

WHITE HORSE VILLAGE

Computer Group Sep-Oct 2010

Simplifying the Lives of Web Browsers

David Pogue, technical contributor to the NY Times offers the following to simplify our Web browsing -- the magic wand is a free service called OpenDNS.

You know how every Web site has an address, like www.google.com or www.nytimes.com? That's just to make it user friendly. Behind the scenes, the actual address is a string of numbers (called an I.P. address, for Internet protocol) that looks something like this: 74.125.53.100. (Google's address.) Nobody can remember those addresses, though they are no longer than a phone number, so the Web's thoughtful designers came up with a secondary system: plain-English addresses like www.whatever.com. When you type that into your browser, a computer at your Internet provider performs a quick lookup that automatically connects you to 74.125.53.100. That, in a nutshell, is how D.N.S. works. (i. e., **Domain Name System**.)

OpenDNS, a one-of-a-kind company has come up with an approach that provides a free, alternative D.N.S. service that works better than your Internet provider's. It's faster, more reliable and has more features. You don't pay anything, sign up for anything or install anything. All you have to do is make one change to your network settings, and you get all of these benefits:

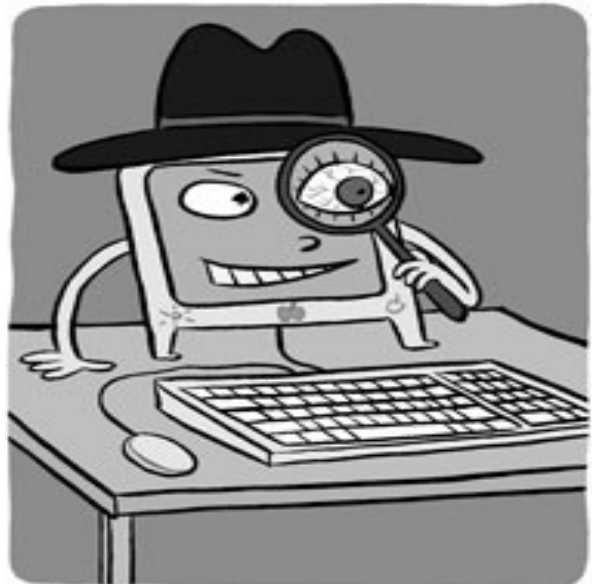
FASTER PAGES To speed up the conversion of plain-English addresses to numeric ones, every Internet provider caches, or preloads, the addresses of thousands of the most popular Web sites. This trick can save you microseconds or fractions of seconds with every page you open. When you visit a site that's not on that "most popular" list, though, you may wait a bit. OpenDNS caches the entire Web. Every Web site appears slightly faster.

NO D.N.S. CRASHES The company claims that in its five-year history, its D.N.S. computers have had zero downtime. A similar feature called SmartCache lets you pull up individual Web sites even when, because of broken addresses, they are unavailable to everyone else

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A Teaser

By Joe Spampinato



For those of you who like a challenge and like to solve problems, I am borrowing a page from NPR's Car Talk, and am including a thorny computer problem that I have encountered. I hope to include one in every Newsletter issue. See if you can figure out how this problem was eventually solved.

At one of my other volunteer activities, repair of Talking Books for the Blind, we use a common computer to enter data on the machines we have worked on, identifying serial number, parts replaced, and any special work performed. We all make liberal use of the numerical keypad to enter the numbers.

One day, for no apparent reason, the keypad no longer worked (the other keys were OK). After checking all the software and bios settings and finding nothing wrong, another keyboard was tried, but the problem remained. A new keyboard was purchased, but this didn't work either.

The problem festered for weeks, until our computer expert accidentally stumbled on the solution and made the original keyboard fully operational again. Can you figure out what he did?

See page 5 for the answer.

Digital Photo Alphabet Soup Explained

What's the Difference Between JPG, GIF, PNG, TIFF and RAW?

Now that digital cameras have almost totally replaced film and many of us are using our computers to process the pictures, we are encountering file formats like JPG, GIF, PNG, TIFF and RAW. The first four have become the most common, but what sets them apart from each other and from RAW?

In short:

- JPG is still the king for photographs and photo-like images on the internet, but be careful, as your file can degrade with every save.
- GIF is largely a novelty and only useful for animation, but can produce small 8-bit images.
- PNG is good option for transparency and non-lossy, smaller files. Larger files, not so much, unless you demand non-lossy images.
- TIFF is the format of choice for Apple/MAC users and graphic artists
- RAW is the unprocessed format available in high-end cameras, the equivalent of a film negative

These formats have become the most popular because of their compatibility with modern browsers, broadband speeds, and the needs of average users. Here is a detailed look at each format, and the strengths and weaknesses of each.

JPG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) files have become the de facto standard image of the internet because they can be compressed so much. Particularly back in the days of dial-up internet, JPGs were the only viable way to send image information. The filetype was originally developed to be a standard for professional photographers. JPG compression has the unfortunate side effect of being permanent, however, as the technology for the file was created for storing large photographic image files in surprisingly small spaces, and not for photo editing.

