
Amateur Computer Group of New Jersey NEWS

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Happy “Gadgetholidays!”

Berry F. Phillips (bfpdata@1access.net), Computer Club of Oklahoma City (<http://www.cokc.org>)



Elections are scheduled for the December 1 Main Meeting, and nobody so far has volunteered to take an office. What about you — are you waiting for Someone Else to do it?



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Founded 1975

Have many of us become “gadgetholics?” Do we rush in mass like drunken lemmings annually, especially during the holidays, to rush over the cliff of technology only to fall even deeper in debt as we race to upgrade to own the newest and the coolest gadget? The Associated Press reported that a poll says Americans are showing early signs of addiction to their gadgets. Fifty percent say they could not get along without computer and mobile telephones, and 40 percent say the same for broadband use. The Associated Press article also quotes a psychologist who is an authority on Internet addictions so there must be truth to this new addiction. Those addicted broadband users are fortunate since “they can get help online.”

Is gadget addiction generic? You might be a neophiliac if you are constantly upgrading with the latest technical gizmo. Media Life magazine reports neophiliacs are people addicted to the new. A study conducted by Yamagata University School of Medicine in Japan reports some people may be genetically predisposed to wanting the newest things. Their study suggests the cause may be a mitochondrial enzyme called monoamine oxidase. However, a University of York sociology professor disputes the findings of the study pointing out, “people were far more suspicious of change in the past – so the urge to constantly move on is sociological, not a genetic one.”

Do you suppose gadgetmania may be gender related? Reality checks suggest males, far more than females, are gadget addicted to various degrees. This finding has been a boost to wives who often receive the blame for compulsive overspending while shopping. Jean Chatzky, author of “Make Money Not Excuses” gives this advice to spouses of gadgetholics: “They get excited in anticipation of their next purchase. They

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Vice President	Frank Warren	(908) 756-1681
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	Arnold Milstein	(908) 753-8036
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C Languages	Bruce Arnold	(908) 735-7898
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Financial	Frank Warren	(908) 756-1681
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Newsletter	— open —	
Trenton ComputerFest	Scott Vincent	(973) 539-8169
Vendor Liaison	Bill Farrell	(732) 572-3481
Webmaster	John Raff	(973) 560-9070

ACGNJ News

Editor

Barbara DeGroot
145 Gun Club Road
Palmerton PA 18071
Tel: (570) 606-3596
bdegroot@ptd.net

Publisher

Associate Editor

Bill Farrell
(732) 572-3481
wfarr18124@aol.com

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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>).

Bruce Arnold	barnold@blast.net
Mike Barlow	barlowm@bright-ideas.com
Barbara DeGroot	bdegroot@ptd.net
James Ditaranto	ExcelVBA@hotmail.com
Mark Douches	pcproblems@pobox.com
Rick Elbanna	rick@nobella.com
Bill Farrell	wfarr18124@aol.com
Manuel Goyenechea	goya@servertec.com
Sheldon Koepf	sheldonk@intac.com
Sol Libes	sol@libes.com
Malthi Masurekar	masureka@umdnj.edu
Gregg McCarthy	greggmc@optonline.net
Andreas Meyer	lunics@acgnj.org
Arnold Milstein	mrflark@yahoo.com
Jim O'Keefe	okeefejim@yahoo.com
John Raff	jraff2@optonline.net
Lela Rames	lrames@att.net
Mike Redlich	mike@redlich.net
Matt Skoda	som359@aol.com
Keith Sproul	ksproul@noc.rutgers.edu
Lenny Thomas	lennythomas@technologist.com
Scott Vincent	scottvin@optonline.net
Frank Warren	kb4cyc@webwarren.com
Evan Williams	nhpressgo@blast.net

Microsoft Vista Beta — First Look

Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D. (bwsail@yahoo.com), Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group (<http://www.spcug.org>)

Many of the reviews that I have read on the early releases of Windows Vista have been done on “fast” hardware. Many times with 1- 2 GB of RAM. Knowing that many users of Windows XP will probably upgrade to Vista with their current hardware, I installed a Beta 2.0 copy of Windows Vista on an older machine. This computer has an Intel 1.3 GHz CPU and had 256 MB of RDRAM. I upgraded the RAM to 512 MB which is normal for many Windows XP users. The computer also has an ATA 40 GB hard drive and it did have a CD writer. However, when I went to install Vista, I found the installation disk was a DVD. So I had to upgrade to a DVD unit. I did manage to find a Sony DVD burner at a very reasonable price. So, a word of warning for those interested in upgrading to Vista when the final version is available, you may have to have a DVD drive to install it. This review is based on my hands-on experience with Vista.

I installed this Beta version to the hard drive as a new installation. It saved the previous version of Windows and user files in one folder. Since I had no applications or personal information on the drive I was able to delete this folder after the installation was complete. I did note that the installation took more than 90 minutes to complete. I’m sure that this was partly related to the speed of this computer as well as the size of the operating system. Since this is a pre-release version, it probably contains debugging code which contributes to its overall size.

