Election and Business Meeting Report

Paul Syers and Bob Hawes

Opening

The meeting came to order at 8:22pm with an official quorum. Mike presided, and welcomed all to the meeting.

Election

Mike opened the election process and reviewed the candidates for 2009 Officers and Directors:

Officers

President · Mike Redlich
Vice-President · · · · · · · · · · Mark Douches, Paul Syers
Secretary · (open)
Treasurer · Malthi Masurekar

Directors (through 2010):

Bill Farrell
David McRichie
Lenny Thomas
Don McBride

Official Vote

Vote for all unopposed positions was made (did not include Secretary or VP), 10 yes votes for unopposed positions.

A motion, to move whoever got the least votes for VP (between Mark and Paul) into the open Secretary position on the slate was made and was subsequently seconded and passed.

Vote for VP was made, Mark received no votes and Paul received 10 yes votes. Paul became VP.

Vote for Secretary (Mark) was made, Mark received 10 yes votes. (*Photo on page 19.*)

The elections were closed.

ACGNJ

Founded 1975

Malthi presented a Treasurers Report for the year.

The Publicity Subcommittee (Gregg, Paul, Bill) was discussed.

The proposed network upgrade was discussed.

The TCF report mentioned the need for Hobbyist of the Year candidates, speakers, and volunteers (for parking, checking doors, checking wrist bands....).

Bob Hawes presented 7 long-time service awards to the following: Bruce Arnold (19 years), Bill Farrell (16 years), Matt Skoda (16 years), Barbara DeGroot (14 years), Arnold Milstein (13 years), Malthi Masurekar (12 years), and John Raff (Three simultaneous positions, 14 years, 11 years and 11 years, for a total of *36* years). Arnold, Bill, John and Malthi were in attendance, and so were presented with their framed certificates personally (*photo on page 3*).

Proposed changes to the By-Laws & Constitution

Revision Committee members Bob, Mike, John, Lenny and Paul reviewed and recommended changes to the By-Laws and Constitution, which had been posted on the club website since November. Changes were made for consistency and voting. They will also be presented to an attorney for review.

Bob Hawes made a motion from the floor, introducing an additional amendment containing some minor last-minute typo corrections. Seconded and passed.

Motion to approve the By-Laws and Constitution changes pending approval of attorney was made and was accepted and subsequently seconded and passed. (Publication of the new Consstitution and Bylaws has been put off to February in order to give the attorney more time to review them.)

The motion to adjourn the Election and Business meeting was made at 8:57pm, and was subsequently seconded.

Main meeting Presentation

Immediately after the Election and Business meeting Bob presented one of the SCO Follies along with coffee and ice cream cake.

Officers, Directors and Leaders

Officers		
President	Mike Redlich	(908) 246-0410
Vice President	Paul Syers	(732) 572-3481
Treasurer	Malthi Masurekar	(732) 560-1534
Secretary	Mark Douches	(908) 889-2366
Past President	Evan Williams	(908) 359-8070

Special Interest Groups		
C Languages	Bruce Arnold	(908) 735-7898
Firefox Activity	David McRitchie	
Genealogy	Frank Warren	(908) 756-1681
Investing	Jim Cooper	
Java	Michael Redlich	(908) 537-4915
Layman's Forum	Matthew Skoda	(908) 359-8842
LUNICS	Andreas Meyer	
NJ Gamers	Gregg McCarthy	
VBA & Excel	James Ditaranto	(201) 986-1104
Web Dev	Evan Williams	(908) 359-8070
Window Pains	John Raff	(973) 992-9002

Board of Directors		
Director Emeritus	Sol Libes	(609) 520-9024
Through 2009	Gregg McCarthy	
	Arnold Milstein	(908) 753-8036
	John Raff	(973) 992-9002
	Bob Hawes	
Through 2010	David McRitchie	
	Don McBride	(732) 560-0369
	Bill Farrell	(732) 572-3481
	Lenny Thomas	

Standing Committees		
APCUG Rep.	Frank Warren	(908) 756-1681
Facilities	John Raff	(973) 992-9002
Financial	Mark Douches	(908) 889-2366
Historian	Lenny Thomas	
Membership	Mark Douches	(908) 889-2366
Newsletter	— open —	
Trenton ComputerFest	Mike Redlich	(908) 246-0410
Vendor Liaison	Arnold Milstein	(908) 753-8036
Webmaster	John Raff	(973) 992-9002

ACGNJ News

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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?

Advertising: Non-commercial announcements from members are free. Commercial ads 15 cents per word, $5 minimum. Camera ready display ads: Full page (7 x 10 inches) $150, two-thirds page (4½ x 10) $115, half-page $85, one-third $57, quarter $50, eighth $30. Discount 10% on 3 or more consecutive insertions. Enclose payment.

Publication Exchange: Other computer user groups are invited to send a subscription to ACGNJ at the address below. We will respond in kind.

Address Changes should be directed to Martin Rosenblum (*m.rosenblum@ieee.org*) and/or to his attention at ACGNJ at the address below.

Membership, including subscription: 1 year $25, 2 years $40, 3 years $55. Student or Senior Citizen (over 65): 1 year $20, 3 years $45. Family of member, without subscription, $10 per year. Send name, address and payment to ACGNJ, PO Box 135, Scotch Plains NJ 07076.

Typographic Note: The ACGNJ News is produced using Corel Ventura 5. Font families used are Times New Roman (TT) for body text, Arial (TT) for headlines.

E-Mail Addresses

Here are the e-mail addresses of ACGNJ Officers, Directors and SIG Leaders (and the Newsletter Editor). This list is also at (*http://www.acgnj.org/officers.html*).

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A Solstice Party (Main Meeting Presentation)

Bob Hawes (bob.hawes@acgnj.org), ACGNJ

Once upon a time, in a far off mystical kingdom called California, a boy (Doug Michels) and his father (Larry Michels) founded a UNIX porting and consulting company named the Santa Cruz Operation (or SCO for short). One December, a few years later, they decided to throw a big party for their employees. Rather than calling it a Christmas Party, they called it a Solstice Party instead. They held it again every year for about twenty years; but its date kept having to be pushed back until, for the last ten years or so, it was actually held in late April. It had more-or-less moved a quarter of the way around the solar system to the Vernal Equinox, but it was still called the Solstice Party. It also gave birth to another annual tradition: a live musical show called the SCO Follies.

Returning to present-day New Jersey, I volunteered to host the non-election part of the December 5th, 2008 Main Meeting. Rather than making a presentation, I decided to hold a small Holiday Party. (I didn't think of calling it a Solstice Party. Maybe I should have). I planned to show *Willy Wonka and the Software Factory* (one of the nine videotaped SCO Follies that are now viewable over the Internet through

YouTube) while serving ice cream cake and coffee. (As far as I could tell, nobody had made coffee at a club meeting since before the year 2000). While I cleaned out and tested the big 50 cup percolator, I didn't really expect to use it. I planned to rely on our two "12 cup" drip machines, one for regular and one for decaf. (Each makes about 7½ *real* cups). I figured that I'd have to refill one or both of them at least once. I bought the biggest ice cream cake I could find that would still fit in our freezer. I figured that I'd have some left over to take home with me. I got it wrong both ways.

The ravening hordes demolished the cake. I barely managed to get a piece for myself. On the other hand, neither of my initial coffee runs was even half consumed. I guess the coffee experiment can be officially considered a failure. As far as the video show went, I had some enthusiasm at the beginning, but I'd lost most of my audience by the end. This shouldn't be taken as criticism of the Follies. They're *very* good examples of amateur theatrics. I guess, at about 75 minutes, that it just ran too long. At least I can consider the ice cream cake to be a complete success. Maybe we can learn from the ups and downs of this meeting, and do it better next year. 💻

Bob Hawes presented 7 long-time service awards to the following: Bruce Arnold (19 years), Bill Farrell (16 years), Matt Skoda (16 years), Barbara DeGroot (14 years), Arnold Milstein (13 years), Malthi Masurekar (12 years), and John Raff (Three simultaneous positions, 14 years, 11 years and 11 years, for a total of *36* years). Malthi, John, Bill and Arnold were in attendance, and were presented with their framed certificates personally. At the right is a representative sample of the certificates.

The Amateur Computer Group of New Jersey
presents the
Decade-Plus Award
for
Continuous Meritorious Service
to

John Raff

in recognition of his outstanding service

from 1995 to 2008 (and beyond)

as Facilities Chairman (1995 to 2008)

as Webmaster or Co-Webmaster (1998 to 2008)

and as Special Interest Group Chairman

(PC Symposium/Window Pains, 1998 to 2008)

Presented at the
Annual Business Meeting
December 5, 2008

Cut It Out

Bob Hawes (bob.hawes@acgnj.org), ACGNJ

Literally, this article ought to be called Copy It Out, but that just doesn't have the same Deja-Vu-ish ring to it. (I like using clichés in my titles almost as much as I like using silly jokes). Anyway, this article was inspired by a fellow ACGNJ member. At one of our Special Interest Group meetings, he demonstrated a "new" feature he'd found in newsletter PDF files that were posted on the Internet by another club. On our club computer, he highlighted text in one of those files, and pasted it into a new file that he'd created. He then criticized us because he couldn't do the same thing from our newsletters.

I was amazed, astonished and confused. I'd always thought that paying Adobe enormous piles of money for the full version of Acrobat was the only way to get any information out of a PDF file. When I got home, I went to that other club's website, and discovered that (after jumping through certain prerequisite hoops) I could do the same thing. Intrigued, I called up one of *our* recent newsletters, and found that I could do it there, too.

It seems that I've been the victim of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because I assumed that I couldn't copy information out of a PDF file, I never even looked to see if I *could*. (Apparently, my aforementioned fellow member also fell into the same trap, at least as far as ACGNJ newsletters went). Wondering just how long this had been going on, I began a systematic investigation. It turns out that you can do this in *any* PDF file that *wasn't* scanned in from already printed pages. For our newsletter, that means any file from January 1998 onward except for the June 1998 and November 2000 issues (and mysteriously *including* the July 1995, August 1995 and January 1996 issues).

I'm sure that some of you figured out this technique by yourselves a long time ago; but I'm also certain that many of my readers followed the same prevailing common wisdom as I did, and never even tried. Now, I'm going to reveal the "secret" to everyone. We'll look at four experimental subjects: Acrobat Reader 5.0 (from before Adobe changed the name) under Windows XP, Adobe Reader 6.0 under Windows 98 SE, Adobe Reader 7.0 under Windows XP, and Foxit Reader 2.3 under Windows XP. (I *never* use any Adobe versions above 7. They have too much "phone home" capabilities for my taste; and sorry, no Linux programs this time).

