonishing number of notebook cases, briefcases and backpacks. Go to Targus online for these; you'll find just exactly what you're looking for, and the prices have become reasonable. They used to have a very high retail markup, but that seems to be no longer the case (pun intended).

For home use, I use a Microsoft Bluetooth keyboard and mouse. I put the notebook on an old printer stand to get the screen up high enough for my eyes, and then I place the keyboard and mouse comfortably where my hands land. Remember that on a notebook the screen is located at a fixed distance from the keyboard. Obvious, I know. Consider, though, that your eyes' requirements are in conflict with your typing comfort. Ok, I guess, if you're under 25 and you're oblivious to the eyestrain and haven't experienced repetitive motion pain.

**Warranty:** The more I look at notebooks the more alike they are. For me, there are only six or seven variables, and I can get what I want from three or four manufacturers with very little difference between them. So I do some research on service and warranty and give the top-rated manufacturer the edge. I want to speak to someone I can understand on the phone when I call; I want extended hours for help; and I want to be able to send my computer out for repair and have it come back with all my software intact on the hard drive.

My brother-in-law needed a keyboard repaired on his Toshiba, and it came back with the hard drive in the same state as new out of the box. They'd done a system restore since it was their policy. Everything was gone. I think that's just inconceivably poor customer relations. The good news is that he called me first, and I convinced him to back everything up before he sent it in.

**The major manufacturers are:** HP, Dell and Lenovo (A Republic of China company; 20% is owned by IBM). Other name manufactures are Sony, Toshiba, Panasonic (which builds ruggedized ToughBooks), ASUS and Gateway. There are many others, and some build very good quality specialized notebooks like AlienWare (now owned by Dell) and Voodoo. Pick your manufacturer by their service ratings!

**In-Store or Online:** Consider this. Except for maybe adding memory, you're pretty much stuck with what you buy. And there are hundreds of configurations possible for each model. Stores carry what moves. That's obvious. What are the chances that you can get the exact configuration you want? Well, maybe they have something close that you're willing to compromise on. I did that, and I wished I'd realized that I could have gotten the internal Bluetooth online for the extra cost of the Bluetooth alone. Except for store clearances, I've never found a store to have lower prices than you can get online.

**Finally, after you've bought:** You still have a lot of work to do. First thing, before installing anything and before connecting to the Internet, you need to remove all the crap software (crapware). I'm serious. Go to Add/Remove Programs and remove all AOL, Yahoo, Google, Real, anything with the word "toolbar" or Screen Saver. Reboot, then uninstall all trial versions of Norton and McAfee, Trend and whatever the current favorites are. Reboot, then open Internet Explorer, click Tools, Manage Add-ons, Enable or Disable Add-ons. Disable all Add-ons except Sun Java and the Microsoft XML thing.

If you're fond of say Norton anti-virus, go to CompUSA and get a highly discounted anti-virus and anti-spyware program. It's usually much cheaper than an online subscription. They also sell 3-packs at a discount. Also consider some good alternative like free.grisoft.com, free AVG and Spyware or perhaps Kaspersky (not free, but highly rated). Install those and then attach your broadband. DO NOT use the Verizon or Roadrunner (Brighthouse) install CDs. You don't need them to attach to DSL or Cable, and you run the very real risk of adding more crapware. After connecting to the Internet, go to Windows Updates, and get

*(Notebook.....Continued on page 8)*

## Special Interest Groups

### Microsoft Access SIG

This SIG meets the **first Tuesday** of the month at 6:30 PM. The meeting location varies. For information contact William LaMartin at [lamartin@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:lamartin@tampabay.rr.com), or Merle Nicholson at [merle@merlenicholson.com](mailto:merle@merlenicholson.com).

### Digital Imaging SIG—Cancelled until further notice

### Visual Basic for Applications SIG

This SIG meets the **third Wednesday** of the month at 6:30 PM. The meeting location varies. For information contact William LaMartin at [lamartin@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:lamartin@tampabay.rr.com).

### Windows SIG

This SIG occupies the first 30 minutes of our monthly, regular meeting and is devoted to a general Windows and computing discussion. Bob LaFave moderates the discussion.