Once Vista was installed, it brought up a Control Center Window with icons for several items, one being hardware that wasn’t installed and another to add a printer. There were also a Vista tutorial and an icon for new items in Vista. The first thing I tried was to see what hardware wasn’t installed. The first item on the list was the ethernet card, next the sound system, then a “Simple Controller” which I finally figured out was the modem and a SCSI controller. To simplify things I removed the modem and SCSI card. Then I tried to install the ethernet card. At that point I started getting the User Account Control (UAC) windows which required that I approve every step that might change the make-up of the computer. Every time I tried to install a driver I had several UAC windows to get through before I could get to the installation process, in spite of the fact I was running as the System Administrator.

Any of you that have set up Window XP Professional should be familiar with the Administrator and User Account system. On my XP Pro system I have the Administrator account and a User account, both of which are password protected. I rarely use the Administrator account, instead I work in the User account. The reason is that without the Administrator account running it is more difficult for trojans or parasites to make changes to any of the system files on my computer, assuming that they can get past the firewall in the first place. I have seen too many XP Pro systems where the user is always running in the Administrator mode which has allowed invasions of the system by trojans/parasites. I have just cleaned out one system that was acting weirdly until I removed 295 parasites/trojans. Whenever I need to install software on my

XP system, I simply use the “Run As” command and enter the Administrator password. That way I don’t have to change from the User mode to the Administrator mode.

However, this has all changed in Vista with the User Account Control. Even if you are logged on as the System Administrator, it requests your permission for access to anything related to the system or devices. Just to review the list of hardware in the Device Manager requires that you get permission to do so by clicking in the Permissions request window. When you try to install new software or drivers you get a security window which requires your permission to let you continue. Then you get the UAC window which requires that you verify that you know you are installing new software and that you think it is reliable! You even get a UAC window when you try to download and install Windows Updates! I have learned that there is a good reason for this security. According to one report I have read it is possible for Trojans downloaded to your computer along with a web page, to inactivate your anti-virus, firewall and anti-parasite software. This can all be done in the background if you are running in the Administrator mode. Then changes can be made to your system software that can affect the operation of your computer. The UAC in Vista is designed to prevent this from happening. Once I set up my User account, I had fewer UAC windows show up. They occurred only when I wanted to install new software or drivers. The only thing I had to do then was to provide the Administrator password.

Since I didn’t have drivers for the ethernet card, I had to search for one on the Internet using my XP computer. After some research I was able to identify the make/model of the card. Then I found a driver on DriverGuide.com. I downloaded the zip file to my hard drive and burned it to a CD-RW. Then I transferred it to the hard drive on the Vista machine. Vista quickly extracted all the files for me. Then in the device driver, I clicked on “Update drivers” for the ethernet card and told it to search the drive for a driver. Low and behold, it did find and install the driver. Now, after some hard drive activity and approving the UAC to update the Network center, I was on the Internet.

The next thing I wanted was not my sound card driver. It was an anti-virus program. According to the Vista information site only TrendMicro has an A-V program approved for Vista. However, I had noticed on the Avast Web site that they had a Vista compatible version of their A-V software. So I went back to their web site and found that all versions of Avast are now Vista compatible. So I downloaded a free Home Edition and installed it. Again, I had the UAC windows to get through to get the installation under way. After it was installed, I went through the Avast registration and my A-V program was operational. So far, the Avast is running normally and is doing its usual updates in the background.

I have been using the Windows Firewall as I assumed it was a two-way firewall. I have since learned that it is only an in-coming firewall. I plan on replacing it with ZoneAlarm.

Continued

Happy Gadgetholidays, *continued from page 1*

get a little higher when they are making it. And they feel a huge let down when it is over.

Compulsive shoppers also put their own families at risk by racking up bills they can not pay. If you think he is simply over-shopping, he needs your help. Offer to be his shopping buddy, which may contain his urge to splurge. And help him find new ways to avoid falling into that new-tech trap by getting off the email and mailing lists that are tempting him or by finding a new hobby to occupy his time." (I am sure glad that I am a single male so nothing will interfere with my gadget shopping during the holidays!)

Why I even understand that Mrs. Claus is having problems with Santa this year. Some say that Santa has global navigation installed in his high tech sleigh and no longer relies totally on Rudolph, the lead red-nosed reindeer, for navigation. The elves in Santa's workshop have been upgraded and some even replaced by robotics as more high tech gifts are be-

ing manufactured than ever before for children of all ages. Mrs. Claus is also concerned about Santa's belly that you recall "shakes like a bowl full of jelly" for fear he will get stuck in a chimney, and his deliveries could not be made on time, disappointing millions globally. Don't worry Santa has been working out daily in his high-tech gym loaded with all kinds of the newest and coolest gadgets. Santa who is male, of course, apparently seems to think that today's addictions are tomorrow's necessities.

Happy Holidays from the Computer Club of Oklahoma City and the Association of PC Users Groups!

