Digital Cameras Blossom as Popularity Increases

Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; radio & TV show host

Much to no one's surprise, the popularity of digital cameras is exploding, as the quality improves even more, and the cameras become more affordable. Digital photography, which was initially slow, grainy, and sometimes difficult to manipulate has matured, and is now nearly universal. With the dramatic improvements in digital camera and storage technology in recent years, much of what early adopters of digital photography experienced has changed for the better.

Sitting in front of me as I type this column are two digital cameras, each of which are representative of the respective technology of the day. One of the cameras is a JVC GC-S1U which is about 5 years old, and when it was new it was considered a technological marvel and state of the art in its day, but by today's standards, while still functional, is technologically obsolete. One of the first digital still cameras available, it has a .3 (that is 3/10) of a megapixel image of 640x480 pixels, which is miniscule by today's standards. It takes 4 AA batteries, which are good for only a few dozen photos before they are exhausted, even less if the integral flash is used. Reviews of the day used the expression that this camera "eats batteries". One of the first cameras on the market to take a memory card, it uses the now large format by current standards CF or Compact Flash card for additional photo storage. Connecting to the computer via a very slow serial connection made photos slow to download, unless an external card reader was used to read the CF card. One feature that this antique camera has, that is still impressive by today's standards is a 10x optical zoom. The processor in the camera is horribly slow by today's standards, with a noticeable lag between pressing the shutter and capturing the image, along with a long delay for a follow up snapshot.

The newer digital cameras on the market clearly show the technological improvements that have become commonplace. New digital cameras come in a wide assortment of

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Tips for reviewers: Why does anyone need it? Why did you like it or hate it? Ease (or difficulty) of installation, learning and use. Would you pay for it?

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From The DealsGuy

Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group.

Want some trivia? We worked a trade show called Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation and Education Conference [*http://www.iitsec.org*] which is mostly a military show. Attendees include many high ranking military officers and even congressmen. There were some army vehicles including a training tank on display in the show. I saw a booth with all kinds of concave and warped type mirrors in it, but didn't hear their uses. This was a place to see cutting edge technology, but I don't have enough room here for the most interesting booths and there is probably limited interest in my trade show experiences. Primarily, the widest technology covered was simulation machines of all kinds all over the show floor. Unfortunately, I was unable to find time to try any of them. You name it, there was a simulator.

A reporter for the Orlando Sentinel wrote about talking to the CEO of a simulation company (VirTra Systems) with offices in Denver and Phoenix who mentioned that he intended to move his operation to Central Florida in sixty days. [*http://www.virtrasystems.com*] He stated "you've got to be here if you're in the simulation industry." Here is the trivia; the reporter said that central Florida is home to more than 140 simulation companies and they employ, directly or indirectly, over 17,000 people. Who would have thought that since this is assumed to be only an amusement park paradise. Another reporter for the Money section wrote about the competition for skilled employees all over central Florida by companies based here.

I knew there were lots of companies oriented toward all kinds of electronics engineering here including a dozen laser light companies, many companies that provide engineering and manufacturing for the computer industry and many other high tech industries, but not about the simulation industry.

*It's All About The Squeaky Wheel

I was in line at Staples early Friday morning after Thanksgiving for some specials, but too far back to get all but one, a 512 meg USB Flash Drive for $19.95 before a ten dollar mail-in rebate. That night, I plugged it into the hub I always use and it gave me an error, but after a couple of minutes, it worked OK. However, soon another message told me there was not enough power from the hub and to plug it into the computer directly. I did that and still got an error message, but it worked after a couple minutes and I could write to it. I have several USB flash drives and have never had that problem using that hub so I wanted to return it to Staples for an exchange. The manager told me he would not exchange it at that price and that I would have to take the problem up with PNY who made it. When I insisted it was not right since that was the only one I had the problem with, he said I would have to pay the difference between the sale price and the posted price if I wanted another one, so I gave up.

When I got home, I called PNY whose tech support took an indifferent attitude about it and said there was nothing wrong with it if it would eventually work. However, he did finally admit that some might work better than others, not that there would be anything wrong. I then called Staples Corporate office, and was transferred to the President's office of customer relations who was sorry to hear what had happened at the Staples store, and apologized saying "that is not the way we do business" and kept me on the line while calling the store. When he returned, he said the manager was "apologetic" and assured me they would exchange my unit for a new one, which that manager had stated they did not have when I was in the store earlier for an exchange.

Returning to the Staples store for the exchange, nobody seemed to know about it, but after my insistence, a lady went looking for the one they would hold for me. When she finally returned several minutes later, she did indeed have one and the exchange was short and sweet, but cool ("here"). The squeaky wheel syndrome worked. The new flash drive worked just fine, even in the hub, as I thought it would. I have since read that it is not recommended to use Flash drives in a hub, but I have used as many as two at one time in my hub, even with the power for it unplugged, with no problem because it is much easier than plugging them into the computer.

*Time To Do Your Taxes

Remember that you can find out where the AARP volunteers are working on income taxes and get yours done there absolutely free, except under certain circumstances. It is admirable that those folks work for free on your behalf when they are actually mostly professional people who are taking time off from their normal job to help us. On the other hand, you can go to [*http://www.taxact.com*] and download Second Story Software's free version of Tax Act for doing your own tax return. It will pester you to upgrade to the paid version while you are inputting data, but it will still do yours free and will now also do the e-file for you free. Personally, I use the Deluxe version because I like the price at $12.95, and it includes other very helpful features, one of which saves time on data input if you used it last year (important to me).

Judy Taylour from APCUG notified most member user groups that Second Story Software will offer user group members a discount for purchasing Tax Act products. I can't include the procedure here because they don't want it posted on the Web, but I believe the Deluxe version would be just $9.95. Simply contact your group's APCUG rep for the procedure for downloading Tax Act to the discounted shopping cart. Double check the prices including the Ultimate Bundle, depending on whether you need the state version or not.

*Build Your Own Web Site For Free!

A friend, who said he had not tried it himself, but that it was well recommended, referred this Web Site freebie for me to try. I have not downloaded it yet, but hope to check it out one of these days. I was a bit skeptical when I was told that one professional Webmaster chose it over the high end product he was already using, but what's to lose when it's free? Check out [*http://www.nvu.com/*] and see if it is anything you might like. They have versions for Windows, Mac and Linux, making it pretty versatile. They say they are supported by Linspire and encourage you to support Linspire products.

"It's Impossible…"

Robert Hawes (r_d_hawes@hotmail.com), ACGNJ

Once upon a time there was a genius. Maybe one of the greatest geniuses who ever lived; Sir Isaac Newton. The argument can be made that just about everything technological that we do today is based in some way upon his work. I'm not going to defend that statement rigorously, but it feels right to me. Having said that, I'll now make a seemingly pointless digression into TV trivia. In an episode of the 70's "Bob Newhart" show, Howard (one of the secondary characters) was desperately trying to impress his date. They were at the airport where he worked, and suddenly an announcement came over the PA system that went something like; "Navigator Howard Borden, report to the Control Tower immediately. We have a problem **only you** can solve". (I have a memory that can still recall stuff like this after thirty-some years, but it's just not quite good enough to get the quote exactly right). The point is, Newton had a problem he was never able to solve. In the three centuries since, nobody else has been able to solve it, either. It's called the Three Body Problem.

