

safe surfing

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF
PERSONAL COMPUTER USERS
WHO FREQUENT THE INTERNET,
WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON GIST
SUPPORT GROUP MEMBERS.

- A BLU-RAY vs. HD DVD
- B DIGITAL CONVERTER BOXES
- C WEB SITE FINDS
- D STUMPER CONTEST

I guess it's pretty obvious by now that I very often delve into areas not really related to internet surfing, let alone safe internet surfing. Perhaps I should change the newsletter's name to something more accurate like "Miscellaneous Items of Interest That Happen to Cross Barry's Wandering Mind." I apologize if I wander too far astray from the areas you want covered, but I suspect many of you are interested in things that interest me. So, unless you contact me to let me know I need to bridle my thoughts or alter my path in some way, I'll just keep on keepin' on, trying to earn your attention.

Blu-ray vs. DVD Decided



Well, it's official. Toshiba has completely backed out of the HD DVD format they were pushing so hard and Wal-Mart's decision not to back HD DVD put the final nail in the format's coffin. As a result, Sony's Blu-ray format has won the war. It's been a long time coming, but I guess you could say Sony has finally gotten back at the industry for shooting down their BetaMax format (and you can really tell how that crippled Sony)!



Bottom line: If you are shopping for a new DVD player, get a Blu-ray player if you can afford it. The best deal right now is probably the Playstation 3; it is not only a world-class video game system, but also a Blu-ray player!

But take heart HD DVD player owners! The machine you bought has one very nice feature you will be able to use for some time in the future: it can "up convert" your earlier DVDs from their lower resolution to something significantly and noticeably higher for viewing on your new HDTV. Your older DVD player probably could not up convert at all and the ability of Blu-ray machines to do that has been the subject of some controversy.

For a full explanation of up converting go to <http://www.oppodigital.com/Getting-Most-out-of-DVD-on-HDTV-Display.html>

Digital Converter Boxes

On February 17, 2009 all television broadcasts must be digital, not analog as they have been. What does this mean to you? Well, if you have already have digital television set (e.g., HDTV) or are receiving your signal through a digital box used by a cable or satellite provider, you will not notice a thing. You are already receiving your signals digitally. However, for any set(s) receiving an analog signal via rabbit ears or traditional antenna, you will need a "digital to analog converter box."

These small boxes are not very expensive



(roughly \$50), and the government is issuing up to two \$40 coupons per family to offset the expense. Just be sure to get them within 90 days of the time you intend to buy the converter because the coupons expire after 90 days. For more, easy-to-understand information including how to get the coupons check out this URL: <http://www.hdtvunerinfo.com/analogconverterinfo.html>



Web Site Finds

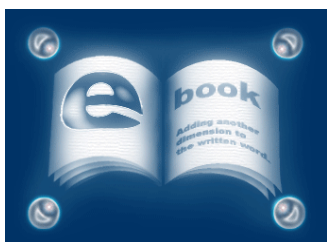
ITunes Not Just for iPods

ITunes has partnered with many companies recently trying to make it more of a force in the online entertainment field. Most recently they announced an

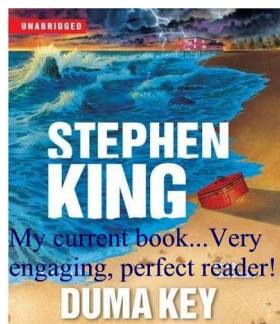
arrangement with the producers of American Idol allowing the download of your favorite Idol's performance for only 99 cents. And the folks at www.itunes.com say that by downloading their free ITunes software you gain "instant access to more than 6 million songs, thousands of podcasts, music videos and audio books, plus hundreds of TV shows and movies."

Books Online

I'm a big fan of audio books. I listen to them almost whenever I'm in the car. And I find myself continuing to listen until a chapter is finished while idling in the garage (Note to self: Buy a CO2 detector). Sometimes I even enjoy listening at home. More and more sites are cropping up that are dedicated to saving trees. Many of them are supported by volunteers, so if you have time to devote they could certainly use your help. My favorite so far is Project Gutenberg at <http://www.gutenberg.org>.



Of course there's a difference between electronic and audio books. Project Gutenberg is a great source for both, but to get the latest titles I'm afraid you'll need to shop (you should excuse the expression) retail. If you demand immediate gratification, drop by COSTCO to get a discounted price on a few very recent titles. If you can afford to wait a few days, go to Amazon. They have absolutely everything. And, better yet, they inevitably have very lightly used titles for tremendously discounted prices. But I'm learning more about audio books all the time. Here are a few tips.



I've found that the reader/actor of an audio book title can be almost as important as the book itself. Conversely, a bad reader can absolutely ruin an otherwise great book. After you listen to a few dozen titles you'll see what I mean. You'll discover the readers, producers and publishers you

like. Another lesson I learned, and this one both surprised me and left me with little I can do in response, is that not all disks have the same capabilities. I learned that you cannot reverse or forward some disks unless it is track by track. That's very inconvenient, especially in a car when you're likely to have missed a sentence or two and want to rewind a little bit (but not a whole chapter!). Unfortunately, I've still not learned to recognize which publishers offer those features and which do not. Apparently Simon & Schuster does, but Listening Library does not. I say "apparently" only because it's possible the features vary by titles within publishers.

