

The Vista PC Journal

The Monthly Newsletter of the Sierra Vista PC Users Group

SIERRA VISTA, ARIZONA

MARCH 2006

CLUB MEETING DATES

5 Apr 2006 Meeting at Sierra Vista Public Library.
3 May 2006 Meeting at Sierra Vista Public Library.
7 June 2006 Meeting at Sierra Vista Public Library.
2 Aug 2006 Meeting at Sierra Vista Public Library.
6 Sept 2006 Meeting at Sierra Vista Public Library.
Club meetings are normally held on the first Wednesday of the month, unless that day falls on a national holiday, when meetings are not held. Meetings are called to order at 6:45 p.m.

COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Bylaws George Johnsen
Membership Emil Bovich
Nominations Ed Laskowski
Presentations vacant
Publicity Emil Bovich
Refreshments vacant
Webmaster Joe Baeza

E-mail Addresses

Vice-pres: joebaeza@cox.net
President: elaskow@hotmail.com
Treasurer: ebwb.ov@cox.net
Secretary: gmjthres@cox.net
Publicity: ebwb.ov@cox.net
Bylaws: gmjthres@cox.net

User Group Web Site

<http://members.cox.net/svpcug>

Recommendation for the Month

Check to see that your Firewall is on. From Control Panel click *Network Connections*; right-click your network connection, and select Properties from the drop-down menu; select Advanced. Make certain the box next to "Protect my computer and network..." is checked. ■

OFFICERS

President Ed Laskowski
Vice-president Joe Baeza
Treasurer Emil Bovich
Secretary George Johnsen

SIG Leaders, Coordinators and Editor

Accountant Emil Bovich
Editor Ed Laskowski
Internet Coordinator Joe Baeza
Programs Coordinator George Johnsen
Linux SIG Ed Laskowski
Software Librarian Joe Baeza
Windows SIG Ed Laskowski

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A Newsletter "At Your Service"

This entire newsletter can be accessed online from the user group Web page, in Adobe Acrobat PDF format. The information published in this newsletter is believed to be correct and is intended to be useful. However the Sierra Vista IBM PC Users Group cannot assume responsibility for the consequences of errors contained in the articles nor for misuse of the information provided. Unless specifically stated otherwise, the opinions and statements expressed in any article, column or editorial are those of the individual author and do not represent an official position of, or endorsement by, the Sierra Vista IBM Users Group. ■

Sierra Vista PC Users Group Benefits

The Users Group offers a number of benefits to its members. Some of these benefits are the following:

1. **Club Shareware Library.** We have discontinued our shareware library, since shareware programs can now be readily downloaded from the Internet. Occasionally, the president will hand out diskettes with free software which is particularly useful.

2. **Demonstrations.** Both software and hardware demonstrations are given at many meetings, both by representatives of software houses and by our own members.

3. **Software Offers.** The established software developers do not now offer products to user group members at discount prices; however, we still get discount offers from newly-established or small companies.

4. **Book Offers.** O'Reilly Media, Inc. offers our members a 30% discount on all their books, as well as books from six other publishers which are distributed by O'Reilly. To see a complete listing of the titles available, visit the O'Reilly web site at:

www.oreilly.com/catalog

4. **Newsletter.** The newsletter is our primary means of announcing events and providing information to our members. It also affords members an opportunity to share their knowledge with fellow members through written articles and reviews.

5. **For Sale.** Members can bring items for sale or exchange to any meeting. Computer hardware, software, and books are appropriate items to bring.

6. **Giveaway Items.** We urge our members to bring their old PC magazines, books, catalogs, and software to the meetings for giveaway on our freebie table; your junk can be another man's treasure.

7. **Question and Answer** period at every meeting. Members can present their problems to the group to get suggested solutions from other members. Membership dues are \$20.00 per year. You can join at any meeting. ■

Minutes of the Regular Meeting

1 March 2006

Sierra Vista IBM PC Users Group

The president called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm; All officers were present.

Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Emil Bovich reported our user group balance as \$210.02. Emil reported that he had arranged a new meeting room at the Sierra Vista Public Library. The room will be available for our monthly meetings from 6:00 pm to 8:45 pm. Adjourning our meetings at 8:45 pm is necessary in order to give personnel time to lock down the library. Emil stated that he had needed a new receipt book, which he bought at his own expense.