Because of the lossy* nature of JPG, it is not an ideal way to store art files. Even the highest quality setting for JPG is compressed, and will change the look of your image, if only slightly. This loss can accumulate—saving multiple versions of artwork can cause degradation with every save. Even so, it is common to see these things saved as JPG, simply because the filetype is so ubiquitous.

* **"lossy" compression** is a data encoding method which discards (loses) some of the data

Alphabet Soup, continued.

GIF (Graphics Interchange Format), like JPG, is an older filetype, and one generally associated with the internet as opposed to photography. GIF stands for "Graphics Interchange Format" and employs the same lossless compression that TIFF images use. Because of this non-lossy format, GIF can be used to keep tight lines on typography and geometric shapes. **However, GIF is not ideal for modern photography, nor image storage.**

PNG (Portable Network Graphics) was developed as an open alternative to GIF. PNG is an excellent filetype for internet graphics, as it supports transparency in browsers with an elegance that GIF does not possess. PNG supports 8-bit color like GIF, but also supports 24-bit color RGB, like JPG does. They are also non-lossy files, compressing photographic images without degrading image quality. PNG tends to be the biggest of the three filetypes and isn't supported by some (usually older) browsers. [The non-lossy nature of 24-bit PNG is ideal for screenshot software, allowing pixel for pixel reproduction of your desktop environment.](#)

TIFF (Tagged Image File Format) is a file format for storing images, popular among Apple Macintosh owners, graphic artists, the publishing industry, and both amateur and professional photographers in general. As of 2009, it is under the control of Adobe Systems. Originally created for use with what was then called "desktop publishing", [the TIFF format is widely supported by image-manipulation applications, by publishing and page layout applications, by scanning, faxing, word processing, optical character recognition and other applications.](#) TIFF has not had a major update since 1992.

RAW - A **raw image file** contains minimally processed data from the image sensor of either a digital camera, image scanner, or motion picture film scanner. Raw files are so named because they are not yet processed and therefore are not ready to be printed or edited with a bitmap graphics editor. Like a photographic negative, a raw digital image may have a wider dynamic range or color gamut than the eventual final image format, and it preserves most of the information of the captured image. This gives photographers much more freedom to manipulate images. **Because the images are uncompressed, RAW files are very large, and require correspondingly large capacity camera cards and significant computer memory space.**

Computer Group Website Enhancements— How Gregg



Our Computer Group Website has undergone a major upgrade with the recent shift in our organization. Our bi-monthly newsletter has become a strictly online offering to reduce costs and manpower required. Contact with new residents and potential members has been simplified

with the addition of a New Resident page to the website. Some personal services have been changed or curtailed. For example, assistance to Residents in selecting and purchase of new computer systems is now spelled out on the newsletter Help page. Obtaining Anti-Virus Software and installing CCleaner is also covered there. To assist in the shift to added content on the webpage, a video tutorial has been added on the Welcome page. The lineup of page content is as follows:

WELCOME – Page link content description and photo links to movies from Channel 14

OUR CHARTER - Computer Group Charter

MEETING SCHEDULE - This year's schedule

MESSAGE BOARD – A Message Board

TUTORIALS – Computer Group presentations

NEWSLETTER – Enlarged font, full color

COMPUTER STATIONS - A description on library's computer work stations

INTERNET ACCESS - Information on Internet Service available and the Clubhouse Wireless Network

ADVISORY COMMITTEE - Information on the Computer Group Advisory Committee

HELP COMMITTEE - Table of committee member help available, information on computer purchase and installing CCleaner and AVG antivirus software

LINKS - Listings of Internet links of local interest

RESIDENT LOCATOR - Campus Overview and residential area maps

NEW RESIDENTS - Information of interest to new residents and registering with the group

CLUBHOUSE CHART - Location map with legend for all the activity areas

Computer Repair in Florida



The technician said: ... *'It must have been after the mouse!'*... The woman didn't think it was very funny at all!

Speaking of Mice —

- > **Caller:** *Hi, our printer is not working.*
- > **Customer Service:** *What is wrong with it?*
- > **Caller:** *Mouse is jammed.*
- > **Customer Service:** *Mouse? ... Printers don't have a mouse!!!*
- > **Caller:** *Mmmm??... Oh really? ... I will send a picture.*



Notable Quotes

"Truthiness': the truth we want, in our gut, to exist, without regard to evidence, logic, intellectual examination, or facts."

Stephen Colbert

"Just remember, it's not a lie if you believe it."

George Costanza on 'Seinfeld'

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor Emeritus:

Euan Hooper

Editor Pro-Tem & HELP! Committee:

Joe Spampinato

HELP! Activities:

Arlene Flick

Publicity & Meetings:

Marty Shane

Distribution:

Joe Spampinato

Please send material for the newsletter to:

joenpat40@comcast.net

and visit our Website at:

www.whitehorsevillage.net/

HELP ACTIVITIES

Arlene Flick



MORE IMPROVEMENTS TO OUR WEBSITE!

Go to the WHV Computer Group Website at:
www.whitehorsevillage.net

For the latest progress,
photographs, and narrated videos
on the WHV construction

AND

Tutorials on computer topics,
and past Newsletter issues and presentations.