I briefly mentioned Foxit in my November 2008 article *Turkey with Gremlins*, giving it only a so-so review. However, it's since become my preferred PDF reader. It's not perfect, but I like it better than the Adobe products. One thing I particularly didn't like at first was the advertisement in the upper right hand corner. (Actually, the Adobe products each have somewhat similar "features" in just about the same places, but theirs aren't nearly as annoying). In a sort-of halfway nice-guy gesture, Foxit provides a way for users to turn their ad off. If you select the "View" menu from the Menu Bar, one of the nineteen options is Advertisement, which comes up checked by default. Simply un-check it, and the ad goes away; but the next time you start Foxit, it's back. There's no way to save your settings and keep it turned off permanently. I ran

Foxit from the XP Command Prompt with the "/?" switch added, thinking that they might have stuck in a special "off" option for knowledgeable users. Unfortunately, none of the seven "Usage" switches listed in the little window that popped up concerned the advertisement. So much for niceness. Strangely (though maybe it's just from familiarity), ever since I found out that I *could*, in fact, temporarily turn off the ad any time I want, I usually don't bother.

Personally, I have two programs capable of making PDF files: Writer (the word processor component of OpenOffice.org 2.2.0) and Scribus 1.3.3.12 (a free and very, very good open source desktop publisher). For my first two experimental sources, I chose a file produced by each program, both containing combinations of text and images. For my third source, I chose one of our newsletter PDF files (created by Corel Ventura Publisher 5). For my destinations, I pasted text into TXT files opened in Microsoft ® Notepad; and I pasted images into various file formats (BMP, GIF, JPG, PNG, etc.) opened in Microsoft ® Paint. (XP specified Version 5.1 for both programs. Windows 98 SE *didn't* list version numbers for either). You might guess that I wouldn't have gone into that much detail if my experiments hadn't been mostly successful; and you'd be right. With the exceptions to be noted further below, I was able to copy both text and graphics out of all three experimental source files, using all four experimental subject programs.

Here's the "secret": Each program starts up with the mouse pointer set to the "Hand" tool by default. To get stuff out, you need to change tools. We'll examine our subjects by seniority, oldest first. Acrobat Reader 5.0 has a Text Select Tool and a Graphics Select Tool, located *only* as icons on its Tool Bar. On the Adobe Reader 6.0 Menu Bar, if you select the Tools menu, and then the Basic sub-menu, you'll find Select Text and Select Image options. By default (although it's removable), there is also a Select Text icon on the Tool Bar. Plus, if you click on the drop-arrow *next* to that Select Text icon, you'll get the same Select Text *and* Select Image options that you got from the Menu Bar. On the Adobe Reader 7.0 Menu Bar, if you select Tools, then Basic, you'll find a single Select option that handles both text and images. There's also a single Select icon on the Tool Bar as well. All three Adobe products passed all of my tests with flying colors. In addition to complete images, with all three you can copy just parts of images, too.

Now for Foxit. If you click the Tools menu on the Menu Bar, you'll find a Select Text option. There's also a Select Text icon on the Tool Bar. Foxit Reader 2.3 passed all of my text tests just fine. However, it contains absolutely *no* graphics copying capabilities. To work with images, you have to download the evaluation version of Foxit PDF Editor 2.0. This is not an intuitively obvious user-friendly program (at least as far as *my* intuition is concerned). However, I was eventually able to figure out how to copy a whole image into the clipboard. From there, it was a snap to paste it into Paint.

(Maybe I'll also figure out how to do partial images someday, but not yet).

Every time you start Foxit PDF Editor, you get a message stating that you can use all of its features; but if you change and then save a PDF document, an evaluation mark will be put on every page that you modified. To test this, I deleted an image from one of my expendable PDF test files, and saved the file. Then, when I viewed that file with Foxit Reader, I found the following message (in red letters) in the upper right hand corner, just like they promised:

Edited by Foxit PDF Editor

Copyright (c) by Foxit Software Company, 2004 - 2007

For Evaluation Only.

Going back to the image I'd pasted into Paint, I saved that file after adding a tiny black rectangle to one side (as my own mark). Then, when I opened it in Windows Picture and Fax Viewer, I saw my pasted image, my little black rectangle, and *nothing* else. So I can use my evaluation version of Foxit PDF Editor to copy images out of PDF files if I need to, without any penalties. In addition, it's supposedly an exceptional PDF editor. Maybe, given time and practice, I'll learn how to use it properly. Someday, it might even be worth my while to actually pay them for the full version. Unfortunately, my current experience leads me to the conclusion that I *can't* recommend it to anyone else. Therefore, I haven't included any instructions (based on my woefully incomplete knowledge of how to use it) here.

I don't know whether they just haven't yet gotten around to adding the image selection feature to Foxit Reader, or if they left it out on purpose. Whatever the case, this lack (and that annoying ad) keeps me from giving Foxit Reader 2.3 the high recommendation that it would otherwise deserve.

Some final caveats: There are definite disadvantages to using a text file as your destination. However, I think that they are much preferable to the damage that could be caused by copying who-knows-what hidden control codes directly into a word processing document. I follow this same rule when copying text from the Internet. Here's what happened one time when I *didn't*.

It was late, I was doing a read-through of a draft newsletter article, and my deadline was "breathing down my neck". I decided that one section was a little weak, and thus required punching up. I already knew exactly where the information I needed could be found on the Internet, so I went there, located what I wanted, copied it, and then pasted it directly into my DOC file. The trouble was, absolutely nothing appeared on my screen. Thinking I'd messed up the copy process, I went back and did it again; and I got exactly the same result: nothing. After a few more frustrating failures, it finally occurred to me that the web site that I was trying to copy from was displayed in white letters on a black background. *All* of my copy operations had been successful; but because I'd been pasting white text onto a white background, I just couldn't *see* any of it.

Now, that was just an innocuous coloring error. Have you ever looked at the complete contents of an HTML file that was created by Microsoft Word? I'd say that less than 10% of it is data (legible characters that would actually be displayed on the computer screen). At most, a further 1% consists of required HTML commands. The rest is made up of ridiculously over-elaborate and absolutely unnecessary code. Who knows what unanticipated consequences might occur if random, incomplete sections of such code were to be copied into another word processor document? I certainly *don't* want to find out.

Even when using a text file as the destination for a PDF copy, you should be careful. There are strange things going on "behind the scenes" in PDF files that may affect the text that you're trying to copy. Sometimes, blocks of text that you highlighted in the source file will be copied to your destination file in a different order. Sometimes, text in the source which seems to be contiguous just flat out refuses to be highlighted for selection all at once. (In that case, get what you can the first time, then go back for the rest. You'll have to edit everything back together later). Finally, sometimes the text selection tool follows a sort-of "rectangular" rule (as if you were laying out some kind of "highlighting" frame on top of your source document). If this happens, and you accidentally stop your selection box just a tiny little bit short, it's possible to lose the first and/or last few letters from each and every line in *all* of your paragraphs. (Acrobat Reader 5.0 had a Column Select Tool which could do this anywhere, anytime, on purpose. That particular idea doesn't seem to have been carried over into Adobe Reader 6.0 or 7.0).

Here are some other things that happened during several of my tests: First, of course, effects like bold, italics, underlining, strikeout and colors were lost. (You have to expect that when pasting into a text file). Blank lines between paragraphs were NOT copied (they just vanished). Occasionally, a single space that should have been between two words disappeared as well. What would have been "soft" returns on the document were copied as "hard" returns in the text file. "Straight-up" quotation marks (ASCII Code 34 in decimal notation, where there's only one symbol displayed for both opening and closing quotes) were copied correctly. The more elaborate "curved" quotation marks used by word processors (which use two different symbols that look like they were both made from double commas, with the opening pair seeming to be upside-down) were displayed by Windows 98's Notepad as little black boxes. (Those are Extended ASCII Codes 147 and 148 in decimal notation, which plain-vanilla text editors often see as unprintable characters). However, the codes themselves weren't changed, because they displayed correctly when later copied into a word processor file.

Isn't it fun to learn something new?

See you next month. 💻

Using Vista's Hidden Disk Cleanup Options

Vinny La Bash (vlabash(at)comcast.net), Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc (www.spcug.org)

There are many things to like about the disk cleanup utility in Windows Vista. It's built into the operating system, it works, and it's free. It's also a tool that removes many potential problems such as corrupt files that may be causing difficulties or could cause computer ills in the future. One of its minor shortcomings is that it doesn't detect and eliminate wasteful duplicate files. This is a very insignificant quibble as Microsoft never claimed it could do that in the first place. That ability is an item on my wish list for the next version. Overall it's a very useful tool that everyone should be familiar with.

There is more to Disk Cleanup than removing junk files and recovering gigabytes of disk space. It's amazing how 'temporary' files can hang around for months in the little used crannies of a disk drive. Poorly written install and uninstall routines are largely responsible, but software glitches and power hiccups leave their own share of digital detritus laying about.

Systems with more than a terabyte of storage are becoming common, and it's easy to lose track of even the largest files. Try locating a suitcase sized patch of land in an area with the dimensions of a football field and you'll have an idea of what I'm talking about. Aside from taking up space, these useless files can slow down searches, bloat your backups, and make Vista's slow defrag process even slower.

If you're not familiar with how Disk Cleanup works, you can access a good tutorial by clicking the Start icon, and then Help and Support. In the search box type Disk Cleanup, and you will get a list of items directly and indirectly related to the subject. You want the first three or four items in the list.

Let's access the normal version of Disk Cleanup by opening up the Computer icon on the Desktop, right-clicking the C: drive, and choosing Properties.

On the General tab locate the Disk Cleanup button just below and to the right of the disk graphic. You might want to make a note of how much used and unused disk space you have for a before and after comparison. Left-click on the Disk Cleanup button and you will get a message that Windows is doing some calculations. Eventually, you get a dialog box which displays various categories of files you can remove. Windows will let you peek at many of these files, but it's largely a waste of time. I've never found anything worth examining. Make a note of how many types of files Windows can remove, and then close all the dialog boxes.

You've just seen the standard way to access Disk Cleanup. Let's now ecamine Disk Cleanup with its deep cleaning options exposed. Vista's official file name for the Disk Cleanup utility is *cleanmgr*. Open the Start globe again and type *cleanmgr* on the Start Search box at the bottom of the menu. Press Enter and The Drive Selection dialog box appears. This is a great way to eliminate mouse clicks if we want a fast way of getting to a specific drive. However, this method doesn't display the extra functions we're looking for so close the dialog box down.

