

## VI.

### *Today's Interesting Websites*

<http://www.bookcrossing.com> This site is for book lovers who would rather give their books away to a complete stranger than recycle them

### **Working at Home**

Here's a guide to creating a slick, modern, low-cost home office.

- 1) We begin with the **computer** - the linchpin to setting up a home office and has always been a major investment. Just a few years ago, a strong computer was as much as \$5K - now you can buy a powerful computer and accessories for significantly under \$1,000. Try free antivirus programs like AVG at <http://free.avg.com> – check your Windows security at <http://www.microsoft.com/security/default.aspx> For spam-guarding email, try Spamfighter (standard) at <http://spamfighter.com> . Instead of Office, try Open Office at <http://openoffice.org>

### **LabWork**

Pretend you have \$1,000. Use your newly honed search skills to put together the best package for a computer, monitor, scanner or printer (and any other peripherals you think you need.

Remember, if someone needs a beefed-up computer, they already know it. They are probably gamers or graphics producers or manipulators of huge databases. Just about anything in the market will do nicely for us mainstream Americans because the core chips are so vastly more powerful than the software sold for them. So it is difficult to find an underpowered computer. .

Look for the following: the most RAM you can afford (at least 2 GB); at least a 14 in. display; a DVD-RW drive if you want to burn disks as well as view them; at least 3 USB inputs; and if a laptop, at least a battery with a proscribed life of 5 hours.

**Printer:** a home-use black & white laser printer is very affordable. Home color printers are inexpensive but the ink cartridges are not.

**Scanner:** If money is tight - you can probably get away with just a computer and printer. But if you can afford another piece of equipment - make it a scanner. Some do the work of several machines – allowing you scan documents or photos or fax things. I would recommend your consideration of a flatbed scanner so you can scan pages from books, newspapers and other materials that don't fit into a sheet feeder. They're cheap.

**Setup** – the furniture. Pretend you have \$500. Use your search skills to pick furniture and accessories for your home office.

Match furniture to work style - do you **pile up, spread out or file away** as you work? - spreaders need long flat tables, filers need horizontal storage, pilers need tall spaces. Eliminate clutter - biggest mistake home officers do is keep too much - have a specific place to put papers when they come in rather than just set them in piles. Use staking bins - for incoming, filing and reading. Buy comfortable furniture - chairs with arms, casters, five points on the floor, good lumbar support, right height for your body. Good chairs aren't cheap though - \$130-300.

**Networking:** One third of US homes have two or more computers, but few (6%) go to the trouble of connecting them.

### **Ways to Network**

Wired Ethernet: Cheap, speedy, wired connections, Need one network adaptor and one cable per computer and a hub or switch to connect everything. Bad: wires everywhere.

Wi-Fi: 802.11b,a,g,n. etc – Need one wireless network adaptor per computer, wireless access point. Bad: security defaults, interoperability between standards.

HomePNA: Uses existing phone line. Need one adapter per computer, USB port, access to phone line for each device. Bad: works on only one line.

HomePlug: Powerline- uses existing power lines. One adapter per computer with bulky wall plug. Simple to install. No extra wiring or construction costs. Bad: affected by power line disturbances like when dishwasher is on. Slow. Unsecure. Wireless is better option..

Bluetooth: Short Range (30 ft.) wireless. Fairly slow. Cost varies. Need Bluetooth-enabled device or card. Bad: conflict with Wi-Fi.

**Automating the home:** Browse the gadgets at <http://www.smarthome.com> – features web cams, motion detectors, operating appliances, entertainment systems, utilities. <http://www.x10.com> – not a brand name, but a tech. spec. Starter kits let you automate 4-5 lamps .

**Access your PC from anywhere** Login to GoToMyPC.com and you can read your email, open files, run programs and operate your PC as if you were sitting at it for fees starting at \$15 per month.

Try DropBox online storage: Search the name

Make conference calls for free at <http://www.freeconference.com/>

Use Skype. Consider GIMP for photo editing: <http://gimp.org> or Audacity for audio editing: <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>

Avoid waiting in lines for **stamps**. <http://www.Stamps.com>

Your personal assistant: <http://www.rememberthemilk.com>

Online office applications are growing in sophistication. Google offers **Google Docs**. Microsoft offer web versions of certain Office apps like Office 365

**Also needed:** a USB key that unlocks a PC and transparently handles hard drive encryption, network encryption and passwords (like a car key). An email filter that blacklists languages. An automatic 2 – minute delay on outgoing email; laptop of the future with a full-size keyboard, and usable projector (virtual) screen and box with slots. Personal version control for docs. Automatic local backup on encrypted external storage. One-click cleanup where hard-drive image returns to an absolutely-known state. Voice recognition that recognizes Stop, Go Back. A smart credit card for travel expenses. A high-impact-resistant, waterproof phone.

**Get work** – Now look for ways of getting paid to use your home office.

Check out <https://www.upwork.com/> or <http://www.guru.com>, <http://www.sologig.com>, <http://www.aquent.com> and try to find a category where your skills match a need. All leverage the web's key strengths - its ability to meet a unique need by matching buyers of service with sellers.

Network at <http://linkedin.com>

<http://crowdspring.com> takes a slightly different bent , offering projects as contests to be won. See also Amazon's <http://mturk.com> for mini-projects, and <http://indeed.com> for other job-based work.

The relatively low cost of 'setting up shop' on the Internet has spurred development of informational websites which often do not charge casual users – they must add something of value that people will pay for – distinct enough as well to garner attention in a niche. See ideas at <http://sba.gov/deliveringsuccess>

Supplement your 'real world' job with one of these:

<http://www.ejury.com> and [onlineverdict.com](http://onlineverdict.com) collect feedback on court cases from virtual jurors.

Can you type well? Try audio transcription at <http://www.productiontranscripts.com> and <http://www.tigerfish.com>