Now, Newton was working on celestial mechanics, using his inverse square law of gravity to investigate the motions of the Sun, the Earth and the Moon. However, the problem can be stated in a more general way. If we postulate a gravitational system containing only two bodies, we can use Newton's equations to predict the exact locations and velocities of those two bodies, at any given time, forever. Unfortunately, when a third body is introduced, the equations become analytically unsolvable. Usable solutions can be found over the short term, but **not** forever. Einstein's relativity-based tweaks to Newton's Laws a hundred years ago didn't help, and neither do the super computers we have today. Research continues, but for now, it's just impossible.

You'll see why I brought up Newton in a minute, but first, let's return to the problem that only I seem to care about; "time bugs". I got sidetracked into this prolonged rant when I found my first Linux time bug, back in September, but all the examples I've cited since have come from various flavors of Windows. That's where I first found them ten years ago, and that's where they've been popping up to confound me ever since.

In my past two articles, I documented time shifts of -4, -5, -8, -9, -10 and -59 hours. The only time bugs I ever found with positive shifts were the first ones I ever saw. As I said two months ago, I couldn't document them at the time, and all I really noticed was a bunch of sevens that should have been sixes. So it's entirely possible that they could have been -11 hour shifts instead of +1. There's no way to find out for sure, now. (I can remember seeing -11 bugs elsewhere, but apparently I didn't bother to document those, either). As I also said before, **all** of these time bugs showed up on FAT drives (mostly FAT16, but some FAT32 and maybe even an FAT12 hard drive or two). None of them were ever anywhere near an NTFS drive.

Even if, as Microsoft claims, this behavior was a properly working feature of the NTFS file system, translating dates stored as Universal Time into local time, you would only expect to see -5 hour shifts for an Eastern Time computer like mine. (Or -4 hour shifts during Daylight Saving Time). Those other shifts can **only** be signs of an instability in the system.

It is my contention that such unstable operation is inevitable, that back-and-forth value swapping schemes like Microsoft's will **only** work correctly when just two bodies are involved. In this case, that's the operating system and **one** hard drive. Introduce a third body (a second hard drive, another storage medium, a different operating system, or **anything** else) and the equations, like Newton's, become unsolvable. Wacky errors like the ones I've documented become the order of the day.

I've got one more point to make on this topic, then we'll move on to something else. Unfortunately, deadline pressures have forced me to put it off until next month. If you're not already sick of the subject, I'll see you then. 💻
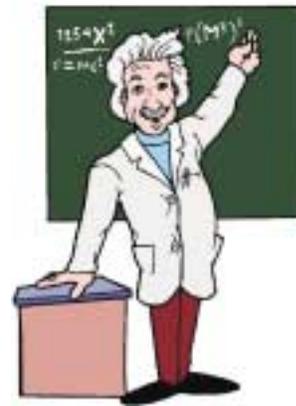
DealsGuy, *continued*

*Worth a Look

This URL has been sent to me more than once in the last few months, but I didn't feel it fit the criteria of my DealsGuy column. However, since I had room this month, I thought I would include it because of the referrals. [*www.infopackets.com/windows+newsletter.htm*] You'll find all kind of things there and even a deal every so often, I'm told. I saw one last time I looked although not this time, but I didn't spend a lot of time there. There are all kinds of articles about many things so I hope you get something out of it. Editors might be able to use some of the reviews posted there.

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. Be sure to check the announcement pages on my Web site. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [bobclick@mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [*http://www.dealsguy.com*]. 💻

A USB Primer

Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Sarasota PCUG, Florida

By now most computer users are familiar with the term USB or Universal Serial Bus. This connection port on your computer is designed to replace the older serial, parallel and PS2 ports. Probably within a year you won't find any new computers with these older ports. They will have only USB. There are some things you might find useful about USB ports and hubs which could reduce or eliminate problems in dealing with them.

USB ports have a number of advantages over the old system of parallel/serial ports. They do not require I/O memory space or individual IRQ lines. Anyone who has had to work with older computers and operating systems will remember the problems of trying to prevent IRQ conflicts when connecting external devices such as scanners or modems. How many times did the sound card manage to steal IRQ's that you had to have for another device? USB also allows for automatic device configuration and hot-plug capability. The hot-plug or hot-swap function means that you don't have to power down the computer and go through a restart when you want to connect a new device. In instead you simply connect or disconnect the USB cable. The computer will recognize the device and connect to the proper driver. That is assuming this isn't the first time you have used the device and that the driver has already been installed. You commonly have to install drivers for external hard drives, printers, scanners, card readers, etc. You generally don't have to install drivers for mice and keyboards that connect to the USB ports.

Next, consider that USB operates at three possible speeds: low speed or 1.4 megabits/second, full speed or 12 megabits/second, and high speed or 480 megabits/second (mbps). Low speed and high speed can be used with either USB 1.x or USB 2.0 hosts. The high speed can be used only with USB 2.0. The host is the computer that provides the USB connections. For USB 2.0 operation the host computers "root port hubs" must support USB 2.0. That means the computer must have USB 2.0 drivers that are supported by the operating system. Windows XP (service pack 1.0) and Windows 2000 both support USB 2.0. The root port hubs are the USB connectors on your computer and are usually connected to the motherboard. You can also identify them in the Device Manager where they will show under the USB Host Controller.

Although the USB specifications indicate you can daisy-chain up to 127 devices from one port, this is not likely to happen because of the power drop that occurs over long connections. You can get external hubs that allow you to connect 4 – 7 devices to a single root port hub. The external hubs are repeaters that relay transaction information from the computer to a device connected to the hub's port. There is a catch to this as well. Some USB 2.0 hubs will decrease their maximum output if you have a USB 1.x device attached to a port. This means that any USB 2.0 device attached to the hub may not function or will function at a lower speed. I learned this the hard way with an external USB 2.0 hard drive. I thought the problem was the drive, but it was the hub. I had a USB 1.0 card reader attached to the hub and as a result the current output to each port was reduced to the point that it was not sufficient to run the drive. This occurred even though the hub and the drive had external power supplies.

An ample power supply is necessary to operate USB devices. Root hub ports can provide 5 volts and up to 500 milli-Amps (mA) of current. The USB power specifications state the USB ports should provide between 100 mA and 500 mA. Devices connected directly to the computer are able to obtain the maximum current. So let's take a situation where we have a hub connected to the computer's root port hub. The hub is receiving 500 mA of current at about 5 volts. If only the current received through the connecting cable powers the hub, the output from each of its four hubs will be only 100 mA. This is referred to as a "bus-powered" hub because it receives its current solely from the USB bus in the host computer. However, if the hub has its own power supply and is receiving at least 1.6 Amps from this supply, then it can provide a 500 mA output at each port. In this case, the hub should be able to support high-speed USB 2.0 devices.

On some computers you will find an icon in the system tray that is a "hardware disconnect". In this instance, you need to double click the icon and wait for it to permit you to disconnect the hardware device. This icon does not appear with all USB devices. Since installing SP2, I haven't seen this icon in my system tray. There are some reports of computers with SATA drives showing this icon. Since the SATA drive is supposed to be hot-swappable like USB devices, I'm not surprised that the icon shows up. However, with my Seagate SATA drive, I still don't see this icon. That may be because my motherboard doesn't support the hot-swap function even though it supports SATA drives.