To access the enhanced options we need to use something called the System Agent or *sage* in conjunction with *cleanmgr*. Click the Start globe again and in the Start Search box type

<div align="center">Cleanmgr /sageset:1</div>

Notice the space between *cleanmgr* and the forward slash. **Sageset** is a variation of the System Agent utility, and the number 1 allows you to select different cleaning options. You can use any number you want, even zero or negative numbers.

Disk Cleanup will now be running in a special setup mode that offers more cleaning options than the standard default. In addition, the System Agent will remember whatever cleanup options you select. When you run Cleanup again you don't have to make the same selections as long as you use the same number. That's what the System Agent set part does.

Press Enter to run the utility and wait for the **Disk Cleanup Settings** dialog box to appear. Highlight the individual cleanup options and in some cases there is additional information that is missing from the default dialog box. You also have more cleanup options.

You can select any number of options from just one to all of them. For maximum cleaning, select everything. When you're satisfied with the options you've selected, click the OK button and run the utility. When the job is done, go back and see how much disk space you've recovered. You could be in for a pleasant surprise.

We used the sageset command to set the cleanup options. The system keeps track of what you've done, and it will run the utility according to your specification in the future, but you can't use the sageset command for that. You need to ignore sageset and run the sagerun command instead. From the desktop click the Start globe, and in the Search box type:

<div align="center">Cleanmge /sagerun:1</div>

Press Enter and the system will automatically run in enhanced mode with the preference previously recorded. Run this command anytime you wish from now on. You can always change preferences by rerunning the sageset command with the cleanmgr utility.

Chances are good that a lot of clutter will be removed from your system, and you will see an increase in free space on your system. If you wish to automate the process, you can use the Task Schedular to run the tool automatically at your convenience.

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Security and Deleting Files: Common Misconceptions

Bob Schwartz (bobx(at)hal-pc.org), Member of HAL-PC, Texas (www.hal-pc.org)

You have just deleted a file from your hard drive. It's gone, isn't it? Sorry! It is still there.

You want to clean up your hard drive, so you format it. It is now clean. Nothing is on it anymore, right? Nope! Everything is still there, except for the file directory.

How can this be? Doesn't Delete mean remove? Doesn't Format clean the disk?

Each file system - has a file directory which records the file name and it's location. To delete a file, the disk system only alters the file's name in the file directory, usually by changing the first letter of the name. Formatting goes one step further, it just empties the file directory. Neither does anything to the files on the disk! They remain.

To clean a drive, either overwrite the whole drive or the unused space. The most common way to clean drives, especially older drives, is to write fixed or random data obliterate the old files.

Fortunately, all ATA drives over 15-20 GB produced since 2001 have an internal drive command that will clean the drive sufficiently that it will meet DOD requirements. At the University of California at San Diego's Center for Magnetic Recording Research (CMRR) you can download their free program for Secure Erase, entitled "HDDerase.exe". Its use meets U.S. Government requirements for disk erasure. Secure Erase should provide the greatest peace of mind. Internet Commentary suggests it is even better than mechanically shredding the disks.

If you have a good machine with good software that you would like to pass on to some else, and you don't have all the original disks – remove personal information. I suggest this approach:

- "Delete" the contents of: all the "My" folders - My Documents, My Pictures, My Music; Recent; Temp or Temporary folders; Recycle Bin; Cookies; Downloads; and the entire folders for Quicken and Tax preparation software.
- Clean your Registry of all personal data. For XP, go to Start/Run, type regedit and press Enter. Go to edit and click on find. Enter your last name, click on find next. When the first entry is found, go to edit and select modify. Delete your name (it should be in color). Depressing the space bar may clear it. Go back to edit and click on find next, etc. Keep on until you get a message that you have reached the end. Then repeat the above with your first name, then your street, your phone number, bank name, broker name, and anything else of a personal nature that you used.
- Find and download a registry cleaner. Use it to remove unnecessary items from the registry. Ccleaner is an example. IMPORTANT NOTE: Before editing your "registry", back it up first, please.

- Defragment the drive. This condenses the files and moves them toward the beginning of the drive.
- Locate and download a wipe application such as bcwipe. Use it to wipe (overwrite) all unused space.

This should effectively sanitize your disk, leaving it clean, safe and usable.

Loss of personal information and the risk of identity theft is a risk for you. For a business, the loss of personal, financial, or medical data may subject it to risk from recent laws, both federal and state.

I have been repairing or rehabilitating older machines as a hobby to give them a second life. There are many good machines and plenty of worthy recipients. If there is good software worth keeping, remove all personal data. If the software is not worth keeping, then wipe the disk clean to install an operating system and applications.

Removing the hard drive before you dispose of an old machine is not a solution, unless you plan to use it in your new machine, or store it permanently – you still ultimately have to sanitize it.

Programs available, free or fee, include: Secure Erase (mentioned above), Secure Delete, Wipe Drive, Acronis Privacy Expert, East-Tec Eraser, East-Tec Dispose Secure, Eraser, SysInternals SDelete, Darik's Boot and Nuke (dban), Over-Write, Wipe, Kill Disk, BCWipe, and Autoclave. This list is NOT exhaustive. And, you have to determine which is suitable to (1) wipe the entire drive or (2) wipe only the unused space.

Bottom line is, when you give away or dispose of a used computer, either clean the hard drive yourself or give the machine to someone you can trust who will do it for you. The comments and opinions here are wholly mine. I welcome alternative perspectives.

Bob Schwartz is a HAL-PC member, retired EE, 14 patents, technical writer, active in civic affairs: President, Brays Bayou Association; Vice President, Marilyn Estates Civic Association; Correspondence Secretary with the Willow Waterhole Greenspace Conservancy.

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From The DealsGuy

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

My wife drives a 2003 GMC Sonoma pickup and while I could write a book about its shortcomings, she loves it. We bought an extended warranty on it, but for only five years or 50,000 miles because we didn't think we would own it more than five years. We noticed oil leaks on the garage floor and took it to the dealer for diagnosis. The five-year warranty recently ended, but the truck only has 60,000 easy miles on it. The service advisor told us it had three leaks and explained that one was an oil pan leak, another is oil leaking from the timing chain cover and the other was the rear transmission seal leaking.

I was surprised about so many leaks, but asked the price of repairs. He said that the oil pan could not be removed because of the front end cross member being too close so they must pull the engine for those repairs. The total bill for all the leaks would be a bit over $1,700. I was astounded because I felt that 60,000 miles was premature for so many oil leaks.

I called GMC Customer Service, which has not been much help in the past with another ongoing problem, and explained the situation and disappointment with the reliability of the vehicle. The customer rep said he would take it up with the Zone Manager and get back with me. The dealership advisor said not to expect much. A few days later, the zone manager said they would be happy to help me and said they would pay for the gaskets and give me a 10% discount on the repair cost. I was stunned and told them where they could shove that help and that they had insulted my intelligence. After all, the gaskets would probably cost $20 and most dealerships give senior citizens a 10% discount, so there was no help there and they said OK, sorry, goodbye. I would have been happy with 50%. No wonder GM is going bankrupt with that kind of product reliability and customer relations attitude.

My son used my GM discount to purchase a GMC Sierra pickup and has had his share of warranty problems with it. First was a problem with the brake rotors, which the dealer would not replace when they became warped at 2,500 miles. They resurfaced them and the problem came back. Later, when the vehicle was just out of warranty, the diesel engine's injector pump went out. Customer Service said they would repair it at no cost, but it took two weeks to get the parts and they would not pay for the rental vehicle (interestingly, a Toyota pickup) which had always been customary. There were other problems. The first GMC pickup before he purchased his present one had transmission problems that they couldn't seem to repair and he had an attorney force GM to refund his money under the Lemon Law. This will be his last GMC, just like us, or probably even a GM product, for that matter, and that's where my pension comes from.

*New Product From Diskeeper

Ms. Teal Thompson, Director of Public Relations, sent me the specifications and pricing (below) for Diskeeper 2009 (just released). Diskeeper has always been a superb product.

"New Features List:

"Improved Trialware: Trialware will now take an analysis of the volume(s) "before" and "after" initial installation. A comparison report is then generated, demonstrating improved conditions.

"Improved InvisiTasking: The new, more assertive InvisiTasking can now operate in competitive environments, in conjunction with other always-on/idle-time tasks that run at lowest priority while still guaranteeing completely invisible, zero-overhead, operations.

"IPv6 (Internet Protocol version 6): Diskeeper 2009 now fully supports communication, such as remote management on native IPv6 networks.

"Improved Free Space Consolidation: About 90% of the available free space will now be grouped into less than a dozen free space segments. This will increase file write performance.

"About InvisiTasking: Instead of the operating system scheduler allocating the entire computer system to each process, one at a time, InvisiTasking empowers the system to allocate resources (CPU, memory, disk, and network) allowing overlapping usage of separate resources, not just reducing system overhead, but eliminating it altogether.

"InvisiTasking is what makes Diskeeper defrag in real time with zero overhead. Systems simply run fast, operate at peak and are reliable, constantly. The drives are always optimally maintained.

"Diskeeper 2009 includes the new InvisiTasking 2.0! New functionality in InvisiTasking will allow it to be more assertive, while still guaranteeing completely invisible, zero-overhead, operations." (Check their Web site for further information.)

"Diskeeper 2009 with HyperFast™ SSD optimization: "The new Diskeeper 2009 is now available as a bundle with the new HyperFast SSD optimization product.

"HyperFast™: Solid State drives (SSDs) promise users a faster and better experience than conventional hard disk drives (HDD). However, Microsoft® Windows® is not optimized for NAND Flash as a principal storage device, such as with SSDs. The result is that, over time, customers of systems with SSDs will experience a very noticeable and dramatic deterioration (up to 80%), to the degree that their computers operate much slower than they would with a hard disk. The new HyperFast feature bundled with Diskeeper 2009 is specifically designed to eliminate performance degradation, and restore performance to like-new conditions."

Special pricing only applies on multiple purchases.

Diskeeper 2009 Home: ESD $29.95, 2-pack $44.95, 3-pack $54.95, 5-pack $89.95

Diskeeper 2009 Professional: ESD $59.95, 2-pack $89.95, 3-pack $149.95, 5-pack $269.75

Order at *http://www.diskeeper.com/purchase/purchase.aspx*.

*Want A DVD Creator?

DealsGuy Note: I have not actually tried this product.

Continued

When to Turn Off Personal Computers

U.S. Department of Energy (www.energy.gov/forconsumers.htm)

If you're wondering when you should turn off your personal computer for energy savings, here are some general guidelines to help you make that decision.