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Microsoft Vista Beta, *continued*

After a re-boot of the computer, Vista popped up a window and asked if it could install my multimedia sound card. I clicked on OK and the next window had two choices, one of which was to search the Internet for a driver. At this point I still had no indication as to the manufacturer of the sound card, so I selected the Internet search. In just a few minutes it changed from searching to installing the software. Then I had a window saying it had installed the software for the Creative Labs sound card! Now that, in my mind is quite an improvement over previous Windows versions.

The one interesting aspect of the Creative installation is that Vista could not install a driver for the game controller. As with most sound cards, there is an output for a game controller. For some reason, Vista was unable to install a driver for this output. It is now listed in the Device Manager as an unknown device. The sound card is listed correctly.

Next step was to set up a User account and shift out of the Administrator mode. That was accomplished quite easily through the Control Panel. So, once I was in User mode, I downloaded a copy of OpenOffice. When I started to install it, a UAC window popped up and I had to enter the Administrator password. Then the installation proceeded normally. Not really any different from the User mode in XP.

Vista has a Security software setup in the Control Panel that is similar to that in XP. It shows the status of the firewall, anti-virus, updates and a new item, Windows Defender. This latter software is an anti-parasite package. It has a default setting to scan your hard drive every day at 2:00 a.m. Since my computer is rarely turned on at that hour, I changed the setting to 5:00 p.m. It is more likely to be running at that time.

The last step was to install two networked printers. I clicked on the "Add printers" icon in the Control Center Window.

That brought up the Printer Installation Wizard. I selected a networked printer and told it to find the printer. Several minutes later it told me there were no networked printers. So I backed up and selected browse for printer. That took me through the whole network tree, but I did find the printer. When I selected the printer and went to the next window, a bright yellow warning popped up to tell me that "printer drivers can install viruses! Are you sure this networked computer is trustworthy?" Well, since it is my main computer, I decided it was trustworthy and clicked on the OK button. Then I got the usual UAC window. After entering the password, the installation was completed and a test page printed. I had to go through the same routine with the second printer. But at least both of them are installed and working.

The Vista computer is now part of my local network and I can share files with it. In fact, part of this article was written on the Vista computer using the OpenOffice I downloaded. I had intended to finish the article on that computer, but the hard drive died. I can't fault Vista for this, the computer is old and it was the original drive. So, when the new drive arrives, I will have to reinstall Vista and all the drivers. Since I had activated this copy of Vista, it will be interesting to see what will happen when I have to activate the new installation. Next month I hope to tell you of my experience with the Vista interface. So, hang in there, more information on Vista will be coming.

Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you. ☐

Preserved for the Ages?

Robert Hawes (r.d.hawes@hotmail.com), ACGNJ

The “experts” tell you to write about what you know. As a computer professional, I know the jobs I’ve done; when things went right, and **especially** when things went wrong. I spent much of my September article talking about what I did on the job in 1997. This time, I’m looking back even further. It wasn’t my first networking job. I’d already spent about a year and a half working with Lantastic (now there, as its name implies, was a fantastic program). Objectively, it wasn’t a very big job, either. The customer had a small office with just a handful of workstations and a single server. However, all of my co-workers were busy on other projects. It was the biggest solo job that I’d attempted thus far, and it **was** the first time that I tackled NetWare.

The workstations were 286 computers with no hard drives. They booted from floppy disks, then logged into the network via ArcNet cards. The server ran NetWare version two-something. The current workers used the same IDs and passwords that had been set up for previous employees. No one then in the office knew anything about administering a network. The customer bought the whole thing (including initial setup) as a package deal from some long-gone OEM reseller years before, then essentially let it coast until it was ready to fall apart. That’s when they called us in a panic, looking for an upgrade. Even though **nobody** in our company had any NetWare experience, my employer took the job, and then tapped me to get it done.

The word “upgrade” doesn’t accurately describe this job. “Complete replacement” is more like it. Ultimately, the only pieces of equipment that didn’t get tossed were two printers (and even **they** got new cables). From my point of view, that was a good thing, because it allowed me to leave the old network running as it was while I assembled the new one. I could take the time I needed to set up the new equipment, get everything running correctly, and even train everyone on the new programs; all without unduly impacting day-to-day office operations. (On the other hand, I didn’t have any time to waste, either. My employer, of course, wanted the job completed as quickly as possible).

On the software front, things were a bit better. Other than NetWare and their tape backup software, the customer had three main programs: a multi-user network version of Lotus 1-2-3 for their spreadsheet, a network version of Multi-Mate for their word processor, and a network version of a proprietary all-in-one package (whose name I can’t remember) that handled the rest of their business needs. Probably the reason I don’t remember that last program’s name is because it was the only thing that didn’t give me any trouble. The company was still in existence, they had a current multi-user upgrade available, and they had excellent technical support.