When you plug in a USB device to either a hub or a computer port, there is an initial identification process referred to as the "configuration" step that occurs. During this configuration process the device can not draw more than 100 mA. If it does, the process will fail and it will appear that the device failed to work. The configuration process identifies the device, its drivers, and its power requirements. Only after this process is complete will the device be able to draw more than 100 mA current. Since this process is not instantaneous, some time must be allowed by the user before attempting to use the device. In addition, this configuration may not occur if the device is plugged into the computer before the computer is turned on and booted. In these cases, it may be better to connect the USB device after the computer is fully operational. Most of the time, the computer will identify and configure the device during the bootup.

Microsoft has a knowledge base article on trouble-shooting USB problems (#310575). Typically the problems relate to drivers or power problems. However, they also point out that high-speed devices should be connected with high-speed cables only. The low speed cables may distort the signal as a result of their reduced amount of shielding. Another really complete source of trouble-shooting information can be found at: http://www.usbman.com/winxpusbguide.htm. This has references for Windows ME as well as XP and Windows

Continued

My Family Health Portrait

Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; radio & TV show host

WEBSITES:

http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory

https://familyhistory.hhs.gov

http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/download.html

Recently, a relative in another state was hospitalized via an emergency room admission. His new wife of just a year did not have much information on the family health history, so urgently needed by the physicians in order to diagnose and treat my relative. Urgent phone calls followed, gathering the requisite family medical history to enable the appropriate diagnosis and treatment. Philosophically, what if a comprehensive family medical history could have been immediately available? This circumstance is not unique, but a reasonable solution has been available for free for over a year at *www.hhs.gov/familyhistory*, courtesy of the U. S. Surgeon General's Office

This site explains the necessity of such data with the statement, "Health care professionals have known for a long time that common diseases - heart disease, cancer, and diabetes - and even rare diseases - like hemophilia, cystic fibrosis, and sickle cell anemia - can run in families. If one generation of a family has high blood pressure, it is not unusual for the next generation to have similarly high blood pressure. Tracing the illnesses suffered by your parents, grandparents, and other blood relatives can help your doctor predict the disorders to which you may be at risk and take action to keep you and your family healthy." In order to accomplish this task, the Surgeon general offers two simple options; one an online web maintained version hosted on a secure server (that is what the "https" means in the internet address) at *https://familyhistory.hhs.gov*, the other a 1.6mb downloadable "Zip" file which may be stored on a home computer, and utilized in the privacy of the home. The files created in either version can easily be exchanged among family members via email or disc.

In the online version, a family history can be newly created, or an existing version can be uploaded from the home computer to the secure Surgeon General website where the data can be managed, and then saved back on the home computer; no personal information is saved or captured by the government computer, protecting the privacy of the user. It should be noted that much effort has gone into the creation of this web based service, in that it explicitly works equally well with almost all known browsers, including Internet Explorer, Firefox, Mac Safari, Netscape, and many other browsers.

The first step in using the online version is to "Create a Family History", or to "Load a Saved Family History" if a file had been previously created. The preliminary step is to create a personal profile, where basic information such as name, gender, height, and weight are entered. The personal profile continues with a simple checklist of major common diseases (such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes), and age of onset, followed by a fill in the blank chart of other diseases. After the personal health history is created, there is then an opportunity to create a family profile. The family profile states "Only add family members that are biological (blood) relatives (not adopted or step-relatives)." Similar fill in charts are presented to complete the information for the other family members. Data can be modified, added, or deleted at any time. Once the user has completed entering the basic family information, a button "Go to My Family" takes the user to the basic "Family Health Portrait" where a family health tree can be displayed or printed; this family tree contains symbols and abbreviations immediately recognizable by a health care practitioner as a

Continued

USB Primer, *continued*

2000. However, anyone who hasn't dumped Windows ME should seriously consider doing so as soon as possible. WinXP is such a tremendous improvement over ME and will really make your computing experience much more enjoyable. My computer hasn't locked up or crashed in more than six months, probably longer. I really don't keep track anymore.

So what devices are typically high speed and require USB 2.0? Let's start with external USB hard drives. Seagate has a very interesting technical paper on external hard drives. In this paper they state that most 2 ½" external drives require 1000 – 1100 mA during the start-up cycle and then can function at the 500 mA maximum current available from the USB port. They also state that most USB ports can support up to 700 mA on a continuous basis. This is something I have not found elsewhere. Consequently, my recommendation is that when looking for an external drive, pick one with its own power supply. I wouldn't want to depend on one that drew all its power from the USB bus.

Other high-speed devices include laser printers, scanners, and multi-function printers. All of these should have their own power supply. Other devices that operate at full-speed and don't need external power are blue-tooth adapters and card readers. This is only a partial list of what is available in USB devices. Just remember when you are looking at them that the term full-speed does not 480 mbps, instead it is the slower 12 mbps.

Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail: bwsail at yahoo.com.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Care and Feeding of CD's

Lynn L. Kauer (llkauer@chartermi.net), Editor, Saginaw Valley Computer Association

I read an interesting article in the September 2005 issue of Popular Photography written by David D. Busch titled, "The Truth About Disc Rot." It paralleled some other magazine and news articles I have read on the same subject. The following is what we should know and understand about CD (and DVD) discs as storage devices. For the purposes of this article, CD's and DVD's are considered the same as far as backup media is concerned. The only difference is that DVD's can hold more data.

We save things that are important to us. Those of us who take digital photos know that simply storing them on the hard drive of our computer is not a wise or safe thing to do as the disc may crash and we will loose everything. Thus, we copy the photos to a CD or DVD disc so that they will be always available for a long period of twenty or more years. However, will they really be there when we look for them?

The media of choice for backup and storage purposes less than ten years ago was tape backup. Some commercial enterprises continue to use digital tape for backup purposes. Tape is rarely used, if at all, for home use anymore. Actually, the backup media of choice for commercial use is moving toward external hard drives. Where does the CD fall into all of this?

There are hosts of backup utilities that utilize the CD for backup purposes. Most CD manufacturers advertise that CD media is good for 20 to 100 years depending on the depth of marketing they are trying to offer. The National Institute of Standards Technology (NIST) tests products for longevity. The catch is that longevity is available if the user adheres to very strict rules and standards. Let us look at some interesting facts.

Handling

When a CD is burned, a laser shoots through the bottom of the disc into the dye layer located under the top protective plastic covering on at the top of the CD. This is the layer where the laser burns pits into the dye layer to allow the compute to interpret what is being written by the computer. When the bottom side of the disc becomes scratched or soiled, the laser is diffused and the data is not clearly written.

Secondly, if the top layer becomes damaged, moisture can penetrate the surface and cause the layer to slowly disintegrate and is the beginning of what is called "Disc Rot."

How often have you watched someone open a CD case and directly pull on the edges of a CD until it is released from the case? Notice how the CD is bent while it is being removed? This bending is causing tiny cracks to develop in the reflective (protective) layer of the CD. To properly remove a CD from the case, press down on the inside of the retaining plastic that holds the CD in place. This causes the retaining ring to become slightly smaller so that the CD slides off easily with out bending forces.

When handling, always pick up or carry the CD by the outer edge. Avoid placing your fingers on the read (bottom) side of the disc as this will cause acid penetration of both protective layers to begin.

Reliability

CD-R is a disc that that can be written to once while CD-RW are discs that can be written to many times reportedly 1000 times. CD's that the least reliable for archival purposes are the CD-RW's. These discs include a layer that is altered by the CD burner each time it is rewritten. Experience has shown that when these discs are used with another computer, it is a common for the second computer to be unable to read it.