President's Report. President Ed Laskowski commented on buying airline tickets online, with some tips on how to make last-minute reservations. He commented on our need for membership in APCUG, both for its benefits and as recognition for our users group. He emphasized that all members should make it a point to attend all meetings, since the library was likely to take away our room if our meetings are not well-attended.

USEFUL DOWNLOADS

NxView. Go to www.freeforwindows.com and download the NxViewer, an excellent program for viewing and organizing graphics files.

The Yahoo toolbar for Internet Explorer offers many features, including a pop-up blocker and anti-spyware utilities; get it at: companion.yahoo.com

Sandra diagnostic utility: www.sissoftware.net

OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE

Firefox Browser. Get it at:

www.mozilla.org/products/firefox

Thunderbird E-mail Client. This is a companion to the Firefox web browser. Get it at:

www.mozilla.org/products/thunderbird

Google Toolbar for Firefox: Get this useful utility at:

googlebar.mozdev.org

Map It. Get directions to a destination of your choice at:

www.mapit.mozdev.org

Book Review

Fixing Access Annoyances

By Phil Mitchell & Evan Callahan

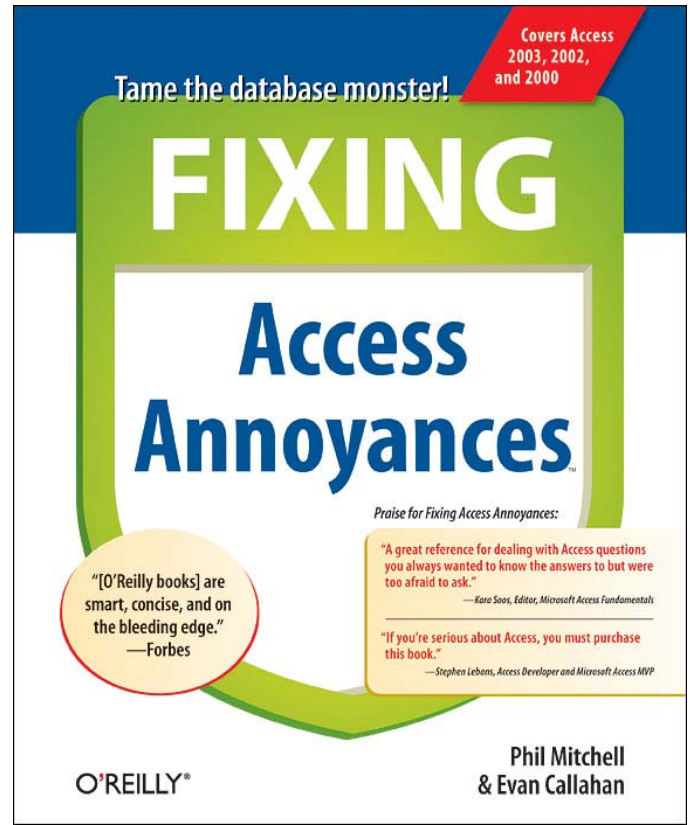
Databases are known as the most challenging applications for the average PC user. Whether you are new to database construction, or are an advanced developer who builds complex applications, *Fixing Access Annoyances* will help untangle the many complexities and idiosyncrasies which you will encounter; you will find fixes here that you can learn nowhere else. The book covers Access 2003, 2002, and 2000, with some commentary and fixes for Access 97 as well.

CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK:

- Chapter 0. Access Basics
- Chapter 1. General Annoyances
- Chapter 2. Performance, Versions, Security, and Deployment
- Chapter 3. Data, Tables, and Database Design
- Chapter 4. Queries
- Chapter 5. Forms
- Chapter 6. Reports, Mailing Labels, and Charts
- Chapter 7. Expressions, Macros, Code Modules, and Custom Controls
- Glossary and Index

Note Chapter 0 above; this is not a mistake. The authors have chosen to call it chapter 0 since there are no fixes given there, but rather a quick overview of the Access program. Starting with chapter one, we are advised to change a number of default settings in the program; how to customize the interface; how to automate tedious chores; and how to write code.

Chapter one starts off with customizing Access. There is a list of six defaults which you should change right away. We then learn about those grayed-out menu items which you will encounter during your work. The authors go on to tell us how to define defaults for Forms, Reports, Tables, Queries, and Datasheets. There is a table of hidden keyboard shortcuts for Design View, and instructions for getting the full list of keyboard shortcuts. We further learn what all those cryptic error messages mean, such as #Name or #Error. The appendix contains a list of Visual Basic functions, Macro Actions, and Events.