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*(Minutes.....Continued from page 2)*

Elections were concluded with terms to begin January 1, 2007. Doug will continue to serve as Secretary until a member accepts nomination and is elected to this office. Please step forward as Doug also serves as our Program Director and now Treasurer.

John Witmer announced we need a speaker for our January 10<sup>th</sup> meeting as Microsoft has requested to be re-scheduled to March. Presentations on Outlook or Scanners were suggested. Vendor presentations are scarce so we will need members to take up the slack. Volunteers? Get with John or Doug.

At 7:20 pm, President Witmer introduced our speaker for the evening, Jen Clausen, to tell us about Smart Computing magazine and the related website. Jen reminded us that Sandhills Publishing produces not only Smart Computing, but also PC Today, CE Lifestyles, Reference Series and Computer Power User.

Jen started by telling us she is from a small town in the middle of Nebraska and that her office is in Lincoln, which is notoriously cold in winter. Tours of Florida are envied assignments at this time of year, so she is pleased to be here. Packets were handed out containing the January 2007 issue of Smart Computing, a ball point pen with logo, a published guide for using the Smart Computing website and a mouse pad with 2007 calendar, email address and toll free phone number for technical support. Smart Computing boasts being written in plain English for computer users of all skill levels with acronyms explained the first time used in an article. The purpose of the magazine is to improve the computer skills and productivity of its readers.

We then scanned the issue distributed, starting with the Cover Story, which may be several articles. The cover subject is always something of a timely interest. Jen next reviewed the Software and Hardware Reviews section.

These reviews are actually done by the writers based on their hands-on experience, and the programs are scored based upon performance, ease of use, (ease of) installation, support/documents provided and price.

We then looked at the Windows Tips & Tricks section, which deals with Windows 98 through XP and will include Vista once released. Articles offer operating system information to make these systems perform at maximum efficiency. Jen then showed us Quick Tips, that is in a question and answer format explaining how to accomplish many tasks covering a number of applications. Next was the Plugged In or Web Tips section, which is all about the Internet and designed to enhance our online experiences.

Mr. Modem's Desktop is a lighthearted series about computers and interesting websites. And finally, Jen covered the Tech Support section, which explains error messages and offers fast fixes to problems you may encounter.

Leaving the magazine, Jen told us about the Smart Computing website, where you can seek support through the Q&A Board, Chat Rooms or Forums, read articles from Smart Computing, Computer Power User or PC Today and create a library of your favorite articles. Articles are PDF and printer friendly. Jen gave us a tour of the website, showing us the many ways we can get support/answers to computer problems or simply improve our efficiency in our applications.

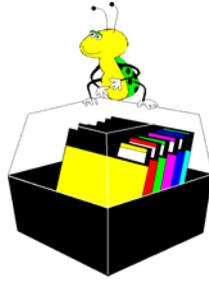
Smart Computing provided door prizes, with the three winners being drawn by Jen Clausen. Prizes and winners were:

- Smart Computing for one year—Nancy Norton
- Smart Computing Reference Library—Merle Nicholson
- Smart Computing Tee Shirt—Ed Purcell

Lucky winners! Thank you, Jen, for the nice door prizes.

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm. Attendees partook of the Holiday buffet. See you next year! ♦

**Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.**  
P. O. Box 3492  
Tampa, FL 33601-3492



**First Class Mail**

- Member: Your membership is up for renewal*
- Vendor: Your product was reviewed on page \_\_\_\_*

*(Notebook.....Continued from page 6)*  
your computer up to date.

Look at your MSCONFIG startup list and also your System Tray. See if there's any crapware you can remove or disable. You don't need Adobe Reader to "call home" through the Internet every time you start your computer to see if there's an update. Note what's on your system tray; write it down before you install any more software so you'll know what came with it and what you've added since then.

So why do Dell, HP and all the rest put crapware on all new computers? They're paid to. It's income for them. Think of it this way. Yahoo makes money how? From targeted advertising. Advertisers pay them, right? The more advertising they get out there, the more they collect, so paying Dell to install the crapware on YOUR NEW COMPUTER makes sense to them. It's easiest to remove this stuff when the computer is new. If you need help with this, just take advantage of being in TPCUG and call a knowledgeable member. ◆