Continued

Buying a New PC, *continued*

basic family health history. Other family members, such as aunts, uncles, and other blood relatives can be added to the list as well. Other family members listed on the family tree can have their own personalized family tree created at this point, and the entire file can be downloaded to the user's computer, leaving no personal data on the HHS computer.

If for privacy or other reasons, the user does not wish to enter personal family health data to the secured website, the downloadable version is a self-contained version of what is available on the website. Once uncompressed with any zip utility (built in to Windows XP), the file is easily and quickly installed. The software does require the Microsoft ".Net" utility, version 1.1 or later, available for free at windowsupdate.microsoft.com. Once installed, the entire process is completed in the privacy of the home, with no personal data leaving the computer, unless the user desires to send the data files to other family members to complete or use as a basis for their own family health history.

With this information readily available both within a family unit, and shared with other blood relatives as appropriate, family health histories can be easily maintained, and distributed or printed as needed.

Many times we cannot recall family health problems that family members may have had which may give us a predisposition, or otherwise genetically affect us. With this free service and software from the Surgeon General, we may all be better able to provide our health care professionals with the information that may prove so vital to our health care and treatment.

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I burn a new music CD monthly for each show that I do. (I entertain at nursing and retirement homes.) I burned and placed the CD-RW into my karaoke player, it would not recognize it. In addition, my second computer would not recognize it either. Only the computer that originally burned the CD was able to read it! Imagine if I had saved all of my music and photo images on a CD-RW. When the computer would eventually be replaced, the disc would likely be unreadable. It is better to save data on CD-R discs, as they are readable with any computer with a CD player.

CD-R's aren't permanent either. The organic dyes layer that the burner works with are similar to dyes in film. When exposed to sunlight, heat, cold and humidity and UV exposure the dye layer changes over time. How often have you watched someone place a CD on the dashboard of a car or keep it in a glove box? Proper storage of CD's is critical to their useful longevity.

Dyes

There are many types of dyes used for the production of a CD. To quote the above mentioned author, "Under the NIST's accelerated "stress test," which includes exposure to very bright light, high temperature and humidity, recorded CD discs using phthalocyanine dye combined with a gold/silver allow reflective layer proved to be considerably more stable than all other types of CD-R media. Discs using azo dye as the data layer had less stability under light, temperature and humidity testing. Media using cyanine dye performed well when exposed to light, but had longevity problems under temperature and humidity stress.

DVD's, which generally use a modified form of a stabilized cyanine dye for the recording layer, are less predictable in terms of longevity. NIST data suggest that, despite lower data capacity, you might be better off in the long run using premium CD-R's instead of DVD+/-R discs."

The author went on to say that it's not always possible to tell what kind of dye was used for the manufacture of the disc because the dyes can be tinted. Cyanine based CD's (most common) have a light green or blue tint on the data side. Phthalocyanine dyes are often light green while the azo dye tends to have a blue color.

While it's possible to tell the dye type by reading the specs from the manufacturer, a better indicator might be the reflective layer. If a gold reflective layer was used then the likelihood of using a good quality dye is increased. Be aware, some cheap discs appearing to have a gold layer may be simply paint. Buyer beware!

Recommended brand discs are Fujifilm, Imation, Kodak, Maxell, TDK, Verbatim and Mitsui/MAM-A.

Protection and Care of CD's

Manufactures recommend storing CD's vertically in a cool, dry area instead of horizontally. The reason is to prevent warping and damage from humidity.

Also, never use solvent based pens to write on them similar to permanent felt tipped pens. The solvent can penetrate the protective layer and damage the reflective layer below. The only safe place to write on the top of a CD is in the clear center portion of the hub when using a felt tipped pen.

It is better to apply a label to the top of the disc for identification purposes. Never write on the label with a ballpoint pen when it is applied to the disc. The tip of the pen can cause stress cracks in the protective layer.

When using CD-RW discs, I use removable labels — *www.digitalinnovations.com*.. They can be written on many times and then removed and replaced as necessary.

For discs that I intend to keep for archival purposes I print the contents on the label with an ink jet printer — *www.fellowes.com*.

When cleaning to remove fingerprints or smudges on the read side on the read side of the disc, always use a CD or lens cloth wiping radially out from the center. Never clean using small circular motions on small portions of the disc as it can cause diffusion of the laser beam. Isopropyl alcohol or clear or soapy water can be used to clean a grimy disc. Never use acetone, anti-static agents or wood based products such as toilet paper or facial tissue to clean a disc.

When applying labels, be sure to center the label on the disc to avoid "off balance" condition when the disc is being used. When the disc is rotated at high speeds, the "off balance" condition can unbalance the disc and cause problems with high speed readers. For this reason I purchased a label applicator that perfectly centers the label each time versus putting the label on the disc "by eye."

The Future

Like the 1.4 MB floppy drive, tape drives, Zip discs and LS 120 disks that are no longer being used, the CD as we know it will likely bite the dust in about ten years. I predict the media of choice for backup and archival purposes will be that of external drive media similar to USB jump drives and flash card burners or other external drive sources. Personally, I use a 160 GB external hard drive to backup my computer data including music and photo files. Because of transportability, I also backup my music and photos on CD's and store them at an offsite location in a safety deposit box.

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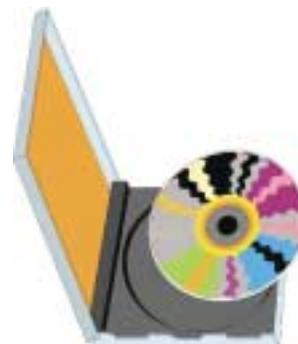
What Your Computer Really Does When It's Idle

Vinny La Bash (vlabash@home.com), Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

You're sitting at your machine, thinking about what to do next, when your disk drive starts whirring and the light flashes, indicating that something is going on. What is your machine doing? Your hands are nowhere near the keyboard or the mouse, and you can be relatively certain that neither telepathy nor telekinesis is at work.

One possibility is that your system is loading automatic updates from Microsoft.com because you set your system to download updates automatically. The same could be true for anti-virus programs, firewalls or any application software that offers this type of automated service.

The Task Scheduler may be running a background utility. Your automatic backup may be kicking in, or an online subscription service is delivering requested information as part of a service it provides. Any number of similar operations could be going on. There is a dark side to this. You may be infected by a spyware program reporting back to its master over the internet. Most spyware blabs about your web surfing habits to a commercial entity so that it can tailor ads to your individual tastes. Many people consider this annoying or intrusive. Nevertheless, the designers of these programs have no desire to hurt you. They want only to sell you something.

However, something far less benign could be going on. A program could be attempting to steal your banking information, PIN numbers, credit card records, social security information, and other financial data with the intention of draining your bank account.

A Trojan horse program may be downloading spam to retransmit from your machine, making it look to recipients that you are the spammer. Other programs make your machine a "zombie" or a node in an array of machines designed to launch a Denial of Service (DOS) attack on a web site.

Worst of all, there have been instances reported of stealth programs downloading child pornography and retransmitting it to another machine. These programs make it look like you are the culprit, making you subject to arrest and incarceration. This kind of frighteningly malicious activity has been rare, but the danger is real.

If you are concerned about this, and you should be, Windows XP offers a solution:

- Click Start.
- Click Run.
- In the text portion of the Run dialog box, type cmd and click OK.

This brings you to the Command Interpreter, which starts out by displaying the Version of XP that's running on your machine and some copyright information. Now enter the command netstat -o, which displays network statistics about your current active connections.