I surmise that most home users wishing to catalog a small collection, perhaps of CDs or DVDs, will use the *Database* and *List* features of Excel, which is much easier to master. Extensive inventories, such as might occur in a business, will need the features and power that Access provides.

Conclusions. If you have been bewildered by the Access database, as I have, you will appreciate the value of this book. It explains all those strange behaviors and error messages that occur when using the program. There are countless default settings, procedures, and fixes described to speed your work. This book will be a valuable reference for your work with the Access program. ■ *Ed Lashowski*

Fixing Access Annoyances, by Phil Mitchell and Evan Callahan. From publisher O'Reilly Media Inc., 1005 Gravenstein Hwy North, Sebastopol, CA 95472. The book contains seven chapters in 356 pages, plus an appendix and index. The list price is \$19.95; user group members get a 30% discount. Mention code DSUG when ordering to get the user group discount. Order by phone at 1-800-998-993.

Order by email at order@oreilly.com.

Order on online at www.oreilly.com.

ISBN: 0-596-00852-X

Useful Web Sites

TV & ENTERTAINMENT

*tv.yahoo.com
www.mycity.com
www.allmusic.com
www.disney.com
*www.imdb.com – Movie Reviews
www.seaworld.org--Sea World

SEARCH SITES

www.dmoz.org
www.google.com
www.yahoo.com
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www.gigablast.com
www.altavista.com
www.infoseek.com
www.earthwatch.com

SOFTWARE DOWNLOADS

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www.mozilla.org/products/firefox

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digitalcity.com

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Usairways.com
Cheaptickets.com
Cheapflights.com
TravelTex.com
Lowestfares.com
Travel.yahoo.com

SHOPPING

www.mwave.com
shopper.cnet.com
www.bestbuy.com
www.amazon.com
www.ZipZoomFly.com
www.computergate.com

COMPUTER BOOKS

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www.half.com
*www.amazon.com
www.powells.com
www.wordsworth.com
www.oreilly.com/catalog

PRICE COMPARISONS

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www.bizrate.com
www.dealtime.com
*www.pricewatch.com
www.pricescan.com
*www.mysimon.com
www.shopnow.com
*www.pricegrabber.com
www.smartshop.com
www.bottomdollar.com

POP-UP, AD, & SPYWARE BLOCKERS

www.lavasoftusa.com
www.lavasoft.de
www.zonealarm.com
*toolbar.google.com
www.popupnono.com

REFERENCE

www.refdesk.com/facts.html--general reference.
www.referencedesk.org – general reference.
www.firstgov.gov – federal govt. sites
terraserver.microsoft.com – satellite images.
www.yourdictionary.com – foreign languages.
www.bartleby.com/--grammar and English usage.
www.nsf.gov/--National Science Foundation.
www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook –
countries of the world factbook.
www.jpl.nasa.gov/marsnews--the latest news
about the red planet.

* recommended sites

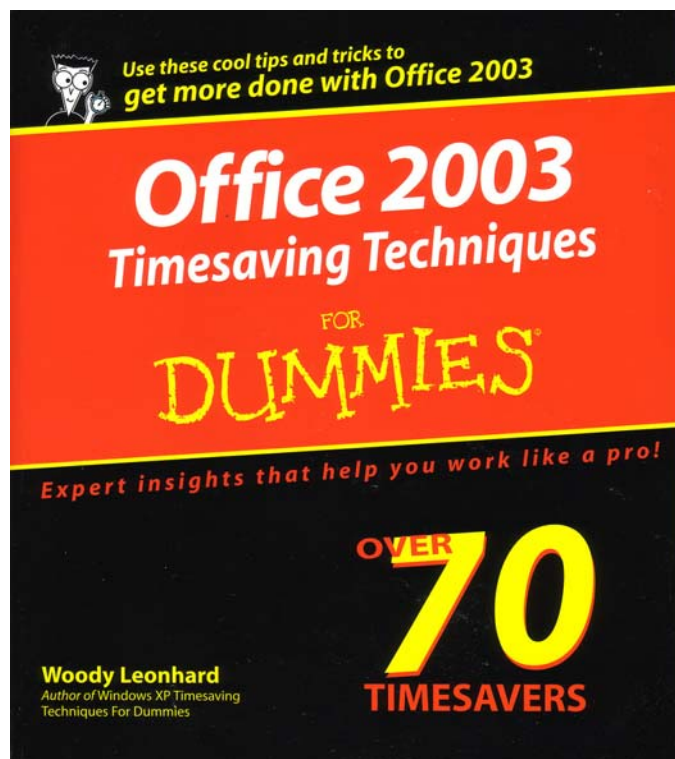
Book Review
Office 2003
Timesaving Techniques
For Dummies
By *Woody Leonhard*