Though there is a small surge in energy when a computer starts up, this small amount of energy is still less than the energy used when a computer is running for long periods of time. For energy savings and convenience, consider turning off the monitor if you aren't going to use your PC for more than 20 minutes both the CPU and monitor if you're not going to use your PC for more than 2 hours.

Make sure your monitors, printers, and other accessories are on a power strip/surge protector. When this equipment is not in use for extended periods, turn off the switch on the power strip to prevent them from drawing power even when shut off. If you don't use a power strip, unplug extra equipment when it's not in use.

Most PCs reach the end of their "useful" life due to advances in technology long before the effects of being switched on and off multiple times have a negative impact on their service life. The less time a PC is on, the longer it will "last." PCs also produce heat, so turning them off reduces building cooling loads.

For cost effectiveness, you also need to consider how much your time is worth. If it takes a long time to shut down the computer and then restart it later, the value of your time will probably be much greater than the value of the amount of electricity you will save by turning off the computer.

Many PCs available today come with a power-down or sleep mode feature for the CPU and monitor. ENERGY STAR® computers power down to a sleep mode that consume 15 Watts or less power, which is around 70% less electricity than a computer without power management features. ENERGY STAR monitors have the capability to power down into two successive "sleep" modes. In the first, the monitor energy consumption is less than or equal to 15 Watts, and in the second, power consumption reduces to 8 Watts, which is less than 10% of its operating power consumption.

Make sure you have the power-down feature set up on your PC through your operating system software. This has to be done by you, otherwise the PC will not power down. If your PC and monitor do not have power-down features, and even if they do, follow the guidelines given about when to turn the CPU and monitor off. ⌨

DealsGuy, *continued*

ZC Software has released ZC DVD Creator Platinum V. 6.2.2, a new version of ZC DVD creator software that converts almost any video source to burn on a DVD directly without having to store it on a hard drive. ZC DVD Creator Platinum lets users customize their menu templates to match the user's style, giving the movie a polished look. The software will edit, author and burn all DVD formats ever known. With ZC DVD Creator Platinum, it is possible to easily create personal DVDs.

ZC DVD Creator Platinum supports all known video source formats, such as AVI, DIVX, XVID, RM, RMVB, MPEG, MPG, VCD, SVCD, WMV, ASF, ASX, SWF, MOV/DAT, FLV (Flash Video), 3GP (3gpp, 3gp, 3gp2), MP4 (mp4, mpeg4), Nullsoft Video (NSV) ,AVS, Decrypted DVD File (VOB), MKV, DV video, mts, and m2ts. Also, the user has new menu template themes that can easily customize the new Hollywood-style DVD menus. It's possible to trim and split-cut the videos, specify the DVD background Music and Images, edit the DVD Menu short description and playback preview the video file.

The video encoder guarantees the best DVD picture quality within one hour. If Nero is installed, the software automatically selects Nero as the default burning engine. ZC DVD Creator Platinum supports wide screens (16:9) as well as the usual TV screens (4:3). It also supports both NTSC and PAL TV systems. The advanced Dolby Digital audio will strengthen the movie with theater quality sound. The software includes automatic matching of a broad range of DVD-R/RW and DVD+R/RW burners. The user can burn a DVD Movie image file placed on a hard disc to a DVD Disk directly without storing them on a hard disc.

ZC DVD Creator Platinum has a friendly and easy to use interface that allows the user to create a DVD movie just by one click. The new version of ZC DVD Creator Platinum has an upgraded video clip edit feature.

Pricing and Availability: ZC DVD Creator Platinum is compatible with all versions of Windows. Ordering the software on a CD-ROM is $15 USD extra for shipping. Special offers are:

- ZC DVD Creator Platinum and ZC Video Converter at $60 USD;
- ZC DVD Creator Platinum and QR Photo DVD Slideshow at $60 USD;
- ZC DVD Ripper and ZC Video Converter at $65 USD;

By purchasing ZC DVD Creator Platinum the user gets lifetime FREE Technical Support and FREE upgrades. For firsthand appraisal, a free trial version is available. The user has a 30-day money back guarantee.

Product page: *http://www.videoxdvd.com/product.htm*

Download link: *http://www.videoxdvd.com/download.htm*

Company web-site: *http://www.videoxdvd.com*

That's it for this month. I'll have some more new product announcements on my Web site that didn't offer discounts. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. 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. Visit my Web site at *http://www.dealsguy.com* ⌨

Face Time in the 21ˢᵗ Century

Lou Vitale (mug(at)maconusersgroup.org), Macon County Users Group (www.maconusersgroup.org)

Person to person communication was pretty simple last century. There was the letter, or as we call it today, "snail mail" and the telephone. Our address book contained the physical address of our friends and their phone numbers. It is amazing to me how much we actually got done, we won wars and went to the moon and created the greatest county on earth, and all without a single bit of digitized information.

To someone who grew up in the last 20 or so years that must seem quaint. They probably can't imagine life without a cell phone, email, IM and a dozen other ways of communicating with their fellow human beings. I am beginning to wonder myself. Someone asked me the other day if I "Twittered", I thought it was a neurological disorder. No, it was a form of micro-blogging, another way to stay in touch in the 21ˢᵗ century.

So just how many ways can you keep up to the minute with your "friends" today, let me count the ways. And this is by no means a complete list.

Email has been around since the beginning of the internet. By the late 80s' everyone with a computer had an email account. Now we could send a message to anyone with a computer and they could reply. This was a momentous social change. It significantly accelerated the communication between people. Plus we could "attach" stuff, like pictures of the grandkids, or an excel spread sheet to our email.

In it simplest form, a blog (web log) is an online diary or journal. Prior to the mid 90's online forums and BBS (bulletin board systems) allowed people to have running conversations on a web site with a moderator to keep order. Then some high profile personalities started to keep online diaries which allowed comments from anyone to be posted, and the blog was born.

Today bogging is a serious force to be reckoned with. Anyone can start a blog and thousands do every day. Currently there are an estimated 12 million blogs and about 57 million blog readers. These numbers are deceiving, since it appears that only about 20% of blogs are active and 60% to 80% of blogs are abandoned after one month. As one commentator put it "the average blog has the life span of a fruit fly".

Yet this kind of personal communication has again changed the social landscape. Anyone can comment on anything from personal hygiene to politics and anyone can respond with their take on the subject. Some bloggers have aspired to become journalists and others are just looking for some virtual recognition, either way we are more in touch.

Personal communication has taken another leap with the creation of social networking sites like Face Book and My Space. These sites and many others like them allow virtual conversation to take place between friends on an almost instant basis. I will confess, I don't know much about them which only proves my age. But without a doubt, and from now on a person's identity will forever be linked to their Face Book page and their list of friends.

Will someone please explain to me why someone would attempt to communicate by text using a device no bigger than a deck of cards and with a "Key Board" consisting of 12 keys?

At a minimum IM (Instant Messaging) requires tiny fingers, superb eye hand coordination and a new language consisting of thousands of newly created letter combinations to represent real words. And another thing since this device is a Phone, why not just TALK to the person? LOL

The ultimate "Personal" communication for the 21ˢᵗ century must be in Second Life. In this enormous virtual world millions of people interact with millions of other people, one on one. The whole range of human activity can now take place in a virtual environment. You can be anyone you want and "talk" to a dragon or a real priest, free of the most basic limitation of our human form. In a sense this is probably personal communication on a level never seen before.

Twitter is the newest "form" of communication. It answers the pressing question, "What are you doing NOW?" As you go through your day, you constantly update your "Twitter" page with mini blog entries no more than 140 characters long. Now anyone who is logged o to your page can tell what you are doing, what you are feeling, who you are with and any moment in the day. Why didn't I think of that? It's obvious that I would want to know all the mundane details of all my friends' daily lives.

Face time means actual face to face talk. The words, the eyes, the body language, the context, all convey meaning. Let me know when we can do that online. Until then, don't look for my Twitter page.

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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. Thanks Joseph Gaffney, who loaned his collection for scanning. Below is a list of what we still need.

1985: June, July, August, September

1984: August

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

1975: All issues except #1 (June). These are also pamphlet-size booklets.

If you can supply any of these missing issues (or scanned images or good clear 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. ⌨

Go-Withs for That New Holiday Computer

Ira Wilsker

While doing my holiday shopping, I noticed that a lot of people were buying new computers for the holidays. I saw people mostly buying notebook or laptop computers, but still many purchased new desktop computers. All new computers typically work fine right out of the box, and often come bundled with either full versions of application software, or trial versions of software. Still, almost all new computers need some accessories, peripherals, or software to maximize usefulness and safety.

Almost all new computers, both desktop and laptop, come with a trial version of antivirus software, and possibly even a trial version of a security suite. Perusing the offerings at the local stores I saw trial versions running from 30 days to 6 months of the popular retail security suites, mostly from Norton, McAfee, and TrendMicro. While functional and requiring registration and updating when first loaded, these security software products will all perform an acceptable job while they are effective, and prior to their expiration. Most of the software publishers consider the pre-installation of their products on new computers as a form of paid (to the computer manufacturer) advertising, with the hope that the user will renew what is already installed. Some of the software publishers even pay commissions to the computer maker when the user pays to renew the trial software, and convert it to a paid annual subscription. The user needs to be aware that while the trial software installed, registered, and updated is typically adequate, it often renews at full retail price. The user can usually find the same product at retail (full retail package) for significantly less than the renewal price, or can find a competitive and possibly superior product at retail.

If the new computer does not come with a security suite, consisting of antivirus, anti-spyware, and a firewall, it will be necessary to purchase a suite, or download and install one of the freeware suites. My personal favorite, which I have installed on many new computers, is TrendMicro's Internet Security Suite 2009 Pro. This suite is among the most comprehensive suites available, and as of now somewhat of an industry standard; it can be installed on up to three computers with a single license. While not a complete suite, I have also installed Sunbelt's VIPRE on some computers, especially those which already have a hardware or software firewall installed. VIPRE in my own tests, and in published comparisons, does not significantly degrade the performance of the computer, unlike many competing products. VIPRE incorporates one of the most powerful antivirus and anti-spyware engines available, and unlike its competitors, can be installed on all computers in the household with a single license. For those who want a freeware suite of security products, Comodo (*www.comodo.com*) offers a totally free and excellent suite of products that can be downloaded and installed a' la carte.

One of the lesser understood killers of both laptop and desktop computers is bad power, resulting from power surges and voltage variations. At a bare minimum, all computers should be plugged into a surge suppressor (not a plain power strip).

