System Tools & Software for Every Computer Lab
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Computers need the appropriate software and routine maintenance if they are to enhance an organization's productivity; in a computer lab setting, these factors can make the difference between success and failure. While good software is critical, it can also be expensive. Since after-school providers and non-profit organizations are often on a very limited budget, the software complement on their computers tends to be similarly constrained.

The following is a very short list of software that should be on every computer; after each category, I list a few links to sites with quality freeware that addresses the particular need. This list is by no means exhaustive, nor is it necessarily the best software out there- it's just somewhere for you to start. If you need a utility or software program that isn't on the list, just go searching for it- it's probably out there somewhere!

Did I mention that it's free?

- **Spyware Blocker**
  SpyBot S&D is a handy program that searches for and removes adware & spyware from your PC; in addition, it also has the capability to actively block spyware it recognizes from running on your system. If you've got kids in your lab surfing the 'Web, then you definitely want to consider this program.
  http://www.safer-networking.org/en/download/
  .
- **Antivirus**
  In the interests of controlling the spread of computer viruses, Avast! makes the home version of their antivirus scanner freely available for download. You will, however, need to occasionally re-register in order to download program and virus database updates.
  http://www.avast.com/eng/avast_4_home.html

- **Benchmark**
  These programs allow you to gauge how fast (or slow) your computer is; this information is relayed to you via a numeric rating and/or a scale which shows the performance of common CPU (central processing unit- the "brain" of your computer) types (i.e., a Pentium III 700 MHz . This can come in quite handy when you've acquired donated computers and need to find out how well they really perform. If you benchmark your lab before opening, it also gives you another way of telling when a computer is having problems and needs to be worked on. (NOTE: The last link leads to a LARGE file; do not choose it unless you have a high-speed connection!)
  http://www.softpedia.com/get/System/Benchmarks/CPUMark.shtml
  http://www.freshdevices.com/benchmark_software.html
  http://www.softpedia.com/progDownload/AMD-NBench-Download-1925.html

- **File Compression Utility**
  If you're downloading files or archiving your own, you're likely to need a file compression utility at some point. WinZip is one of the most popular; it's been around for a long time and

can handle most of the file formats you're likely to encounter. WinZip 9 and 10 have "seamless" integration with Windows (you can access WinZip from Windows Explorer by using the right-click menu, etc.). 7-zip isn't as well known, but handles some file types that WinZip doesn't.
http://www.winzip.com/
http://www.7-zip.org/

- **Metasearch Engine**
Have you ever noticed how your search engine results differ depending on which engine you're using? Copernic Agent is a meta-search engine, a program that accesses multiple search engines at once to give you more comprehensive results. In addition, it can be used to search
http://www.copernic.com/

- **Hard Drive Defragmentation/Disk Cleanup**
Windows includes utilities for disk defragmentation and cleanup, but this site lists other options for those who don't like the built-in versions.
http://www.freewarefind.com/archives/disk_cleanup.html

- **Office Productivity Software** (word processor, spreadsheet, presentation, etc.)
Quoted from the web site- "OpenOffice.org the product is a multi-platform office productivity suite. It includes the key desktop applications, such as a word processor, spreadsheet, presentation manager, and drawing program, with a user interface and feature set similar to other office suites. Sophisticated and flexible, OpenOffice.org also works transparently with a variety of file formats, including those of Microsoft Office. Available in over 45 supported languages with more being constantly added by the community, OpenOffice.org runs stably and natively on Solaris, Linux (including PPC Linux), Windows, Mac OS X (X11), and numerous other platforms. Our porting page lists the platforms (ports) that OpenOffice.org can run on."
http://www.openoffice.org/index.html

- **Web Browser**
Firefox is an alternative to Internet Explorer; it offers a number of functions that IE does not, such as tabbed browsing, built-in search and pop-up blocker, customizability. There's also Thunderbird for those of you looking for a replacement for Microsoft Outlook. Firefox is definitely worth trying out!
http://www.mozilla.org/products/firefox/

- **USB Flash Drive Applications**
With the advent of USB Flash Drives, it was just a matter of time until applications were created for them; now, you can carry OpenOffice, Firefox, and many other applications on your portable memory device (1GB versions are currently available for $70) and run them from there. It's almost like having your own laptop without having to lug it around. The InfoBox link leads to a collection of freeware programs that the author assembled for download to a 512MB flash drive; in the works is a "lite" version that will fit on smaller drives. If you're like me, you'll find the utility and productivity programs alone worth the download!

http://www.theinfobox.com/index.php/Portable_USB_Apps

http://www.usbapps.com/

http://www.portablefreeware.com/

- **Internet Filters**

  Naomi is a filtering application that actively scans the content of files viewed on the Internet. Because of this, it can block content adaptively rather than being forced to rely on a list of trusted or objectionable sites. This feature can make monitoring Web usage less time-consuming and challenging than having to define or download such lists.
  http://www.radiance.m6.net/index.html

  B Gone relies on keywords that appear in a webpage's caption (the description that appears at the top of the web browser window) to filter web content.
  http://support.it-mate.co.uk/?mode=Products&p=bgone