There are five columns of information displayed. The Proto column tells you what communication protocol is being used for a particular process. In most instances this will be TCP (Tele-Communications Protocol). This is irrelevant for our purposes.

- Local Address is your machine.

- Foreign Address is the IP address and port number of the machine the process is communicating with.
- State informs you if the communication session is sending or receiving, waiting, acknowledging or finished.
- PID (Process Identifier) is the piece we need, because it identifies the process (program) that is controlling the communications session from your computer.

4. Perform the Ctrl+Alt+Del keystroke sequence to bring up the Windows Security window.

5. Click Task Manager.

6. Click the Processes tab.

7. Click the PID column. This sorts the information, making it easier to find the program you're looking for.

Note: If the PID column is not displayed, you can activate it from the View menu.

Examine the PID list until you find the PID number(s) you found with the netstat command. If it's msnmgr.exe or iexplorer.exe, there is nothing to worry about. These are normal Windows XP processes and no cause for concern. There are many other legitimate Windows XP processes that are likely to be listed in the Task Manager.

How do you tell the good from the bad? Unfortunately, Windows itself isn't much help in showing what any given process is doing and you can't shoot them all and "let God sort them out". A search of Microsoft's web site won't yield useful information. A great place to find valuable information about common Windows processes is:
http://www.liutilities.com/products/wintaskspro/processlibrary/

This site contains information about all common Windows processes, and the site administrators do an excellent job of keeping posted information current.

Knowing what's going on in your system is good, but the best protection against intruders is to keep your anti-virus, firewall, and other specialized protection programs up-to-date.

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prices and features, from tiny key-chain size cameras, to cameras embedded in a ballpoint pen, to inexpensive disposable cameras to pocket size marvels, to SLR (Single Lens Reflex) type cameras with extreme resolution rivaling 35mm film, and using an assortment of available lenses, just like traditional 35mm cameras. Zoom can range from the less expensive and generally inferior digital zoom, to the superior optical zoom. Zoom ranges typically range from 3x to 12x, with some models offering a combination of optical and digital zoom to increase the ability to manipulate the closeness of the image. Many of the newer digital still cameras can also capture video and sound, often in the popular MPEG-4 30fps (30 frames per second) format, the length of the video being only limited by the amount of storage available on the memory card.

The second camera I have in front of me is a new, state of the art Casio EX-S500, one of a series of new cameras Casio is producing in the "Exilim" series. The camera is actually small compared to my older camera, only being about 3.5 inches wide, by about 2.3 inches tall, and about .6 (6/10) of an inch thick, weighing only about 4 ounces. This full featured camera will easily fit in a shirt pocket or purse. It uses the tiny SD memory cards. With an excellent 5 megapixel maximum image size, this camera will take digital photos in six different sizes ranging from an enormous 2560x1920 pixel size (5 megapixels), to the smaller 640x480 size (3/10 of a megapixel). It should be noted that the smaller the image, the more images that can be stored in the memory card. Also, the smaller images are more appropriate if they are going to be emailed, an important consideration in "netiquette". The larger size images are appropriate if large photos are to be printed in 8x10 inch or 11x14 inch sizes, or even larger.

Zoom is provided by a telescoping 3x optical zoom, which can be coupled with an integral 4x digital zoom, giving a maximum zoom of 12x. The lens produced very bright and sharp images. When the camera is turned off, the telescoping zoom lens is retracted into the body of the camera, making the front of the camera nearly flat. One technological marvel built into this camera an "Anti-Shake DSP" which is a digital signal processor that removes the effect of moving the camera while the image is being recorded; this contributes to an exceptionally sharp image by removing or minimizing the blurring many of us encounter when we move the camera as we take a photo.

Despite the small stature of the camera, it also can record movies and sound in three formats, 640x480 in both high quality and normal mode, and a smaller image 320x240 size for extended play. Video is saved in MPEG-4 format, and the sound is saved in the universal WAV format. With a common and inexpensive 256 megabyte memory card, the camera can capture about 8 minutes of video and sound at the high quality setting, and about 45 minutes at the extended play setting. Simply, available memory and battery power is the limiting factor in the length of the video that can be shot at any given time.

While my old camera ate batteries, having a very short battery life, this new Casio Exilim has a proprietary rechargeable lithium ion battery with a normal capacity of about 200 photos before it needs to be recharged.

The camera has a shutter speed of 1/8 to 1/2000 of a second, rivaling many of the classical 35mm cameras, and includes a multi-mode flash, self timer, bright 2.2 inch LCD screen, and a mini-cradle which simultaneously connects the camera to a USB 2 high speed connection as well as AC power to charge the internal battery. There is also an "AV Out" jack on the cradle. Included with the camera are two CDs of software to download and manage the still images as well as the video. A set of included video cables allows the playing of video direct from the camera when it is docked in the cradle.

The body of the Casio Exilim EX-S500 camera is stainless steel, and available in a typical steel grey color, as well as while or orange toned stainless steel. This camera has a suggested retail price of $350. Locally these cameras are available at Circuit City, CompUSA, Radio Shack, Target, Ritz Camera, Sharper Image, or online from Casio at *www.casio,com*.

Casio is now marketing some excellent quality digital cameras, and should be strongly considered when shopping for better quality and full featured digital cameras.

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What Comes After Your Pictures Are in Tip Top Shape?

Donald Cummins, APCUG Representative, Fresno Personal Computer Users Group, California

Paper and ink are a team – one without the other is just paper or ink. Paper is one of the least understood or overlooked items.

Paper should be used with care. A wedding picture may be a total loss if you put it on the incorrect type of paper. If the picture is taken on the soft side (not very sharp) and printed on very glossy paper, it will make it look out of focus. It would be much better if it is printed on less glossy paper or, even better, on a matte-finish paper. Many of the wedding photos may need to be printed on a number of different types of paper to find the best results. At the same time, the ink cartridges may need to be changed from one group of photos to another.

Some people feel you should use only one brand of paper that is made for your brand of printer; e.g. Epson printer should only use Epson paper and Epson original ink cartridges. They say do not "mix and match." Others say stick with one brand of paper or ink and know everything about them. This can be a huge effort at the beginning but may pay off later.

Each photo should be and must be looked upon as being unique unto itself. Now this is where ink comes into play. There are two types of ink dye and pigment. Dye inks produce somewhat brighter colors and are prone to fading. They now may last 10 years or longer. Pigment inks are less bright and last longer than dye ink on photos.

Some feel that the larger number of dots per inch is one of the biggest things that will enhance the finished photo. The other side says 1440 dpi is all you really need. The droplet size may be the finishing touch to the photo if your printer can put down a droplet size of four picoliters and/or smaller; this is too small for our eyes to see. Some printers are even putting down droplets as small as 1.5 picoliters.

Does the ink bleed through or run or take forever to dry and cause the paper to cup up? Some will lay down the ink in a number of passes and others may lay the ink down in one pass. One may require the paper to move through a number of rollers and others will pass straight through.

One item which can affect the finished photo is how thick the paper is. You need to check how the paper moves through the printer because the way it moves will control how thick the paper can be.

Printers now have many more capabilities than four or five years ago. They have more ink colors, ink placement size, and speed than ever before.

For detailed printer information, check the following websites for their information on printers, ink and paper information:

- Epson – *www.epson.com*
- Canon – *www.canon.com*
- Hewlett-Packard – *www.hp.com*

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Back Issues Needed

The editor is attempting to build a CD containing all issues of ACGNJ News in pdf format, but our collection is incomplete. We're hoping some faithful reader has been hoarding them and will be willing to lend them to us just long enough to scan them. We promise to return them quickly. The list is shrinking thanks to the help of Joseph Gaffney, who loaned his collection for scanning. Below is a list of what we still need.