This book is part of a new series from IDG books, with a wider page format, meant to lie flat on the desktop. It provides 72 techniques for improving *Office* performance across the full range of *Office* applications. Author Woody Leonhard describes the situation in the introduction – “Although tamable, the Office beast is getting worse” – at the very least, it is getting more complex, as more and more features are added. Along with the techniques, you will get Woody’s frank commentary on the real value of many Office features, which in some cases is zero. For example, we are advised that – “Office comes loaded with dumb defaults that you should change – immediately.” The recommended changes are then described in the various techniques.

PARTS OF THE BOOK:

- Part I. Knocking Office Into Shape
- Part II. Saving Time with Word
- Part III. Streamlining Outlook
- Part IV. Exploiting Excel
- Part V. Pushing PowerPoint
- Part VI. Assimilating Access
- Part VII. Combining the Applications
- Part VIII. The Scary (or Fun!) Stuff

Each part of the book begins with techniques for customizing and setting the default options. Part I covers settings which span the entire range of Office applications. Technique 10, *Keying Combinations*, covers six pages and includes ten tables. Table 10-7, for example, lists shortcuts for typing accented and other foreign characters – such as the é and ñ. Parts II through VI then cover specific techniques for each application, beginning with Word. Part VII gives techniques for combining data from various applications, for example bringing an Excel spreadsheet into a Word document, or bringing Excel data into the Access database. Part VIII covers assorted techniques which do not fit nicely elsewhere in the book.



A valuable feature of this book is the profuse screen captures, all of which show the recommended defaults and customization options correctly checked. You can therefore simply open the book at your computer, and copy the settings directly from the screen shots. There are many references to online help and resources throughout the book.

Conclusions. Author Woody Leonhard lives up to his reputation as super-expert on Microsoft Office; in addition to the various techniques given, he offers his evaluations and insights into the Office suite. This book is best for intermediate and advanced users. It approaches the Office applications from a different point of view than other tutorials, with great detail for each technique presented, and many screen shots to guide you along the way. You could learn much of this the hard way, by grinding through dialog boxes, or by trial and error; but it is far more efficient to get it straight from the expert.

Ed Laskowski

Office 2003 Timesaving Techniques for Dummies, by Woody Leonhard, from IDG books. The book contains 506 pages in eight parts, and an index. The list price is \$24.99. You can order the book at:

www.dummies.com

ISBN: 0-596-00852-X

Report to the Membership

President Ed Laskowski has completed assembly of his new PC, and has performed a successful initial boot up. Work yet to be done includes installation of the operating system and software. In response to a number of questions from the members, he has provided the following information on the construction, components and cost.

Case: Beige Super-Flower SF-701W ATX case with 450 power supply.

Motherboard: Biostar NF4S, designed for the AMD 64-bit 939 pin processor.

Memory: 4 each 256 MB PC3200 CL 2.5 DIMMs, for a total of 1 GB. All four memory slots on the motherboard are filled.

Processor: AMD 64 3700+ 939-pin, retail box. The retail box came with heat sink, cooling fan, and heat-conducting paste.

CD-ROM drive: A Samsung CD-ROM reader; capable of reading data and audio CDs and CD-Rs.

DVD drive: AOpen combination drive which reads CD-ROM, CD-R, and DVDs; has the capability to write CD-R and CD-RW discs (but not DVDs).

Video Card: Sapphire ATI X500 PCI-e x-16 video card, with 256 MB DDR2 memory.

Floppy drive. Standard floppy drive.

SATA hard drive: 200 GB, Maxtor.

IDE hard drive: 80 GB Maxtor.

Cooling Fan: 120 mm fan at back of case.

Savings. An often-asked question is whether there is a cost savings when building a PC. Ed tells us that the cost savings on this configuration was about \$400.00. This does not allow any costs for assembly work, which would wipe out all savings (he values his labor at \$40.00/ hour).

Advantages. President Ed Laskowski indicated that he built the PC not so much for cost savings, but rather to control the quality of the components used, and also to control the software which will be installed. He further points out that the case is sufficiently large to allow for installation of additional components at a later time, if needed. He further points out that this is a 64-bit system, so it will be ready for operating systems and applications likely to come in the near future.