Novell had excellent technical support, too. They sold the customer an upgrade copy of NetWare version 4.10 at the discount price, but they advised me **not** to try to “migrate” the old system. (That’s what they called an upgrade made over the existing network to a new hard drive on a new computer). While the manual said it was possible, and provided detailed instruc-

tions, the representative I spoke with told me that to his knowledge, migration had **never** worked properly from a system like the one I had. As far as their networking software was concerned, the old installation was **so** old that everything had been changed. **Not one single file** had a corresponding upgrade in their new version, so the whole operating system would be installed from scratch, anyway. Apart from the data files, the only parts that would actually be transferred were the startup scripts, user IDs, and access permissions. In my rep’s experience, for a setup as old as mine, the architecture of the new network would be **so** different from the old one that something in those areas **always** got translated wrong. With a really big network, there was no choice but to migrate, and then fix the glitches as you ran into them. In my case, he said that I’d have a lot less trouble if I did a fresh installation on the server, created a completely new set of scripts and passwords, and then copied just the data files to the newly created user directories on the new hard drive. NetWare wasn’t easy. I had a steep learning curve, but **not** any more so than if I’d attempted to migrate. However, once I figured out exactly how to set up users and permissions for the new system, everything worked exactly as it was supposed to. Copying the data files was a snap. Who knows what problems I might have run into if I hadn’t been given that advice?

Aside from those two printers, that all-in-one program, and NetWare, everything else (hardware or software) got changed. The old workstations were replaced by 486 computers with VGA color monitors. They booted the latest DOS from their own hard drives, then logged into the network via Ethernet cards connected to a common hub. Each ran its own copy of Windows 3.1. The old system’s tape backup drive still worked, but it was obsolete and its software installation disks were nowhere to be found, so I installed a current IDE tape drive and backup program in the office administrator’s new workstation. I suppose that I could have upgraded Lotus 1-2-3, but the person who would be doing most of the spreadsheet work was an Excel fan, so each workstation was given a single user copy of the latest release of Excel for Windows. Microsoft was out to obliterate Lotus, so they’d made it easy for Excel to use 1-2-3 data files. (We could probably have obtained a multi-user version directly from Microsoft, but it was faster, easier, and probably cheaper to get single-user versions from my employer’s usual wholesale software source). That just left the word processor. An upgrade was out of the question, because Multi-Mate had fallen by the wayside long ago. Since they still needed to access their previous correspondence, I had to find an existing Windows word processor that could convert Multi-Mate files.

In the dim, dark past, when I got my first PC, WordStar for DOS (then a top-of-the-line, cutting edge word processor) came bundled with it. Over the years, I upgraded WordStar several times, and was generally satisfied with its performance. For reasons I won’t go into here (but which I will undoubtedly rant about someday), I didn’t like Windows 3.1 when it eventually came out. For now, I’ll just say that it

Continued

absolutely flat out **refused** to do something that I routinely did under DOS every day. I solved this problem by continuing to work mainly in DOS. I limited my use of 3.1 to the few programs I had that only ran under Windows, and I didn't switch to a Windows word processor until I absolutely had to. That time came when I went to work for the company that sent me out on the job I've been describing. They used WordPerfect 5-something for Windows. To keep in sync with their front office, I bought a copy of WordPerfect 6.0 for Windows to use at home. (Unlike Microsoft, WordPerfect had an excellent reputation for maintaining backward and forward compatibility. My employer's older version had no problem reading the default documents created by my newer version). Searching for Multi-Mate capability, I naturally looked to my own computer first, and found exactly what I needed. So I purchased single-user copies of the currently available version for each of the customer's new workstations. That was WordPerfect 6.1 for Windows. As fate would have it; with that release, WordPerfect dropped a lot of its support for other manufacturers' ancient and/or discontinued file formats. To my professional embarrassment, this program that I'd recommended to our customer couldn't read their Multi-Mate files.

I've **never** been able to understand this particular move on WordPerfect's part. The progression from 6.0 to 6.1 indicates a minor but significant modification, so they must have added something new. But what did they gain by cutting down on their foreign file import capability at the same time? I mean, they already **had** all the necessary input filters. It wouldn't have cost them anything to just leave them in. Instead, they probably had to pay somebody extra to take them out without leaving any traces behind. Even if only one in a million of their customers ever really used this feature, it **still** would have remained a positive aspect of their product. I've asked this question of the universe at large before; "Why would a vendor produce an 'upgrade' that actually **removes** features from their previous version"? This wasn't the first (or last) time, and I haven't received a satisfactory answer yet. WordPerfect can't have wanted the reaction they got from me: Any brand loyalty I might have been developing for them just vanished. Anyway, let's get back to our story.

I had to move fast. My reputation (and maybe my job) was at stake. Given time, I'm sure I could have isolated and copied just the converter section from the WordPerfect installation on my own computer, but I didn't **have** any time. Instead, I tried a quick-and-dirty approach and (luckily for me) it worked. Using my original distribution disks, I installed my version 6.0 on each of the customer's workstations. Then, using the appropriate set of disks for each computer, I re-installed their version 6.1 on top of mine. That completely overwrote my version with the customer's version of WordPerfect, **except** for the parts which had been eliminated from 6.1. Now, they had the Multi-Mate compatibility that I'd promised them.