Our HELP! Committee needs Help

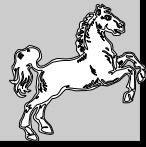
One of our objectives has always been to have our members spread around the campus so that all computer users have a nearby helper. You can see from the listing of HELP! Committee members on the next page that while Danzig is well represented **we are seriously short of helpers in Gardens, Woodlands, Kelso, Ascot and Belmont.** The more helpers we have the less of a burden for each of us.

Please contact Joe Spampinato at
484-422-8195

If you would like to help out.

The HELP! COMMITTEE, Chair JOE SPAMPINATO

HELPER!	Court	phone	email address
Villas		610-558-	
<i>Don Surr</i>	V140 Alydar	1243	donald.surr@gmail.com
<i>Jim Calkins</i>	V159 Alydar	6862	jbcalkins@verizon.net
<i>BettyJo McCarthy</i>	V161 Danzig	4940	dbjmcarthy@verizon.net
<i>Arlene Flick</i>	V168 Danzig	0732	ajaflk@verizon.net
<i>Pete Lee</i>	V188 Danzig	0130	cpetelee31@comcast.net
<i>Pete Thompson (MAC)</i>	V197 Damascus	2167	pthomps1@swarthmore.edu
Gardens			
<i>Martin Myers</i>	G127 Garden	1809	jmmyers@alumni.princeton.edu
Saratoga			
<i>Marsh Nelsen</i>	S110 Saratoga	610-361-8607	saratoga110@comcast.net
Woodlands			
Joe Spampinato (CHAIR)	W116 Woodlands	484-422-8195	joenpat40@comcast.net



WHITE HORSE VILLAGE

Computer Group

MONTHLY MEETINGS

All are welcome!

Tue Oct 26rd at 10:30 am: *Q&A Program conducted by How Gregg & Joe Spampinato.*

Tue Nov 23rd at 10:30 am: **Bob Curley:** *"Things my customers ask me every day"*

December: NO MEETING

Tue Jan 25th at 10:30 am: To Be Announced

**ALL MEETINGS TO BE HELD IN THE
WHV AUDITORIUM**

Note: If there is some particular computer subject you would like us to cover at our monthly meetings, please let us know and we will try to accommodate it. Notify How Gregg at howgregg@verizon.net or Joe Spampinato at joenpat40@comcast.net.

Simplifying the lives of Web browsers,
continued from page 1

TYPO CORRECTIONS As long as OpenDNS is inserting itself between you and the Web, it can do you some favors. One is correcting typos in the address 3-letter suffix. If you type "nytimes.cmo" or "wikipedia.og," for example, OpenDNS quietly and instantly corrects the typo and sends you where you wanted to go.

PHISHING PROTECTION Phishing is the Internet scheme where you get a fake e-mail note from your bank about a problem with your account. When you click the link to correct the problem, you get a fake Web site, designed to look just like your bank's — and by logging in, you unwittingly supply your name and password to the bad guys. OpenDNS intercepts and blocks your efforts to visit the fake sites.

PLEASE NOTE: *If you do not wish to receive this Newsletter, or if you know others who would like to receive it, please tell me at joenpat40@comcast.net or leave a message at 484 422-8195. The latest and preceding newsletters are available on our website. If someone you know at WHV has difficulty in accessing this online version, please let me know so that we can provide assistance.*

SHORTCUTS Web address shortcuts are short, memorable abbreviations for your favorite sites. You can set up "nyt" so that, when you type it into your address bar, you go to a much longer Web address like <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/todayspaper/index.html>.

PARENTAL CONTROLS The latest OpenDNS feature is site-blocking. Here again, having an account means that you can create a setting that applies to every computer in the house — and block your choice of 57 categories of Web sites, including Pornography, Nudity, Lingerie, Instant Messaging, File Sharing, Game and Humor (?).

All of this is free, automatic and always improving.

The biggest realistic challenge may be setting up OpenDNS in the first place. It involves typing two addresses into the D.N.S. settings page of your computer or router: 208.67.222.222 and 208.67.220.220. That new address directs your computers' Web requests to OpenDNS's lookup service. Go to OpenDNS.com for step-by-step instructions that take all of two minutes to complete.

If you have a local network with multiple computers, it's much smarter and quicker to make the change on your router. At OpenDNS.com, you'll find illustrated instructions for each router brand.

The above is an abridged version of an article by David Pogue in the August 18, 2010 NY Times.

Answer to Teaser on Page 1

(This may be particularly relevant for those of us who let our children and grandchildren have free access to our computers.)

One day, our computer guy happened to notice that, while the keyboard keypad did not yield numbers when pressed, certain keys (2, 4, 6 and 8) caused the pointer to move. This prompted him to look at "Making the Keyboard Easier to Use" under Windows "Ease of Access" features. He found that the feature called "Mouse Keys" had been turned on. This option allows the numeric keypad instead of the mouse to move the cursor. In the process, it also disables the keypad's numeric function.

After he de-selected the Mouse Keys option, we had full keypad functionality once again.

To date, no one has owned up to making the change. We have our suspicions.