1985: June, July, August, September

1984: March, August

1976: January, February, March, April (pamphlet-size booklets)

1975: All issues (pamphlet-size booklets)

If you can supply any of these missing issues (or scanned images or good copies), please contact the Editor by email (*bdegroot@ptd.net*). Those who supply missing issues will receive a free copy of the resulting CD as our thanks for your help. ⌨

SIG News

Investing

Norm Wiss (cut.up@verizon.net)

http://www.acgnj.org/groups/sig_investment.htm

The Investment SIG continues with presentations on how to use analysis programs TC2000 and TCNet. Large charts are presented on our pull down screen and illustrate the application of computer scans and formulas to find stocks for profitable investments. Technical analysis determines buy points, sell points and projected moves. Technical analysis can also be used on fundamentals such as earnings, sales growth, etc. ***Our next meeting: February 9.*** ▫

NJ Gamers

Gregg McCarthy (greggmc@optonline.net)

http://www.angelfire.com/linux/gamers/

www.lanparty.com

The next Friday Night Frag will be February 10, 6 p.m. to Saturday 12 noon — 18 hours for 5 bucks! ▫

Window Pains

John Raff (jraff@comcast.net)

http://www.acgnj.org/groups/winpains.html

This meeting is a combination of the older PC Symposium, PC User Group and Random Access Session which are now defunct. The intent is to provide the members with Windows oriented application discussions both Microsoft and Linux style. The presentation will be directed toward the more heavy technological level of attendee, although newbies are welcomed. ***Next meeting February 17.*** ▫

Main Meeting

http://www.acgnj.org/groups/mainmeet.html

Evan Williams (nhpressgo@blast.net)

February 3*:* Subject to be announced. ▫

Visual Basic

Rick Elbanna (rick@mastersofthecode.com)

http://mastersofthecode.com/html/sig.htm

This is a public Special Interest Group sponsored by Online Marketing Network LLC and Ricardo Capelli Associates LLC. This is a co-operative meeting with the Excel VBA and WebDev group. ***Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at East Brunswick Public Library in East Brunswick, New Jersey****.* Meeting times vary depending on the busy schedule of the Library. Times will be emailed to interested developers — send email to Rick to put your name on the notification list. Because of limited seating, those expecting to attend should email Rick prior to the meeting. Walk-ins are welcome, but are not guaranteed a seat. ▫

LUNICS (Linux/Unix)

Andreas Meyer (lunics@acgnj.org)

http//www.acgnj.org/groups/lunics.html

LUNICS is a group for those who share an interest in Unix and similar operating systems. While we do quite a bit with Linux, we've also been known to discuss Solaris and BSD too. We generally meet on the first Monday of the month at 8:00 PM at the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad. See the web page for directions and more information. ***Next meeting February 6.*** ▫

Web Dev

This SIG is intended to be an open forum for all Website Development techniques and technologies, to encourage the study and development of web sites of all kinds. All languages will be considered and examined. Anyone interested please contact the Chairperson in charge. The current project is a CMS for the club. Anyone interested in starting a new project, come to the meeting and announce / explain. Provide as much detail as possible. One can also send projects to the ACGNJ Newsletter editor for inclusion in the next volume.

WebDev should be an all-encompassing development and examination forum for all issues, applications, OS, languages and systems one can use to build Websites. We currently have two Web dev languages .NET and Java as SIGs but the other langages and OS need to be investigated, examined and tested; Windows, Linux, UNIX, DEC, Vax, HP etc. Intel-PC, Motorola-MAC etc. ***Next meeting February 15****.* ▫

Human Networking

http://www.acgnj.org/groups/hns.htm

Mark Douches (mad-networking@pobox.com)

The purpose of this SIG is to expand the number of professionals that we know so that connections can be made into different markets or industries when a career change or business need is necessary. We are not just a group of people who like computers or technology. Our membership consists of Information Technology professionals from various industries. We will discuss over a time period the tools and skills that are necessary to cross a bridge advance your career. ***Meetings are held 2nd Wednesday of the Month at 7:00 P.M.*** ▫

Genealogy

Frank Warren (kb4cyc@webwarren.com)

http://www.webwarren.com/kb4cyc/gensig.html

Genealogy SIG is for genealogists interested in computers and computer users interested in genealogy, and is a forum to assist members in furtherance of both endeavors. Meetings usually focus on genealogy more than on computers. We meet at 8 PM on the fourth Thursday of the month, but we do not meet in November or December. In addition to our Web page, we also have an electronic mailing list. Messages to the list should be addressed to *gensig@webwarren.com*. To subscribe, include the line "subscribe gensig" in the body of the message. ***Next meeting February 23.*** ▫

C/C++ Programming

Bruce Arnold (barnold@blast.net)

http://www.blast.net/barnold

This group is devoted to discussing programming languages in general and C, C++, and C++ for Windows programming in particular. Each month a small but hopefully useful program (complete with source code) is presented for discussion.

January: General Review of MFC Controls and Past Meetings, by Bruce Arnold. MFC stands for Microsoft Foundation Classes and is used in Visual C++ Version 6.0. These classes provide a wrapper for the Windows API, Application Programming Interface. Most of the functions are provided with source code so that you may analyze how they relate to the underlying API functions. As usual, the code is available at our website. ***Our next meeting February 21.***▫

Layman's Forum

Matt Skoda (som359@aol.com)

http://www.acgnj.org/groups/laymans.html

We meet on the second Monday of the month (no meetings in July and August) to discuss issues of interest to novice users or those who are planning to get started in computing. Watch our Web page for updates and announcements. ▫

Lotus Notes

Mike Barlow (mwb@injersey.com)

http://www.acgnj.org/groups/sig_lotusnotes.htm

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at the offices of Bright Ideas Software, 1060 Amboy Avenue, 2nd Floor, Edison NJ at 7 PM (Random Access 6:30). Call (732)417-5778 for last-minute changes, cancellations, information on future meetings, locations, directions, etc. Directions are posted on our Web page. ▫

VBA & Excel

Jim Ditaranto (fryr92a@prodigy.com)

http://www.excelvba.homestead.com

VBA is implemented in Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Project and Microsoft Access, and will be implemented in Word and PowerPoint. Anyone interested in using any Microsoft Office and VBA is invited — ***7 PM third Monday***. Currently Jim is improving his skill set, so David McRitchie and John Raff will carry the banner. ▫

Java

Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net)

http://www.redlich.net/javasig/

The Java Users Group covers beginner, intermediate, and advanced level Java programming. Primary focus is on developing useful/practical applets and applications, but can include related topics such as Java I/O, JavaBeans, Reflection, object-oriented programming and software design issues. Meetings are held the second Tuesday of the month starting promptly at 7:30 PM.