Here, almost halfway along, we finally get to the point that links us to last month's article. The lesson is that you can't entrust a proprietary software package, no matter what its reputation, with exclusive control of the way to access your

data files. The State of Massachusetts once used WordStar, and now they use Microsoft Office. A government has to produce documents that can be readily available even **centuries** later. Suddenly, they found themselves having trouble accessing WordStar documents created less than twenty years ago. Then, they looked closely at likely future accessibility to their current Office data files, and they recoiled in horror.

Have you ever looked at an HTML file with a plain-text editor? If so, you'd see that the entire content is completely visible. Everything remains clearly legible, with **none** of the 33 unprintable ASCII control characters anywhere in sight. Now "legible" doesn't necessarily mean "understandable". HTML commands can grow quite complex, especially when created by MS Word. (Bill and his meddling minions love to stick their big hairy hands everywhere. Microsoft's automatically generated HTML code routinely inserts two or three **lines** of text into a document, where two or three **words** of general purpose HTML code would have done the job just as well). It may be complex, but the whole file is still readable in straightforward English (or whatever native language you happen to be working in). The data stays accessible.

WordStar documents, Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheets, and DBase databases, while they **do** contain some unprintable characters, are still almost as readable. Look at them with a generic text editor (or the TYPE command in DOS) and you can separate the data from the control codes. You'll lose your formatting, but if you work at it, you can get the data out. In addition, specifications for all these types of files have been published for years. Anyone, **including** a commercial competitor, could use those specifications to construct programs that can accurately read all of them. On the other hand, Microsoft's Office file formats are all binary. Try looking inside any of **them** and you get zip. Furthermore, specifications have **not** been published for **any** Office file type. Apparently, they're undocumented even deep inside Microsoft itself. I guess I've been lucky in my use of older versions of Word and Excel files for backwards compatibility. I haven't used PowerPoint, professionally or personally, since 1996. I'm told that if I still had my old PowerPoint presentations, and if I tried to open them with today's PowerPoint, it probably wouldn't be able to read them. That kind of performance is unacceptable to **any** user, individual or government.

Instead of looking to older formats for compatibility (as I did), Massachusetts decided to search for a new, state-of-the-art file saving system that would insure widespread future accessibility to their data, and they found a good one. So, a little over a year ago, the State of Massachusetts announced that **OpenDocument** (also known as ODF, see Appendix I below for further details) would soon be adopted as their standard format for office applications, text documents, spreadsheets, charts and graphical documents such as drawings and presentations. That was instead of Microsoft's proposed new **XML** (see Appendix I) format. At that point, the ODF standard had been released for quite some time, and was already available in several open source office suites, but MS XML (scheduled for inclusion in the next version of MS Office) was still

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mostly vaporware, hardly seen by anybody outside of Microsoft (or inside, for that matter).

When Massachusetts first made their announcement, the biggest known difference (other than the fact that OpenDocument had been developed by a variety of independent organizations and had already been extremely well tested, while Microsoft was still making it up as they went along) was that transforming data accurately between ODF and **XHTML** (see Appendix I) will be easier; because they both use a similar mixed content model, while MS XML uses a non-mixed model. Since I'm not completely sure what that last part means, I can't really say how important it might be; but similarity seems better than non-similarity, so you know I'm rooting for ODF. As I write this, Massachusetts is still holding out, despite intensive pressure from Microsoft. I hope they don't cave.

APPENDIX I: DEFINITIONS

The following definitions were all paraphrased from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>). Instead of alphabetical order, I've tried to list them in a logical arrangement that matches the sequence in which they were introduced. I think they tell an interesting story if you read them this way, but many are interconnected, so you still might have to jump around a bit.

OpenDocument, or ODF, is short for the OASIS Open Document Format for Office Applications, an open format for saving and exchanging office documents such as memos, reports, books, spreadsheets, databases, charts, and presentations. It can be implemented into any system, be it open source or a closed proprietary product, without royalties. The ODF format is intended to provide an open alternative to proprietary document formats, so organizations and individuals can avoid being locked in to a single vendor. It was developed by the OASIS industry consortium (Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards, formed in 1993), based upon the **XML** format originally created by **OpenOffice.org**. Approved as an ISO and IEC International Standard (ISO/IEC 26300), ODF is the first standard for editable office documents to be vetted by an independent recognized standardization body. Interestingly, Microsoft is a member of OASIS.

XML (Extensible Markup Language,) is a wide standard for encoding structured information. Its primary purpose is to facilitate the sharing of data across different systems, particularly systems connected via the Internet. Languages based on XML (such as **XHTML**) are defined in a formal way, allowing programs to modify and validate documents in these languages without prior knowledge of their particular form.

XHTML (Extensible Hyper Text Markup Language) became a World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) recommendation in 2000 with version 1.0, and XHTML 1.1 has been a W3C recommendation since 2001. Whereas HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) is an application of **SGML**, a very flexible markup language, XHTML is an application of XML, a more restrictive subset of SGML.