Fit. President Ed Laskowski made clear that many frustrations can be encountered in building your own system—one is that parts can require hand-fitting, such as filing, trimming, and cutting, to fit things into place.

Risks. The president pointed this a downside to building: most components used in the construction have a warranty of 30 days, which in most cases expired long before assembly was complete. The only exception is the CPU, which is guaranteed by AMD for three years from date of purchase. In contrast, a computer purchased from a retailer is ready to go right out of the box, and can be tested immediately.

COST	
Case and Power Supply:	\$46.14
Motherboard + 512 MB RAM:	\$112.17
AMD 64 3700+ CPU:	\$212.00
Additional 512 MB memory and case fan:	\$48.72
CDROM +CD-RW/DVD drive:	\$60.05
SATA hard drive:	\$96.13
IDE hard drive:	\$51.00
Floppy drive:	\$6.50
Video Card:	\$76.29
TOTAL	\$709.00

SUPPLIERS	
Case from Directron.com	
Motherboard and Memory from Mwave.com	
CD-ROM and DVD drives from Computergate.com	
Processor from ZipZoomFly.com	
(Components were chosen mainly for performance, with cost also being considered.)	

Problems. (1) A problem encountered on boot up was that neither the CD-ROM nor the DVD drives were recognized by the system BIOS—the reason—both drives set as Master. Setting one drive as Slave solved this. (2) no power-on light on the front case—the reason—reversed connector on the motherboard; switching it solved the problem.

Conclusions. The president indicated that this was a successful building project. He pointed out that you have to like this sort of thing to make it worthwhile—with competitive prices for PCs at retailers like Best Buy, Circuit City, and CompUSA, you might well prefer to buy. ■ *The editor.*

Reviewing Software

Since we now are now receiving a goodly number of reviews we thought it useful to publish some guidelines. We request you limit your review or general article to a maximum of 1300 words, and book reviews to 600 words. As far the minimum is concerned, we would like to do justice to any product that is reviewed. A \$300 software package deserves close to 1300 words, while a low cost program might rate 400 words or less. Use your discretion.

Word 95, 97, or 2000 file formats work well; also Lotus WordPro (all versions); WordPerfect 7, 8, or 2000 for Windows; also WordPad for Windows. If you do not use any of these, save your file in text format (TXT). For paragraph headings, use **Bolds**; for emphasis use *Italics*; avoid underlining if at all possible. Reserve CAPS for computer commands or filenames.

Please spell check and grammar check your article. Try not to include columns, tabs, indents, justification, hyphens or formatting codes. These features are almost never imported properly, with the result that more editing is required. Use standard filename extensions when naming your file.

While we don't want to reduce our reviews to a formula, you should make certain that at least the basics are there: name and version of the program, system requirements, installation procedure, and other software that may be required. Describe the major features of the program and how well they worked. Describe new or unexpected features of the program and your reaction. Finish with some conclusions and recommendations. State any special offers to club members, with an address and phone number for ordering the package. Attach your file to an email message and send it to the editor by Internet.

We can take care of the mechanics of writing (spelling, punctuation, and grammar), but the style, content, and organization of your article is up to you. A final request: read your article over when you are done—ask yourself “is this how I really want this to read?” If you are satisfied, then so are we. ■

Review Software

Developers expect to have their products reviewed within 90 days of receipt, or sooner if possible. This means a published review in the newsletter 90 days after you receive the package, or completing the review within 70 days, to allow time for the editors to bring the review into the newsletter. Of course, the sooner you complete a review the better, since a lot of software has a shelf life of only a few months, whereupon it becomes obsolescent. A condition now being imposed by developers: no additional software packages will be made available for review until the extant one has been completed. We believe this is a fair practice.

In keeping with our commitment to the developers, we do not sell or auction any review software, and observe all copyright restrictions. We try hard to complete reviews ASAP. We are open to comments on our reviews and will print corrections if necessary. Our group has generally lived up to its commitments. ■

PC Components

Editor Ed Laskowski has available a number of spare PC Components, which can be used for troubleshooting by our members. These include a video card, modem, ribbon cables, mouse and keyboard. While these components are obsolescent, they can be used to isolate a failed component in your system. For example, if you suddenly find you do not have a readable screen, you can borrow the VGA video card and plug it in. Once you determine the problem, you can buy a suitable replacement. You can borrow these items by calling 378-6828.

**SIERRA VISTA
IBM PC
USERS GROUP**