January: Parsing XML Documents with XMLtp -- This month's meeting featured a technical overview of XMLtp, a tiny XML processor/parser written in Java by Thomas Weidenfeller. This utility is intended to be used for applications that use XML files for internal/configuration data. XMLtp can be downloaded at *http://mitglied.lycos.de/xmltp/*, and comes with all the source code, documentation, and examples. ▫

DotNet

This group has disbanded. ▫

Macintosh Users

Keith Sproul (ksproul@noc.rutgers.edu)

This group is no longer meeting, but Keith is still available to help Mac users via telephone or email (see page 2). ▫

MCP

(Microsoft Certified Professional)

Gregg McCarthy (greggmc@optonline.net)

http://www.angelfire.com/linux/gamers/mcse.html

The MCSE SIG is a study group with the goal of preparing for the Microsoft Certification Exams. In February of 2000 "Windows 2000" debuted along with new MCSE tests. It's two years later and we have settled somewhere between W2k Pro/Server and Windows XP in our studies. Windows NT while still viable, is history as far as Microsoft is concerned. Windows .NET server should be out this year and should look like Windows XP-Server.

The books we will be using are "Mastering Windows 2000 Server" by Mark Minasi and the "MCSE Self-Paced Training Kit" from Microsoft Press. These books are important because as a study group we won't have a teacher to explain the concepts. We'll ***need*** to discuss them in the group. This is a study group, not a class taught by a teacher. Since hands-on training is crucial in acquiring the skills needed for these tests, we try to focus on lab work as well. The Microsoft training kits are good for labs.

We meet on the first and third Wednesdays of each month from 7 pm to 10 pm. Attendees are encouraged to bring a PC properly configured with NT, 10BaseT network card, and Netmeetng 2.1. For more info, reading assignments, course schedule, visit our website. ▫

Guru Corner

Jo-Anne Head (tinarock@aol.com)

If you need help with any of the technologies listed below, you can call on the person listed. Please be considerate and call before 10 PM.

Hardware

	Scott Vincent	973-539-8169

Software

HTML	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
	Mike Redlich	908-537-4915
CSS	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
ColdFusion	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
Java	Mike Redlich	908-537-4915
C++	Bruce Arnold	908-735-7898
	Mike Redlich	908-537-4915
ASP	Mike Redlich	908-537-4915
Perl	John Raff	973-560-9070
	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
XML	Mike Redlich	908-537-4915
e-Commerce	Rick Elbanna	800-323-7575
Genealogy	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
Networking	Scott Vincent	973-539-8169
Home Automation	Charlie Huffsmith	732-549-1734
	Frank Warren	908-756-1681

Operating Systems

WindowsNT	Scott Vincent	973-361-5793
Windows95	Rick Elbanna	800-323-7575
Windows98	Rick Elbanna	800-323-7575
Windows3.1	Ted Martin	732-636-1942
	Charlie Huffsmith	732-549-1734

Macintosh

Mac O/S	Keith Sproul	(732) 821-4828

Discount Computer Magazine Price List

As described by the DealsGuy

	1 yr	2 yr	3 yr
Computer Games	$10.95	20.95	29.95
Computer Gaming World	14.95	28.95	41.95
Computer Shopper1	16.97	32.95	47.95
Dr. Dobbs Journal	15.95	30.95	
Mac Addict	10.97		
Mac Home Journal	15.97	29.97	
Mac World	12.95		
Maximum PC	9.95	18.95	27.95
Microsoft System Journal	21.95	39.95	
PC Gamer	12.95		
PC Magazine (22/44/66 Issues)	25.97	48.95	68.95
PC World	16.95		
Wired	6.00	12.00	17.00

These prices are for new subscriptions and renewals. All orders must be accompanied by a check, cash or Money Order. Make payable to Herb Goodman, and mail to:

Herb Goodman, 8295 Sunlake Drive, Boca Raton, FL 33496

Telephone: 561-488-4465, e-mail: hgoodman@prodigy.net

Please allow 10 to 12 weeks for your magazines to start. For renewals you must supply an address label from your present subscription to insure the correct start of your renewal. As an extra service I will mail a renewal notice about 4 months prior to their expiration date. I carry more than 300 titles at excellent prices — email for prices.

ACGNJ MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Sign up online at *http://www.acgnj.org/membership_update.htm* and pay dues with PayPal.

Dues

	US/CANADA	FAMILY OF MEMBER (No Newsletter)	FOREIGN	STUDENT	SENIOR CITIZEN (Over 65)
1 Year	$25	$10	$55	$20	$20
2 Years	$40				
3 Years	$55				$45

Mail this application and your check to:

AMATEUR COMPUTER GROUP OF NEW JERSEY, INC., P.0. BOX 135, SCOTCH PLAINS, NJ 07076

❏ New Member o Renewal   ❏ Address Change

First Name _____Last Name _____Phone _____

Mailing Address _____E-Mail _____

City _____State_____Zip_____URL _____

What topics would you like to see covered at club meetings?_____

Other Local Computer Groups

Princeton Macintosh User Group: 7:15 pm 2nd Tuesday, Jadwin Hall, Princeton U. (609) 252-1163	**NY/NJ/CT Relational Database User Group:** Corporate and independent users. (212) 839-0125	**New York Personal Computer Club:** For information call hotline, (212) 533-NYPC
Computer Education Society of Philadelphia: 7:30 pm, 2nd Wednesday, St. Asaph's Episcopal Church. Lee Le'mon, (717)786-2260	**Brookdale Computer Users Group**: 7 pm,3rd Friday, NAS 100 at Brookdale Community College, Lincroft NJ.(732-739-9633) *www.bcug.com*	**Macintosh User Group**: Third Tuesday, Dickson Hall, Montclair State University, Montclair NJ. (201) 893-5274 *http://www.njmug.org*.
WordPerfect SIG of PCUG of So. Jersey: 2nd Mon., 2101 Chapel Ave., Cherry Hill NJ after 7pm Main Meeting. *http://www.pcugsj.org*	**Hunterdon Computer Club:** 8:30 am to noon 3rd Saturday, Hunterdon Medical Center, Rt 31, Flemington. (908) 995-4042	**PC Club of South Jersey**: 7 pm, 2nd Monday, 2101 Chapel Ave, Cherry Hill NJ. L. Horn, (856) 983-5360. *http://www.pcugsj.org*
Philadelphia Area Computer Society: 3rd Sat., 9 am Main Meeting, groups follow. Drexel Univ., Philadelphia. Pat Murphy, (609) 428-8759	**Central Jersey Computer Club**: 8 pm, 4th Friday, Rm 74, Armstrong Hall, Trenton St. College. Rich Williams, (609) 466-0909.	**NJ PC Users Group:** Bergen County Community College, Paramus NJ. Maureen Shannon, (201) 853-7432
Morris Micro Computer Club: Bill Traywick, (201) 635-5393.	**Fairlawn Computer Club**: Last Monday, Fairlawn Senior Citizen Center. Joe Mathias (*fair.lawn.computer.club@juno.com*)	**Princeton PC Users Group**: 2nd Monday, Lawrence Library, Rt 1 & Darrah Ln, Lawrenceville, Paul Kurivchack (908) 218-0778, *http://www.ppcug-nj.org*
Workshop, Hands-On: 2 P.M. to Midnight on last Saturday of the month. First United Methodist Church, Church and Atlantic Streets (one mile from GSP exit 117A), Aberdeen NJ. Bring your project, computer and extension cord. For information call Burke Mawby, (908) 566-7445.		

Classified

FREE TO MEMBERS. Use our classified ads to sell off your surplus computer stuff. Send copy to Classified, ACGNJ NEWS, P.O. Box 135, Scotch Plains NJ 07076 or e-mail to the editor, *bdegroot@ptd.net*. Classified ads are free to members, one per issue. Non-members pay $10. Send check payable to ACGNJ Inc. with copy. Reasonable length, please.