Generally, the higher the "joule" rating, the more protection provided. Most surge suppressors also have connections for phone lines, network cables, coax, and other connections that can carry power spikes into the computer, causing damage. While there is some debate on the usefulness of filtering, and the possible degradation of signals when thus filtered, I believe that it is still a wise precaution to have the computer and peripherals plugged into a quality suppressor. Look for the "UL 1449" rating which indicates that it meets minimum safety standards for suppressors. For desktop computers, the physical size of the suppressor is not a major factor, but for laptop and notebook computers which will likely be transported, there are some excellent suppressors that are small in form factor. I carry a small but powerful Tripp Lite surge suppressor in my computer case, and use it whenever I plug my computer into a wall outlet.

For desktop computers, even better than a strip type surge suppressor, is an uninterruptible power supply, often referred to as a UPS. These devices, in addition to providing suppression functions, also provide battery backup power in order to allow an orderly shutdown in the event of a power failure, which protects both the computer itself, and also the data which can be properly saved before a forced shutdown. Many better UPS devices also incorporate AVR or automatic voltage regulation, to provide a constant voltage to the computer, which protects the computer's power supply, and prolongs its useful life. If the user lives in an area with irregular voltage, or notices that lights and TVs dim whenever an air conditioner or major appliance kicks in, AVR is a "must have" feature. Because of their size and weight, UPS devices are not appropriate for laptop use unless used in a stationary environment such as a home or an office. In purchasing a UPS, in addition to AVR and other features, it is important that the battery capacity be enough to power the computer and monitor long enough to provide for an orderly shutdown, generally the larger the integral battery, the better.

For laptop and notebook computers, there are several items of necessity that are usually not included with the computer at the time of purchase. One item of necessity is a high quality computer case that offers complete protection to the computer on all six sides. One of the major killers of laptop computers is damage when dropped or banged; a good case will provide reasonable protection. I have learned first-hand not to skimp on the case, but have heard horror stories of people buying a thousand dollar notebook computer, and putting it in a $29 case, only to suffer unintended destruction while traveling, or by simply having the case fall off of a table or car seat. Most laptop and notebook computers are fragile, and the LCD screens can easily crack, so get a good case with excellent protection.

Another killer of notebook and laptop computers is heat, especially notorious when the computer is placed on a non-conductive surface, such as wood or a laminate, and allowed to run for long periods of time. When this occurs, the computer has a good possibility to overheat, as heat can not be

Continued

Mac versus PC

Sandy Berger (sandy (at) compukiss.com), Compukiss.com (www.compukiss.com)

We have all seen the popular Apple television commercials encouraging computer users to switch from Windows to Mac. Not only are the commercials convincing, but Apple has made some moves that make the Mac a viable option for computer users. In years past, the biggest drawback to purchasing a Mac was that Windows software was incompatible with a Mac. You couldn't use Windows software that was not available in a Mac version so switching from a PC to a Mac meant repurchasing all your software applications.

Then Apple made the move from Motorola processors to Intel processors. This made the Apple hardware compatible with Windows software. Any Mac that you purchase today is able to run both the Windows and the Mac operating system. You can do this by using a free Apple program called Boot Camp that is available to all Mac users. Using Boot Camp, you have to reboot the computer every time you want to switch between the two operating systems. Another option makes using Windows on a Mac even easier. If you purchase a simple virtualization product like Parallels, you can switch on the fly.

Being able to run Windows on a Mac has been a boon to Apple. In 2004 their market share in the operating system segment was a little over 3%. Today it is close to 8% and growing.

There are fewer worries when using a Mac. For the most part, Macs are almost completely virus and spyware free. It's not that Macs are actually more secure, it's just that with the viruses and programs that infiltrate computers to steal information and to send out spam are operating system-specific. In other words, the hackers have to create their programs to run on either Windows or Mac. Since the Windows operating system is currently running on over 90% of computers, that operating system is the most likely target for the bad guys. So right now, Macs are ignored by most hackers.

It can also be said that Macs run their software better than PCs. The reason that this is true is that because Apple produces all of the hardware they can have strict control over every hardware component. So the software producers know exactly what hardware their software will run on. In the PC world, slight differences in the hardware can cause software headaches. As you know, with HP, Dell, Acer, Sony, Gateway, and many others producing the hardware, there is compatibility, but not necessarily full hardware/software compliance.

So why doesn't everyone switch to the Mac? Well, it can be summed up quite easily in one word, "Price". Macs always have been, and are still are, more expensive than PCs. Often Macs can cost several hundreds of dollars more than comparable Window's machines. This week Apple announced their first sub-$1,000 laptop computer. The MacBook will now be selling at $999. Their higher-end MacBook Pro will start at $1,999. In contrast, you can buy many Windows laptops for under $1,000, and some are now even under $500.

Another thing that makes the Mac more costly is that when you purchase an Apple computer it comes with the Mac OS X operating system. If you want to run Windows on your Mac as well, you will have to purchase a full version of Windows. As I write this, Amazon is selling the full version of Windows XP Home Edition for $179. A full version of Windows Vista Home Premium is selling at Amazon for $222. If you want to add the ability to easily switch between the two operating systems, you will have to dish out about $80 more for Parallels or another good virtualization program. In some cases those added costs can almost double the cost of a cheap PC.

The other reason that some people won't switch to a Mac is that they don't want to have to learn to use a new operating system. But if you are currently using Windows XP and you purchase a new computer now, you will have at least a slight learning curve to make the transition to Windows Vista.

If Apple would lower their prices and create a free program that would let you run Windows without rebooting, I wouldn't mind purchasing the additional Windows software necessary to be able to run both operating systems on a Mac. In fact, I think that those two changes would have people flocking in droves to the Mac. But then, if the Apple operating system gains a bigger market share, hackers will start targeting it as well as Windows. Oh well, I guess life in the computer world really does mirror life in the real world. It seems that nothing will ever be perfect in either world.

Parallels Desktop for Mac is the first solution for Intel-Macs that give you the flexibility of running Windows on a Mac OS X simultaneously without rebooting. C

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Holiday Computer, *continued*

dissipated through the case on the bottom. A good peripheral would be a laptop notebook cooler, which is a flat, thin, USB powered device, containing one or more fans to dissipate heat. The computer sits on the top of the cooler, and the fans blow room air around the base of the computer, cooling it. A poor man's version is an iron or aluminum trivet available in the housewares department of any discount or dollar store. Likewise, a sturdy cake rack, available from similar sources, will allow cooling air to circulate around the computer if the computer is placed on it while running. If placed physically on the user's lap, the user will easily know when it is getting too hot.

Congratulations if you were fortunate enough to get a new computer for the holidays. Now maybe you can also get the accessories and peripherals for it to maximize its useful life. ⌨

Copying Information from Your Screen

Richard Kennon (drtrdguy (at) volcano.net), Amador Computer Users Group, CA (http://www.acug.net/)

Sometimes there are things you may want to copy from your screen that may not lend themselves to the PrtScr method. This is especially true of lists in drop down boxes that require a scroll bar down the right side. PrtScr will only show the portion of the list that shows. For instance, I write a (almost) monthly newsletter on the web and usually include a bunch of pictures. I like to have a hard copy of the picture thumbnails at hand to remind me of things to say. This is always a scrolling window. Often I want a hardcopy of a menu, too.

I have found FastStone Capture to be a perfect answer to my needs. You can try it free by going to *http://www.faststone.org/*. Then, if you like it, as I do, you can purchase a lifetime license for $19.95.

You can capture and annotate anything on the screen including windows, objects, menus, full screen, rectangular /

freehand regions and scrolling windows / web pages. Editing tools include annotating, resizing, cropping, sharpening, watermarking, edge effects and many more. Of course, you can transfer the image to any editor of choice. You can either print the copy or save it in one of eight different formats. I choose JPEG. Further, you can choose the resolution of the saved image. I don't know if it actually improves the resolution or just resizes to more pixels.

Of course, it features a bunch of hot key combinations but, with my memory, this is not useful. Instead I rely on the small box of choices at the bottom right of my screen. I find it extremely useful and use it almost every day.

SnagIt

John Roy(johnroy1 (at) comcast.net), The Personal Computer Users Group of Connecticut (http://tpcug-ct.org/)

So what is SnagIt? It is a screen capture program (Like base level PrintScreen). Every computer user needs the ability to capture information off of the screen. Your basic operating system has always provided rudimentary capability to print or capture a full screen but it is woefully inadequate in today's environment. How many times do you need a screen region or maybe an area that scrolls off the display as many web pages do? How about having the ability to extract only the text or capture screen actions? All of these functions and many more are easily addressed with SnagIt.

SnagIt has been around since 1990. I remember my first exposure to this great utility back in those early years when computer expositions were held at the Javitz Convention Center in New York City. While today's functionality greatly supersedes those early days the neat scroll capture was the cool feature of the times and is still a main-stay tool.

For a screen capture program to be useful it needs flexibility beyond Microsoft's dismal screen and window capture. SnagIt provides every imaginable capture you could ever want with Image Capture, Text Capture, Video Capture, Web Capture, and Printer Capture. Each of these modes has additional control options such as delayed capture, capture the mouse cursor, set a timer, or capture multiple areas, to name a few. Video capture provides a very useful tool for creating instructional clips. You can play back the video or even save individual frames. The ability to capture editable text from dialog boxes and other screens where it ordinarily can't be copied is extremely useful.

To make life easier you have the ability to set up profiles to reflect the way you like to work. Profiles coupled with a defined hot key can grab and process a clip all the way to the intended application. You can configure input, output, effects and options. Add-ons are automatically and/or optionally installed into several applications such as Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, Power Point and Internet Explorer) and other popular

products. Wizards and tool-bars are available to simplify setting up profiles.

Having many capture options is only the front end of this versatile utility, there is also an overabundance of tools to annotate, mark up, organize, convert, edit and share captured content. The processing tools suite includes a very powerful editor that will bring your clips to life. No longer are you stuck with a blasé clip. With very little effort you can spruce up your clips by adding effects, borders, stamps, and hotspots to name a few. You can operate on one or many images at the same time. A batch conversion utility allows the user to modify and output a collection of clips into a wide selection of formats. This utility allows you to set up your output to selections such as File, FTP, Email, Printer, etc. The output properties are fully customizable.

Since SnagIt stores every capture you make, a first reaction would be "how does one find the clip of interest"? Well search capability is automatically built into the software and can be further enhanced by the use of tags. Every capture you make saves the time, date, and URL information that will allow you to quickly return to the site of the capture.