Here's another good site for electronic books. This one is particularly nice because it provides a comprehensive list of other sites to visit for free e-books:

<http://www.e-book.com.au/freebooks.htm>

Bringgo

This company's name is cute but pretty much useless in internet marketing terms. Maybe it's catchy, but it won't help you remember how to get to the site! The URL is <http://www.nophonetrees.com/> and it's one of my favorite new sites. Not only do they keep a current and lengthy list of very useful toll-free numbers, but they will call the number for you, navigate through the often lengthy and frustrating phone tree, and call you back when the human has been located! Try this very clever service before they start charging for it.



I was also very pleasantly surprised to find two numbers there that are notoriously hard to locate and often out of date: the numbers for eBay and Amazon.

Alerts

If there is a topic you're obsessed by, you definitely need to set up an alert at Google. Just enter your search terms and criteria and you will be notified any time your specific area of interest generates a new hit:

<http://www.google.com/alerts>



Clinical Trials

Here is a list of some of the most complete and authoritative sites that cover current clinical trials:

<http://clinicaltrials.gov/>

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

<http://www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials>

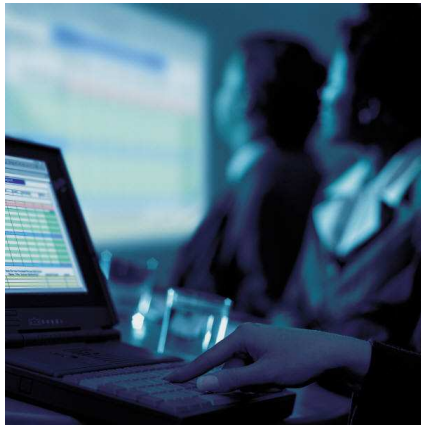
This last one offers an easy way to sign up for an RSS feed (remember that from my April newsletter?) that will alert you when a new clinical trial is initiated

in an area of interest to you:

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/databases/alerts/>

Free PowerPoint Presentations

Need a lesson plan or other presentation in short order? These Microsoft PowerPoint presentations can be a great foundation. And you need not have the full PowerPoint program to play or view them. A free PowerPoint Viewer is available at Microsoft.com.



Check this site out for elementary school subjects:
<http://www.graves.k12.ky.us/powerpoints/elementary/>

This site goes from Kindergarten through High School:
<http://www.lexington1.net/technology/?page=instruc/pow erpoint.htm>

And here's a site that covers virtually every subject:
<http://www.pppst.com/themes.html>

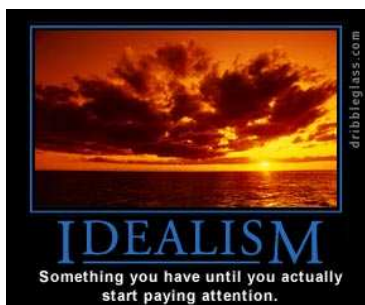
Unique Sites

There are some pieces that have circulated the 'net for quite some time and that are still in big demand. Here are some of my favorite that people keep asking me to find again for them.

Zoom through the universe from the quark to the Milky Way:
<http://micro.magnet.fsu.edu/primer/java/scienceopticsu/powersof10/>

When was the last time you needed some real facts to counter that argument about The United Nation's Law of the Sea over the water fountain? Well that's just one of many topics you can find out more about at the Congressional Research Service web site:
<http://www.fas.org/man/crs/index.html>

And talk about facts! I don't know of another source so full of useful, current information than the CIA World Fact Book:
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>



Barry Codron, a retired U.S. Air Force pilot, lives with his wife and doggie, near his children and grandchildren and their doggies, in the Sacramento area. He enjoys writing and consulting in areas including technology and music, among other fields that pique his interest from time to time. He welcomes your questions, comments, ideas or corrections at barry.mart@sbcglobal.net.

Stumper Contest

If friends are complaining that they are not receiving pictures in the mail they receive from you, this month's Stumper answer is for you!



When you want to send an email from Outlook Express that includes a photo or graphic, what step must you take to insure your recipient get's the picture and not the infamous "Red X."

Mike Blake, from Ontario, Canada was the correct responder this month. And, as they say at the Oscar's, this is Mike's second award!

In Outlook Express, click on

- "Tools,"
- "Options,"
- "Send."
- Under "Mail Sending Format," select "HTML."
- Then press the "HTML Settings" button and make sure the "Send pictures with messages" box is checked.

That's all there is to it, but be sure you make those selections from the main window in Outlook Express, not from the "Create," "Forward" or "Reply" windows. If you do that, the change will only be saved and applicable for that specific message, not all future messages.

For next month, ponder this scenario: You've decided to take a stab at bidding for something on eBay. You've done your homework and you know how much you want to spend. The bidding has been slow, and that excites you because that may mean the item hasn't generated too much interest. You're afraid to bid too early and get the juices of the other bidders going, but you don't want to be too late or too low either. How can you bid, or is there a program you can use, so as to keep bidding down yet not miss having the last word up to your limit?