SGML (Standard Generalized Markup Language) is a meta-language in which one can define markup languages for documents. SGML is a descendant of GML (Generalized Markup Language), developed by IBM in the 1960s.

OpenOffice.org (it can't formally call itself "OpenOffice" due to trademark problems) is an open source office suite released in 2000. Abbreviated as OOo or OO.o, it was developed from the code base of StarOffice, a commercial office suite acquired by Sun Microsystems from the German company StarDivision in 1999. OO.o is free software, with source code available under the **GNU Lesser General Public License (LGPL)**.

GNU is a free operating system begun in 1983 by Richard Stallman. The name is a recursive acronym for "GNU's Not Unix", chosen because its design is Unix-like, but it differs from **UNIX** by being free software, and not containing any proprietary UNIX code. GNU has been under active development ever since, releasing many libraries, system utilities, and end-user applications over the years. Many GNU programs have been ported to numerous other operating systems. To ensure that GNU software remains free, the GNU project designed and released several license formats over the years. Their GNU GPL (General Public License) is now the most common free software license, used by many GNU programs, as well as a large number of free software programs that are **not** part of the GNU project at all. It gives all recipients of a program the right to run, copy, modify and distribute it, while forbidding them from imposing further restrictions on any copies they distribute. This idea is referred to as "copyleft". Most **Linux** distributions have been released under the GPL. The GFDL (GNU Free Documentation License) and the **LGPL** (Lesser General Public License) are two other GNU licenses.

LGPL (Lesser General Public License) is a GNU license originally written to address the specific requirements of certain software libraries. Currently, some distributions (such as OpenOffice.org) find that it meets their needs better than the GPL. The GNU licenses aren't the only free software licenses out there. Some others are the **BSD** license, the MIT License (also called the X License or the X11 License), and the MPL (Mozilla Public License). They all have the same end in mind - to freely release software while not just dumping it into the public domain. For various reasons, each is slightly different, but all have one thing in common - if you comply with any of them, you automatically don't comply with the proprietary license for the proposed MS Office XML implementation. That's how Microsoft's weasel lawyers worded previous agreements for their soon-to-be-abandoned binary formats, and that's what they intend to do again.

UNIX (all capitalized) is the proprietary trademark for the computer operating system originally developed in the 1960s and 1970s by a group of AT&T employees at Bell Labs. The rights to the UNIX source code are currently the subject of a fiendishly complicated lawsuit, which I'm not even going to try to describe here. The term Unix-like (with just the U capitalized) is used to describe operating systems (such as **BSD**,

Continued

GNU, Linux and Mac OS X) that behave similarly to UNIX, but don't contain any proprietary UNIX code.

BSD (Berkeley Software Distribution) is the Unix-like operating system originally distributed by the University of California, Berkeley, starting in the 1970s. At first, Berkeley worked with AT&T on the development of UNIX for academic use. Then, the Department of Defense got involved, and many innovations pioneered by BSD spread to other UNIX environments. Then there was a lawsuit, and (to make a long story short) the BSD developers retained the rights to their share of the code. So BSD is now called "Unix-like" because its code is not owned by UNIX. In contrast, some releases of proprietary UNIX still contain sections of BSD code. According to the BSD license, this is perfectly legal. (The BSD license is more permissive than the GNU General Public License. Pundsters who refer to the GPL as "copyleft" call the BSD license "copycenter". You can finish the joke from there by yourselves). In 1995, the University of California, Berkeley ceased their participation, but the BSD project went on without them. Currently, several BSD variations are in active development.

Linux is often described as; "the Unix-like operating system began as a hobby in 1991 by Linus Torvalds", but that's not the whole story. Here's a closer approximation of what really happened: In 1983, Richard Stallman founded the GNU project, intended to create a completely free operating system. By 1992, the GNU project had assembled most of the components necessary to meet that goal, except for one thing – the kernel. The GNU kernel was an ambitious project, building on Carnegie Mellon University's "Mach" microkernel research. Unfortunately, this turned out to be a lot more difficult than anticipated. (Indeed, work on the GNU kernel has con-

tinued ever since, but as of this writing, it still isn't finished). At first, Linus Torvalds released his Linux kernel project under a license which forbade any commercial exploitation. In 1992, he switched over to GNU's General Public License. At last, by combining the Linux kernel, most of GNU, and some software packages from other sources, developers could achieve the GNU ideal; a fully functional and absolutely free operating system. So the only part of a Linux system actually developed and maintained by Linus Torvalds is the kernel. That's only a small part, but it's the most important part, so (to GNU's chagrin) it gets the name. Currently, counting both commercial and non-commercial variations, there are estimated to be over five hundred different distributions of Linux in active development.