To fully appreciate the value of this great program, download the 30 day free trial and/or view some of the extremely informative and clearly illustrated tutorials available on TechSmith's website http://www.techsmith.com/. SnagIt lists for $49.95, runs on all newer Windows operating systems including 64-bit Vista. A minimum of 1 GHz processor and 512 MB of Ram is required but double that for smoother operation. TechSmith has developed and improved on SnagIt over the years and has a product that belongs in every computer user's tool box.

Build a "Green" PC on a Budget

Rob Limbaugh (Relimbaugh (at) dacs.org), Danbury Area Computer Society, CT (www.dacs.org)

We're constantly bombarded by the subject of energy conservation — "green" this and "green" that. I think that much of our problem is our "disposable society". On top of that it seems that most people tend to be "green" only if it fits into their budget and lifestyle. It is a little difficult to rationalize spending $25,000 on a solar array for a house that will take a decade to pay for itself..

But, if you happen to be looking for another computer and you're willing to spend some spare time and effort, you can rescue good parts from a premature demise and save money at the same time. How? Read on!

Timing Is Everything

Around here we have "transfer stations" to which local residents take their refuse and recyclables if they don't have curbside pickup or another service. The transfer station is somewhat of a presorting point before everything goes to a larger dump site.

What amazes me is that people seem to be willing to pay a few bucks to throw away things that could be recycled or disposed of for no cost with just a bit more effort. No matter. That works out well for me — I can shop!

I need more computer equipment like I need another hole in my head. What I always seem to lack are good motherboards to match up with the spare DVD drive here and spare hard drive there. On a recent trip to the dump I hit pay dirt! Someone had dropped off a bunch of computer equipment and I got there early enough in the day to have relatively fresh dibs!

Weeding Out Junk

Knowing that garbage tends to be at dumps, I look for specific traits when considering a rescue of any would-be junk. Last thing I want to do is throw it away when I get home and you can't exactly test things at a transfer station. This is a good exercise in knowing your hardware so you can just take home the good stuff and leave everything else there. As luck would have it, I found a gutted case with a motherboard stripped of everything but the CPU and heat sink. Even the BIOS battery was gone! They did leave the power supply, though.

Back to the Bench

So far my out-of-pocket expense is $0.00 and I'd like to keep it that way! I take the guts home and blow them out with an air-compressor. The minimum needed to successfully power on a motherboard are a power supply, motherboard, CPU, fan, and memory. Unfortunately I didn't have any memory on hand for this motherboard, so now it's time to do some leg work and see if I should consider spending the money when I don't even know if the board works.

The motherboard, in this case, can be identified by a silk-screen of "PTGD1-LA" between the PCI slots. This cross-references to a board used in HP Pavilion Ax00 systems. This gives me access to motherboard details so I know what the connecting pins are, memory requirements, and other details necessary to do troubleshooting. Yippee, memory for this board is on sale right now — 1GB for $27!

Good, Bad, or Ugly?

In this situation I presume the components are good until proven faulty. Having all the dust blown off, I sniff around the motherboard. That's right, using my nose, I sniff around the motherboard. The power supply, too. Fried components have a burnt smell. All smells good.

Powering on a working system with the memory removed should get yield "memory error" beep codes from the motherboard. I power everything on and get beep codes indicating bad memory. During this time I listen for fan noise out of the power supply and the CPU fan. Nothing that sounds like skateboard wheels on pavement. Things are looking good!

Many motherboards take CR2023 batteries for memory, including this one. I picked up a two-pack along with a 1GB stick of PC-3200 memory. So far I'm out about $30 and still don't know if this will fire up completely, but odds are in my favor. Besides, if I needed PC-3200 and PC batteries today, I'd need them in the future for another find later.

Hot Dog!

With the memory seated and a battery added, I fired up the machine and the screen came up! Woo-Hoo! Looking really good now! And it's a P4!

I gathered up a spare SATA hard drive and DVD drive and connected them to the system. BIOS reported the devices. Turns out this is an Intel P4 3.0GHz CPU with Hyper-threading.

Wrapping It Up

Sure this isn't a screaming-fast brand new machine, but it has much potential and is still quite useful. Someday, the parts will wind up being recycled through the transfer station for good — but not today. For now, it has a new life. This board has integrated video, audio, and four SATA ports. It has IDE, USB, PCI Express, and legacy connections. It is also very quiet. This is not bad find at all! I will probably use this as the start of my network storage system.

Now if only I could get my hands on some DVD-RW drives that don't work..

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YouTube for Posterity

Mike Moore (ml.moore (at) insightbb.com), Bowling Green Computer Users Group, KY (www.bgamug.org)

Video sharing websites, such as Google Video and YouTube, are either great resources or the world's biggest time-wasters, depending on your viewpoint. YouTube for example, allows users to view and share video clips with ease, and anyone can upload a video clip on this site without cost, making it a kind of "America's Funniest Videos" of the internet.

In an effort to keep users coming back to their site (and thus generating more ad revenue), YouTube encodes its video files in the Macromedia Flash format (SWF), with Flash video (FLV) data embedded, which prevents viewers from downloading files and making digital copies. Instead, the files are streamed directly to the player in your browser (Internet Explorer or FireFox). There is no obvious download link for users to save the video locally for offline viewing or for transferring to a portable media player. You might think of this in terms of your desktop: you get the link, but not the file.

One of the things I like about the internet is it's a little bit like a dream that you can control. Or, if you like, some kind of software heaven. If you can imagine a solution for some perceived problem, often you can look out there, and a solution will have already been created, like magic. This arises from the very large number of creative folks that come across the same difficulties that you and I do, and are actually able to whip up a solution. More often than not, they don't want any money in exchange for the solution, they just want the problem to be fixed.

There are, in fact, multiple solutions for this problem — that YouTube offers no handy download link and no apparent way to put its videos on your iPod or computer for later enjoyment. I will present only one, but I also want to tell you how I found it, because that will help you with locating solutions like this.

You can find YouTube video recorders at download.com and a host of other download sites, but I have a problem with programs found on these sites. I look for well behaved programs that only minimally solve the problem and do not try to do too much. And the distinction between well-behaved programs and ad-ware and spy-ware is getting to be very small indeed. The word "free" on these sites, in reference to someone's program, usually means anything but free.

It is difficult to find a site that presents only open-source, well-meaning programs that respect my desktop and my time. Such programs are like finely crafted European or Japanese tools. They are understated and unassuming, and behave exactly as expected and are documented well. The closest I have ever come to a site that presents such tools for download is *http://sourceforge.net*.

Sourceforge.net is not perfect. One of the pervasive problems on the site is that you won't always know if a particular program is for Windows, Linux, Unix, Mac or some other more exotic computer. Another problem is sometimes programmers jump right into the middle of their story when documenting the program and forget to tell us what the heck the program is supposed to do.

Anyway, I browsed to sourceforge.net and typed in two keywords: youtube recording, and got 45 hits. Try that on Google and you be lucky to get less than 45,000!

Since SourceForge is about teams of programmers communicating towards a solution to a particular problem, we find far less junk on here than we do on one of the more popular download sites. But we also find projects that have only just started, and don't really have anything for us to download yet. To help me decide which of the 45 solutions to look at, I focus on the last column, which tells me the number of downloads and therefore the relative popularity of the program.

Based on over 35,000 downloads, it looks like "Youtube Downloader" is a good choice. Note: SourceForge is not known for creative program titles either!

Note that the description of this program indicates the program is "platform independent," meaning that it does not matter whether you have a Mac or PC, this should run on both. Platform Independent usually means that the program runs inside of a browser and uses Java technology to achieve its independence. See *Java.com* for more on how Java manages to do this. If you have the latest Internet Explorer or FireFox browser, you probably have Java. If not, it's easy to download it from Java.com if you have a fast internet connection.

The file comes down as ytd17.zip. After I unzip the file to a directory (a good choice would be My Videos), I notice there are two directories, one labeled YouTubeDownloader and one called simply, bonus. Without even being tempted by the "bonus" directory, I navigate into the other directory and find two more directories, "full" and "opensource," and I chose full. Inside there is a file called ytd.jar. It carries a little blue and orange coffee-cup logo which is another giveaway that this is a java program. I double click on this file and hope for the best. Windows asks me if I want to open it, and I click OK. It opens, but I am also directed to a web site automatically. I hope the programmer just wants me to know something about the program and is not wanting to sell me anything! Here we see another benefit of Java programs — no installation needed. Just double click and it goes to work for you.

I opened my browser and went to YouTube.com, selected a video and then copied the URL (from the browser address window) using CTRL-C, put my mouse cursor in the space where it says "Enter youtube links separated by a new line" and hit CTRL-V to paste the URL in there. I guess you could type it in too, if you were very accurate.

I clicked on the download button and when the download was complete, the program rather cryptically referred me to the download directory, which turned out to be where I installed YouTube Downloader, My Videos. There was a file in there called YouTube-Dancing Liquid.flv, which was indeed my video, but there was a problem—the FLV file extension was not associated with any of my applications! No matter, when I double clicked the FLV file, Windows gave me a choice of what to open it with. I chose my trusty VideoLAN player (on your BGAMUG CD), and it worked just fine.

Happy YouTubing!

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TV Converter Box Notes

Mike Morris (twriterext (at) gmail.com), Front Range PC Users Group, CO (www.frpcug.org)

Regarding video (and audio) hardware, I have to admit to being an Old Analog Guy (the acronym = OAG and is pronounced "ogre"). I have 2 old analog TV's. I don't intend to buy a new HDTV until they both quit working. I don't intend to sign up for satellite or cable TV. I don't, actually, watch very much TV (or movies), and I am not interested in computer games. For the "Digital TV Transition" coming in February 2009, a TV converter box is the solution for me; especially now that I have my two $40 coupons. The question is, which converter to buy?

There are 52 DTV converter box models from 33 manufacturers listed on the enclosure that came with my converter box coupons (and many more listed on the website provided at the end of this article). Not all converters are equal. It is still "Buyer Beware," so you need to decide what features and specs you want (and/or don't want), and then check the specs of each unit carefully. Perhaps there are a few others like me, who are considering buying a converter box. For my fellow OAG's (male or female), I have collected links to information on 6 of the converters that I will share with you.

Do check prices, with reputable online sellers and with your local big box or electronics store. Prices vary widely. I have picked some prices in order to provide an approximation of the "MSRP (Manufacturer's Suggested Retail Price)".