Member of
The Association of
Personal Computer User Groups

http://www.apcug.net

Radio and TV Programs

**Computer Radio Show**, WBAI 99.5 FM, NY, Wed. 8-9 p.m.

Software Review, The Learning Channel, Saturday 10-10:30 p.m.

On Computers, WCTC 1450 AM, New Brunswick, Sunday 1-4 p.m. To ask questions call (800) 677-0874.

PC Talk, Sunday from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m., 1210 AM Philadelphia. `1800-876-WPEN`, Webcast at *http://www.pctalkweb.net*.

PC Shows Inc (KGP)

After 26 years, PC SHows/KGP Productions has closed up shop and retired to Florida, cancelling all future computer shows. The Trenton Computer Festival will continue to be held, see *http://www.tcf-nj.org*. Thanks to all our vendors and customers these past 26 years.
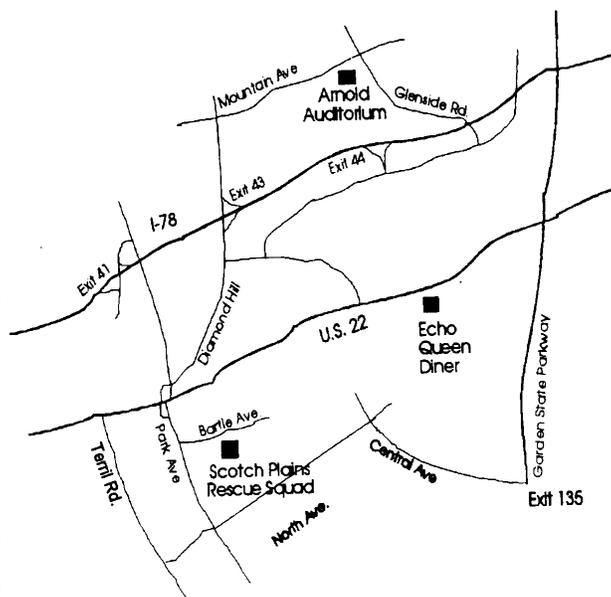
Directions to Meetings at Scotch Plains Rescue Squad, 1916 Bartle Ave., Scotch Plains NJ

From New York City or Northern New Jersey

Take Route 1&9 or the Garden State Parkway to US 22 Westbound.

From Southern New Jersey

Take Parkway north to Exit 135 (Clark). Stay on left of ramp, follow circle under Parkway. Bear right to Central Avenue; follow to Westfield and under RR overpass. Left at light to North Avenue; follow to light in Fanwood. Right on Martine (which becomes Park Ave). Right on Bartle Ave in middle of shopping district.Scotch Plains Rescue Squad (2-story brick) is located on the right. Do not park in the row next to the building — you'll be towed.

From I-78 (either direction)

Take exit 41 (Scotch Plains); follow signs to US 22. Turn right at light at bottom of hill and use overpass to cross Rt. 22. Follow US 22 Westbound directions.

From US 22 Westbound

Exit at Park Avenue, Scotch Plains after McDonalds on the right, diagonally opposite Scotchwood Diner on the left, immediately before the overpass. After exiting, turn left at the light and use overpass to cross US 22. Bear right at bottom of ramp to continue south on Park Avenue. Turn left at the second light (a staggered intersection). Scotch Plains Rescue Squad (2-story brick) is on the right. Do not park in the row next to the building — you'll be towed. We meet on the second floor, entering by the door at the right front of the building.

From Western New Jersey

Take US 22 Eastbound to the Park Avenue exit. The exit is about a mile past Terrill Road and immediately past the overpass. Exit onto Park Avenue South and follow the directions above to the Rescue Squad building.

Tech News

Bob Elgines; CRCC Editor; elginesz@rraz.net

More Free Spyware - There is another one out there like Spybot called SpyBlaster which can be downloaded at *www.javacoolsoftware.com* . There is a slight catch, you will need to manually update, unless you pay $10 for an automatically update subscription. This unlike Spybot will prevent installation of spyware.

PCI Express vs AGP-8X Graphic Cards - Are they here to stay? The PCI-Express cards are about the same speed and higher in price. So don't run out and change your Mother Board to accommodate the PCI-Express. The only difference right now is the Bandwidth, but there are not programs out there to use this advantage. It's main use would be used in Gaming.

Windows 2000 Info! - Microsoft released an update containing a collection of previous patches. The final service pack for Windows 2000 is SP4, which was released in March, 2003. Support for Windows 2000 will end in 2010.

What is "Windows XP N"? - Windows XP N is a version without the MS Media Player. Windows XP Home (the standard version) sells for the same price.

What is "Windows XP Media"? - Basically the standard home version with all of the latest photo, music,, and movie enhancement pack. This includes such things as Plus!Photo Story, Media player, Movie Maker, etc. These items can be download from Microsoft for free in most cases.

New Microsoft Windows Software - Microsoft's new operating system called "Longhorn" has been officially named "Windows Vista", and is set to be released to the public in 2006. The three new goals are summarized as Clear (new methods), Confident (better security) and Connected (seamless) by Microsoft developers.

New WD Hard Drive - Western Digital released a new high-class series of Caviar drives and announced a new high capacity drive of 400 GB SATA (Serial). This drive has a speed of 7200 rpm, 16 MB of cache, and a transfer rate of 150 MBps. The WD Caviar SE16 400 GB is priced at approximately $280 with a three year warranty.

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you. 💻

ACGNJ MEETINGS

For the very latest news on ACGNJ meetings visit the ACGNJ Web Page (*http://www.acgnj.org*)

Wednesday, February 1, 2006
7 P.M. - MCSE Study Group, Gregg McCarthy (*greggmc@optonline.net*).

Friday, February 3
8 P.M. - Main Meeting, Evan Williams (*nhpressgo@blast.net*).

Monday, February 6
8 P.M. - Lunics (Linux/Unix). Andreas Meyer (*lunics@acgnj.org*), cancelled.

Wednesday, February 8
7 P.M. - Human Networking, Mark Douces (*mad-networking@pobox.com*)

Thursday, February 9
8 P.M. - Investing, Norm Wiss (*cut.up@verizon.net*).

Friday, February 10
6 P.M. to 5 A.M.- NJ Gamers. Gregg McCarthy (*greggmc@optonline.net*), 732-721-6507. Break 8 to 10 P.M.

Monday, February 13
8 P.M. - Layman's Forum, Matt Skoda (*som359@aol.com*), 908-359-8842.

Tuesday, February 14
7:30 P.M. - Java, Mike Redlich (*mike@redlich.net*) 908-537-4915.

Wednesday, February 15
7 P.M. - MCSE Study Group, Gregg McCarthy (*greggmc@optonline.net*).

7 P.M. - WebDev SIG

Friday, February 17
8 P.M. - Window Pains, John Raff.

Monday, February 20
8 P.M. - VBA, Jim Ditaranto (*fryr92a@prodigy.com*), 201-986-1104

Tuesday, February 21
8 P.M. - C/C++ Users, Bruce Arnold (*barnold@blast.net*), 908-735-7898

Thursday, February 23
8 P.M. - Genealogy SIG, Frank Warren

Tuesday, February 28
ACGNJ Board Meeting 💻

**All meetings, unless otherwise noted, are at Scotch Plains Rescue Squad, 1916 Bartle Ave., Scotch Plains, N.J.
Directions and map inside back cover.**

8 P.M. - Genealogy. Frank Warren (*kb4cyc@webwarren.com*), 908-756-1681.