APPENDIX II: ANSWER TO TRIVIA QUESTION

Last month's question was; "Why has there never been an "official" Linux distribution"? If you read the Linux definition in Appendix I above, you know that's really the wrong question. The right question would be; "Why has there never been an "official" GNU distribution"? Someday, when the GNU kernel is finally finished, there probably will be an official GNU distribution. But for now, all of the so-called "Linux" distributions out there are actually hybrids; one part "true" Linux (the kernel), lots of parts GNU, and more parts from other sources. A "pure" Linux distribution would have to contain only the Linux kernel. Such a system is possible. A small (maybe hand held) special purpose device running embedded Linux might not need to use any of the GNU components. I don't know of a device like that right now, but surely one will exist some day. When it does, its operating system could accurately be called an official Linux distribution. ☐

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 (pamphlet-size booklets)

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

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10% discount for 3 or more consecutive insertions			

From the DealsGuy

Bob (The Cheapskate) Click (bobclick@mindspring.com), Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

*Here Is Some Fast Food Technology

Technology is fast catching up with vending machines according to this article I read in Information Week. Soft drink machines are everywhere you go, also vending machines for candy, coffee and many other types of products, even machines that dispense ice cream bars and ice cream sandwiches. A technique has now been developed for an ice cream vending machine that does not need to be refrigerated full time. To quote from the article, "we pump the base mix, aerate it, flavor it, flash freeze it, scrape it up off a freezing surface, form it into a scoop and into the consumer's cup in 45 seconds." Also, no refrigeration is required for warehousing. Read the article at informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=193004764 and it also mentions their use of Linux for the machine.

*Have Your Medical Data With You!

Be medically prepared with all your medical records hanging around your neck (or in your possession) when you are away. Medistick makes a USB flash drive that is designed to hold up to five medical histories. It appears to be a self-extracting file that can also offer password protection. Medistick has medical emergency logo on the sides. Capacities are available from 128 MB to 4 gigs and costing \$57 for the 128 mb size. <http://www.medistick.ch> Information is collected and entered by you, or your doctor, if his staff will help in that regard, and the document automatically converts to a pdf file.

I doubt I would use the password protection because what if you are incoherent and can't give medics the password to open the file for your medical information? On the other hand, since some folks write their password on the side of their computer, you could do that with the Medistick. I am cramped for space here so be sure to check their Web site to get the best description of the product. It sure sounds great to me, and so is the deal. All your records are carried with you including all your doctors' names and phones. If you see a new doctor, just give them your Medistick to get all your medical info. With my health, I will probably need the 4 gig model. Just a thought, but this might make a great Christmas gift for the person who already has everything, and for that person who has a serious medical history.

Medistick has offered the DealsGuy readers this deal: "1 128MB Medistick and software for 1 person for only \$49 with shipping included. (MSRP is normally \$57 plus \$3.50 shipping) This deal is good until Jan. 31, 2007. Readers should click on <http://www.medistick.ch/en/contact/> and mention the DealsGuy column in the "comments" area. They will then get an online invoice from Medistick through PayPal for \$49 as payment by credit card in advance."

*Reminder About the Laptop Discount

Don't forget about Dave Whittle's discount offer on the Lenova Thinkpad laptops that is still good. Simply call Lenova's user group inside sales rep, Isaac Williams, directly for help in configuring your system, or to get answers to your questions. Call 1-877-338-4465, Option 1, Extension 6322.

Below are some new products that I received announcements for. I have edited the announcements so check their URL for better info.

*How About A Backup With Security!

SoftOptima LLC announces the release of Backup Premium 2.5 backup software. The specially designed protocols SFTP and FTP SSL/TLS provide a high degree of security for data transferred via the Internet. Backup Premium offers the capability to backup user data using SFTP and FTP SSL/TLS and allows substantial safety of the backup process.

You can backup all important files from a Windows profile, Microsoft Outlook, Outlook Express and ICQ; running certain programs before or after backup sessions; and the possibility to work with network drives under different accounts. It's easy to configure the backup process and adjust it to the particular needs of a single user, or a whole company. Backup Premium has an ergonomically correct user interface and a high-quality graphic solution that makes the work with the program simple and yet pleasant.

A fully functional Backup Premium 2.5 trial version is available for a 30-day evaluation period. Registration costs \$39 for a single user license. User group members receive 25% discount at <http://www.backup-premium.com/special-order.shtml> until February 2007.

Product Page: <http://www.backup-premium.com>

Screenshots and graphics:

<http://www.backup-premium.com/screenshots.shtml>

Download: <http://www.backup-premium.com/backuppremium25.exe>

*This Product Helps You Work with Your Pictures

Almalence Incorporated announces PhotoAcute Studio 2.0. PhotoAcute Studio processes sets of images taken in continuous mode. It utilizes super resolution algorithms to convert a sequence of photos into a single high-resolution and low-noise picture that could only be taken with a much better camera. PhotoAcute Studio operates with various camera and image types from mobile cameras to DSLR cameras supporting RAW format and 16-bit color.