Channel Master CM-7000: A recent price: $79.99 (less $40 coupon). Exact phrase Google search: 3860 hits. A few of those pages were investigated. One with information and specifications is Channel Master 1. Channel Master is part of Andrew Corporation (known for its antennas, among other things), which is now part of CommScope. The CommScope HQ are in North Carolina. For more information on these companies and their products, connect to CommScope (*http://www.commscope.com/company/eng/index.html*).

Check out the discussion of this unit on AV Science Forum (*http://www.avsforum.com/*): (This is part of a message posted in March of 2008.) "The specifications on page 2 of the information sheet: Demodulator input for 1080i, 720p, 480i, and 480. Video output is 480i ONLY. 480i is Standard Definition DTV only. The CM-7000's claim to "Get Free HDTV Without Monthly Fees" is inaccurate."

Echostar TR-40: A recent price: Unofficially, $40, which means, effectively, free with the coupon. Exact phrase Google search: 10,100 hits. Lots of information on this unit on the AfterDawn website (*http://www.afterdawn.com/*). This website also provides comparisons to other similar units.

Digital Stream D2A1D110/20: A recent price: $69.99 (less $40 coupon). Exact phrase Google search: 2 hits, plus 2 ads. None of the links from the Google search provided information on the model number listed above. There are four other Digital Stream model numbers listed in coupon enclosure, one of which is described at Solid Signal.com (*http://www.solidsignal.com/*).

GE 22729: A recent price: $79.99 (less $40 coupon) Exact phrase Google search: 39,200 hits. For (limited) specs see *www.afterdawn.com/hardware/product_details.cfm/4895/ge_22729*.

Insignia NS-DXA1: A recent price: $59.99 (less $40 coupon). Exact phrase Google search: 44,700 hits. Check information on World-Wide TV-FM DX Association website *http://www.wtfda.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=114&Itemid=43*. There is also a detailed CNET review: *www.cnet.com/1770-5_1-0.html?query=Insignia+NS-DXA1&tag=srch*

From the spec sheet: "(This unit)...displays digital TV at standard-definition (480i) screen resolution."

Magnavox TB-100MG9: A recent price: $79.99 (less $40 coupon). Exact phrase Google search: 999 hits. You will find some information on this unit at Solid Signal.com. There is also a discussion of this product on the AV Science Forum.

RCA DTA 800A: A recent price: $49.99 (?) (less $40 coupon). Exact phrase Google search: 412 hits. There are two versions of this product: the 800A and the 800B. The difference is the tuner manufacturer. For more information on this, connect to the AV Science Forum; scroll down to posting #39.

Remember this acronym, courtesy of the late Robert Heinlein (Science Fiction author): TANSTAAFL. That translates to "There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch." If you have decided to stay with your old analog TV, and you do not plan to sign up for satellite or cable TV, then you must do your homework in order to find the right product before spending your hard-earned money on a converter box.

Remember also that the word "converter" has real meaning in this context. The converter box is converting an HDTV signal into something an old analog TV can display. That "something an old analog TV can display" is definitely NOT HDTV (no matter WHAT the advertisements say).

You will likely find one other obvious difference between using your old analog TV to receive analog broadcasts, and using your old analog TV with a converter box. If you tuned (or tried to tune) to a distant station with your old analog TV, you would get a terrible picture (lots of noise, etc.). With the converter box, you simply won't know a weak station is even there. You need a strong signal — the converter boxes have a "threshold" effect. With a strong signal, everything looks good. With a weak signal, you get a black screen. So, when you are setting up your converter box and TV, you may want to move your antenna (or Rabbit Ears) around to get the maximum strength signal possible.

For more information on digital TV, connect to this Wikipedia article *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HDTV*. For more information on the TV Converter Box Coupon Program, connect to: *https://www.dtv2009.gov*. For an up-to-date list of qualifying products, see : *https://www.ntiadtv.gov/cecb_list.cfm*

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The New, the Best, and the Worst

Pim Borman (swipcug(at)gmail.com), SW Indiana PC Users Group (http://swipcug.apcug.org)

Picasa web album

In June I took a brief vacation with son Mike and cocker spaniel Bonnie, touring scenic central West Virginia. We visited the stark rock outcropping known as Seneca rocks, admired the amazing 110-meter steerable radio telescope at the green bank national radio astronomy observatory, and found carnivorous plants in their natural habitat in the cranberry glades botanic area. Together we took over 400 pictures that we culled down to 60-some upon our return. It is often said that the secret of great photographers is that they take hundreds of pictures but save only the one or two best ones. Nobody ever mentions how hard it is to pick out those few winners!

I decided to try and upload the best pictures to an online free photo album. I was already familiar with Flick'r, but I decided to try the Google-Picasa web album instead. Picasa is an excellent simple photo editor and it gives direct access to the online album. The album allows 1Gb of storage, enough for some 4000 pictures, and you can get even more for a small fee.

Since I already had a Google email account, setting up the web album was easy, using the same user name and password. On the site you set up separate albums (folders) to store pictures in separate categories. I created a new album for my pictures and prepared to upload them. After some trial and error I found it easiest to first assemble the captioned pictures in a Picasa album on my pc and then to upload them all at once to the web album. Once the pictures are uploaded you can add more or delete mistakes, move them into the desired order, and add or change captions. By default, the photos are converted to optimum size for display on a computer screen, but there are options for larger (up to 20mb) or smaller file sizes.

Once the album has been installed it is ready to be shared with the rest of the world. You may choose to make your photos public, or keep them private, accessible only to those you share the URL with. The view album page shows large thumbnails of the photos. They can be viewed individually or as a slide show. The view map button brings up Google maps where you can indicate where you took your pictures. The Organize and Edit captions buttons are self-explanatory. A new features link at the top of the page leads to the latest features added. It is now possible to upload videos from Picasa to your web album. That might be preferable to YouTube, unless you want the whole world to admire your movie.

The web album displays the URL of your album site as the address itself or as a short paragraph of html code that you can insert on your web site. Either way, it is best to copy and paste the information since the URL tends to be lengthy and confusing. My vacation pictures are located at *picasaweb.google.com/swipcug/westvirginiavacationjune2008?Authkey =kovcoyrboay*.

To do your correspondents a favor you should convert the URL with SNIPURL (*http://snipurl.com*) or TINYURL (*http://tinyurl.com*) to a simpler address, such as http://snipurl.com/pimspix. If you have never done that before, you'll find it easy to do. Go to http://snipurl.com (or the TINYURL site) and paste the URL of your album in the box. Specify an easy-to-remember nickname (such as "Pimspix," but only available in SNIPURL) and "snip it!" the shortened URL (http://snipurl.com/pimspix) will be shown and copied to your clipboard, ready to be pasted in your message.

Gathering CLOUDS

My experience with setting up a photo album "somewhere up there" is a typical example of the current trend towards "cloud" computing. Almost since the beginning of the world wide web we have been using online search engines that access indexed information stored "somewhere up there." Many of us have changed from our pc-based email programs to online programs, such as Yahoo or Google Mail, that store our email correspondence on computers "somewhere up there."

The push is now to extend cloud computing to office suites. Instead of using expensive MS Office we can use Google docs and conduct our administrative activities online, with the option of sharing our work with colleagues far away. Microsoft, always ready to recognize good ideas after others first thought of them, is moving versions of its office suite online under the "live" banner. Others are jostling to join the crowd.

If this trend continues and spreads to other computer activities, our operating systems, whether windows, Mac, or Linux, will become less and less important. The functions of the operating system will be taken over by browsers. To those of us using multiple operating systems, such as Windows and Linux, we already find that it makes no difference if we use Firefox in Windows or Linux. Similarly, Picasa is Picasa and my new web album is the same no matter how I access it.

So far, that all sounds good. But gathering clouds threaten to bring rain. If everybody is going to use the Internet almost all the time, the current Internet infrastructure will not be able to keep up. There will be a need for millions of additional servers and drastically increased connection speeds.

The computer industry is aware of that. According to the Economist (May 24, 2008) Microsoft is building a new $500 million data center near Chicago. It will require 3 electrical substations with a total capacity of almost 200 megawatts. Google is said to have 3 dozen data centers with an estimated million individual servers. More and more these extensive data centers are being built in out-of-the-way places near sources of low-cost power, even in Iceland with cheap geothermal power. With all this power consumption computers are becoming a major source of global warming.

To increase transmission speeds the industry is eying the airwave bands that will be freed up in February when analog TV will be phased out. There are so-called white spaces between the frequency bands assigned to TV broadcasts, and tech companies want to use those buffer zones for lightning-fast data transmissions. Initial tests show that it might wipe out nearby HDTV broadcasts, but they keep working at it. (Scientific American, June 2008)

The computer revolution has just begun!

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SIG News

C/C++ Programming
Bruce Arnold (barnold@ieee.org)

http://home.earthlink.net/~barnold2002/Acgnj/index.html

This group is devoted to 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.

December: I presented a program inspired by Mike Redlich at the Java SIG meeting. The idea is to create an application that will send out emails in a batch process. It's called "Bmailer" which is short for "Bulk e-Mailer". The program takes as input two previously prepaired files. The first is a text file with a list of the recipients email addresses. The list could be hundreds of addresses long. The second is a template text file that will be sent to each recipient. When the "Send Mail" button is clicked, the application starts sending out the emails to the given SMTP provider. Since some providers don't allow high speed batch processing, an optional 30 second delay is provided between outputs.

Our *download site* has code and programs from most meetings.

Our next meeting January 20. 💻

Main Meeting

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

Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net)

December 5: Care & Feeding of iPhones (You too can have a book of bills) by Dave Mara (or Apple Store)

January 2: CANCELLED.

February 6: To be announced. 💻

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. 💻

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 PM at the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad. See the web page for directions and more information. *Our next meeting January 5.* 💻

Web Dev
Evan Willliams (tech@evanwilliamsconsulting.com)

This SIG is an open forum for all Website Development techniques and technologies, to encourage study and development of web sites of all kinds. All languages will be considered and examined. Anyone interested please contact the Chairperson. 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. 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.

Our next meeting January 14. 💻

Java
Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net)
http://www.javasig.org

The Java Group covers beginner, intermediate, and advanced level Java programming. Primary focus is on developing useful/practical applets and applications, but can include topics such as Java I/O, JavaBeans, Reflection, object-oriented programming and software design issues.

December: This month's meeting demonstrated how to develop a small mail merge application using your favorite backend database and the JavaMail API. You may already be familiar with this technique using Microsoft Office applications. I have already used this application to send you personalized e-mail announcements using my Java Users Group MySQL database. We will review the entire mail merge application with the main focus being the JavaMail API including how to send e-mail with both regular text content and attachments.

Our next meeting January 13. 💻

Investment Software
Jim Cooper (jim@thecoopers.org)

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

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. We're no longer focusing on just Telechart -- if you are using (or interested in) Tradestation, eSignal, VectorVest -- or just in learning how to select and use charting and technical analysis, come join us !!

Our next meeting: January 8. 💻

The newly elected Board Members: Paul Syers (Vice President), Michael Redlich (President), Donald McBride (Director), Bill Farrell (Director), Malthi Masurekar (Treasurer), David McRichie (Director), Lenny Thomas (Director). Not in photo Mark Douches (Secretary).

SIG News, *continued*

Window Pains

John Raff (jraff@comcast.net)

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

Our intent is to provide members with Windows oriented application discussions, Microsoft and Linux style. Presentation to be directed to more heavy technological level of attendee, although newbies are welcomed.

December 19: Meeting cancelled due to bad weather.

January 16: Evan Williams, WEB 3.0: Collaborating on the global market using open sourcetools and technology. ▱

FireFox Activity

Firefox@acgnj.org

This SIG is intended to be an open forum for **all** FireFox and Mozilla techniques and technologies, to encourage the study and development of web sites of all kinds. All the browsers will be considered and examined. All are encouraged to "think out of the box" about new web site design. All members and guests are invited to check out the design concepts and voice their opinion. *Our next meeting January 19.*▱

NJ Gamers

Gregg McCarthy (greggmc@optonline.net)

http://www.NJGamers.com

www.lanparty.com

The next Friday Night Frag will be January 9, 6 p.m. to Saturday 12 noon — 18 hours for 5 bucks!

BYOC - Bring your own computer

BYOF - Bring your own food.

and if you don't like sitting on metal chairs... BYO chair!▱

Guru Corner

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.

Software

HTML	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
ColdFusion	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
CSS	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
Java	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
C++	Bruce Arnold	908-735-7898
	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
ASP	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
Perl	John Raff	973-560-9070
	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
XML	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
Genealogy	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
Home Automation	Frank Warren	908-756-1681

Operating Systems

Windows 3.1	Ted Martin	732-636-1942

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:

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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/membershipApplication.html 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 ❏ 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, A-10, Washington Rd, Princeton, (609) 252-1163, *www.pmug-nj.org*	**Linux Users Group in Princeton:** 7 pm, 2nd Wednesday, Lawrence Branch Mercer Library, Rt#1 & Darrah Lane, Lawrence NJ *http://www.lugip.org*	**New York PC:** 3rd Thurs, 7 pm, PS 41, 116 W 11th St. For info call hotline, (212) 533-NYPC, *http://www.nypc.org*
Computer Education Society of Philadelphia: Meetings & Workshops at Jem Electronics, 6622 Castor Ave, Philadelphia PA. *www.cesop.org/*	**Brookdale Computer Users Group**: 7 pm,3rd Friday, Brookdale Community College, Bldg MAN Rm 103, Lincroft NJ. (732)-739-9633. *www.bcug.com*	**NJ Macintosh User Group**: 8 pm, 3rd Tuesday, Allwood Branch Library, Lyall Rd, Clifton NJ. (201) 893-5274 *http://www.njmug.org*.
PC User Group of So. Jersey: 2nd Mon., 7 pm, Trinity Presb. Church, 499 Rt 70 E, Cherry Hill, NJ. L. Horn, (856) 983-5360 *http://www.pcugsj.org*	**Hunterdon Computer Club:** 8:30 am, 3rd Sat, Hunterdon Medical Center, Rt 31, Flemington NJ. *www.hunterdoncomputerclub.org*, (908) 995-4042.	**NY Amateur Computer Group:** 2nd Thurs, 7 pm, Rm 806 Silver Bldg, NYU, 32 Waverly Pl, NYC. *http://www.nyacc.org*
Morris Micro Computer Club: 7 pm 2nd Thurs., Morris County Library, Hanover Ave, Morristown NJ, (973) 267-0871. *http://www.morrismicro.com*	**Central Jersey Computer Club**: 8 pm, 4th Friday, Rm 74, Armstrong Hall, College of NJ. Rich Williams, (609) 466-0909.	**NJ PC User Group:** 2nd Thurs, Monroe Rm at Wyckoff Public Library, 7 pm. Maureen Shannon, (201) 853-7432, *www.njpcug.org*
Philadelphia Area Computer Society: 3rd Sat, 12 noon Main Meeting, groups 8 am-3 pm. Upper Moreland Middle School, Hatboro PA. (215) 764-6338. *www.pacsnet.org*	**NJ Computer Club:** 6:15 pm, 2nd Wednesday except Jul & Aug, North Branch Reformed Church, 203 Rt 28, Bridgewater NJ. *http://www.njcc.org*	**Princeton PC Users Group**: 2nd Monday, Lawrenceville Library, Alt Rt 1 & Darrah Lane, Lawrenceville, Paul Kurivchack (908) 218-0778, *http://www.ppcug-nj.org*

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.

apcug — 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.

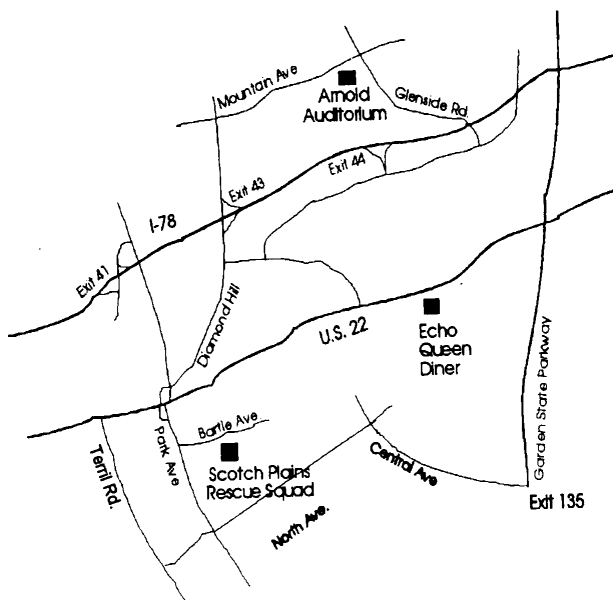**PC Talk**, Sunday from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m., 1210 AM Philadelphia. 1800-876-WPEN, Webcast at *http://www.pctalkweb.net*.

MarketPro Shows

http://www.marketpro.com/

Jan 3-4: Meadowlands Expo Center Secaucus

Jan 17: Edison Holiday Inn

Jan 31-Feb 1: Meadowlands Expo Center Secaucus

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.

Media Show 4 by Cyberlink

Terry Oden (terryo (at) brmemc.net), Macon Computer User Group, Georgia (www.mcug.org)

There may be hundreds of ways to gather, store, view, edit and show your pictures and videos. This is one of the best and easiest I have found. Your operating system will do a fairly good job of getting your pictures and videos into your computer. On the net are programs that are free like Picassa, Flickr and You Tube which do a very good job of storing and displaying your own work to family and friends.

One of the things that I liked best about Media Show was ease of operation. There are only 5 buttons to control the whole program.

1 is the **Home** button. Here you see all of your folders and how many pictures or videos you have in each folder.

2 is **Create**. Here you can do things like make your own Screen Saver, compose a movie or DVD print your pictures or order prints on line.

3 is the **Share** button. Share your pictures with friends and family or up-load them to Flickr, or upload to U-tube with a single click of your mouse, if desired.

4 is the **View** button, here you can adjust the size of your thumbnails or add any captions to your pictures. You can also change the color of the skin of the program (appearance).

5 is the **Folder Tools** button. Here you edit, sort, locate, delete or hide some pictures if you like.

Media Show 4 is one of the top programs when it comes to ease of operation, not to mention what the finished product will look like. To create a movie or slideshow with sound and motion, fading or cell you only have to make about three clicks of the mouse. First you decide if you want background music, select what format you want to use, and where to save

your work. Yes, you do have to tell it what pictures or videos to use! Last, click the Burn button and that's it. Zap you're done!

Creating a DVD is very easy. Name your DVD, and pick a menu style. Now comes the hard part. You must decide which videos you want to use and if you want any still pictures in it or not. Click the preview button. If you like it, click on the burn button and you're done.

System Requirements

Windows Vista / XP (with Direct X 9 or above), Screen Resolution- 800 x 600, Printers- All, CPU- Intel Pentium D 3.0 GHz, AMD Athlon 64 3500+ or above, Sound Card- PCI sound card or on-board audio, Memory- 512 MB RAM minimum 1GB recommended, Hard Disk Space- 1 GB required, 20 GB recommended for DVD production, Graphics Card- Intel 945GM or above-64 MBVRAM or above, Optical Drive- A DVD burner (DVD+R/RW or DVD-R/RW) is required to burn content onto DVD's, Import Devices- Cameras via removable disk interface-Cameras support Windows Portable devices interface-Camcorder DV devices via IEEE 1394 (Firewire), Internet Connection- required for some upload/download features.

I've not found a program this large at this cost (under $50) that operates so easily and simply. I have found no shortcomings yet. This is the best program for the money that can be found, .

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ACGNJ MEETINGS

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

Tuesday, December 30, 2008
7 P.M. - Board of Directors meeting. CANCELLED

Friday, January 2
8 P.M. - Main Meeting, Mike Redlich (*mike@redlich.net*). CANCELLED

Monday, January 5
8 P.M. - Lunics, Andreas Meyer (*lunics@acgnj.org*)

Thursday, January 8
8 P.M. - Investing, Jim Cooper (jim@thecoopers.org).

Friday, January 9
6 P.M. to 5 A.M.- NJ Gamers. Gregg McCarthy (*greggmc@optonline.net*), 732-721-6507. Break 8 to 10 P.M.

Monday, January 12
8 P.M. - Layman's Forum, Matt Skoda (*som359@aol.com*), 908-359-8842. No meetings in July or August.

Tuesday, January 13
7:30 P.M. - Java, Mike Redlich (*mike@redlich.net*) 908-246-0410.

Wednesday, January 14
7 P.M. - WebDev SIG, Evan Williams (*tech@evanwilliamsconsulting.com*)

Friday, January 16
8 P.M. - Window Pains, John Raff (*john@jraff.com*).

Monday, January 19
7 P.M. - Firefox Activity, David McRitchie (*firefox@acgnj.org*)

Tuesday, January 20
7:30 P.M. - C/C++ Users, Bruce Arnold (*barnold@ieee.org*), 908-735-7898

Monday, February 2
8 P.M. - Lunics, Andreas Meyer (*lunics@acgnj.org*)

Tuesday, February 3
7 P.M. - Board of Directors 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.