Spatial resolution is limited by a camera's matrix and lens, but this limit can be exceeded by means of super resolution that can be done by either acquiring more graphic information (e.g. taking and merging several images of the same object) or by reconstructing the details lost due to the faultiness of the optical system. Noise is the most undesirable factor that degrades image quality. PhotoAcute Studio combines several photos of the same scene, separating the useful signal and the noise, thus providing strong noise reduction without losing the image details. By merging several images taken at different exposures, PhotoAcute Studio expands the dynamic range of the resultant image revealing the details usually clipped in the highlights and the shadows.

PhotoAcute Studio is a Windows based application. The Macintosh version will be released in 2007Q1. A detailed description of PhotoAcute Studio features, online help and an

Continued

“.. here are some ways on how to stop being obnoxious with your e-mail.”

E-Mail: Be Less Annoying

Steve Bass, *PC World*

I've come to the conclusion that everyone needs to take a test before being able to use e-mail. No, I'm serious. You have to take an e-mail test. If you pass, you get an e-mail license. Proudly hang it on the wall. Screw up — send lots of messages with blank subject lines, say — and your license is pulled. You go on probation and attend mandatory remedial e-mail training.

Why am I being so hardnosed? I have a laundry list of ways people drive me wild with e-mail. I wrote about a few in “Get Relief From Annoying E-Mail,” my July, 2006 “Hassle-Free PC” column

pcworld.com/howto/article/0,aid,125767,tk,nl_sbxhow,00.asp

But I ran out of room in the print column, so here are some more tips, including how to stop being obnoxious with your e-mail.

To Whom Am I Speaking?

Sometimes I have absolutely no idea who's sending me an e-mail, and this is a problem. I mean, I'll say something to another guy that I wouldn't dream of uttering to a lady my mother's age. [Sorry, Mom.]

Don't share. If you and your live-in (spouse, significant other, whatever) use the same e-mail address, stop it. Extra e-mail addresses are free and consolidating e-mails into one mailbox is confusing the dickens out of me because I never know who I'm writing to.

Use a signature line. Make life easier for me: Add a signature line with your name and e-mail address using the hot-linked mailto:steve_bass@pcworld.com format. It's easier to reply just to you if your e-mail was sent to many people; it's also great for when I forward your e-mail — the new recipient doesn't have to cut and paste your address.

Use your real name. Don't get me wrong, I love your beerbelly49832@yourisp.com. The problem is, I haven't a clue who you are. Be a champ and add your real name in the signature line. And a favor? Don't use initials.

Do I Need to Read This Right Now?

Look, I'm a very busy man (or so I tell my wife and editor), and I get tons of e-mail every day. I need to do e-mail triage—you know, scanning the inbox for the hottest messages and reading them first. But honestly, I can't do this with most e-mail I get. So here's what I recommend:

The subject is... Tell me, clearly and briefly, what your message is about in the subject line. I delete all messages with vague subjects — Hi, Hello, or worse, an empty subject line (oh, do I hate that!). And make sure you don't trigger my spam filter by using all capital letters, exclamation points, and words you typically see in junk e-mail, like “free,” “spam,” “mortgage,” or “Viagra.”

Exec summary. Give me a one- or a two-sentence overview at the start of your e-mail. “I have a complicated issue,” you might start out, “involving a Dell, memory cards, and SP2. If you have time to help, I've provided details below.”

continued on page 18

DealsGuy, *continued*

examples gallery are available at <http://www.photoacute.com>. You can download a free trial version. The price of the full version varies depending on supported camera types, ranging from \$19 for mobile phone cameras to \$119 for DSLR cameras with the support of RAW format and 16-bit color. Users group members get a 35% discount by going to the order page http://www.regnow.com/softsell/nph-softsell.cgi?items=13404-1&ss_coupon=DGY-8JQU which contains the discount code in the URL. The discount will be applied on the second page of the ordering procedure. This discount is good until January 31, 2007. PhotoAcute Studio 2.0 can be downloaded at: <http://www.photoacute.com/studio/download.html>

Product page URL: <http://www.photoacute.com/studio>

Direct download link:

photoacute.com/files/PhotoAcuteStudio_setup.exe

*Got A Pocket PC? You Can Translate Languages!

LingvoSoft has released LingvoSoft Translator 2007 for Pocket PC featuring the ability to translate between English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. It provides full-text translation of business correspondence, e-mails, letters, documentation and even the words to your favorite song! If you choose the talking version, not only will you have the

fastest translator available for Pocket PC but you'll also be able to use it to speak. With super fast and super smart search functions, a customizable interface and three different ways to enter text, it will even translate the contents of your device's clipboard automatically upon launching the dictionary application.

<http://www.lingvosoft.com/info/software/Translators/?refid=16179>

<http://www.lingvosoft.com>

Users Group members get a 25% discount on any LingvoSoft software title at lingvosoft.com/info/software/Translators/. Simply enter your personal gift certificate code “MY8UZPF7M4” in the “Add Gift” field of the shopping cart and click the “Add Gift” button. You should then see the discount deducted from your order's total in the shopping cart. This offer is good until December 31, 2006.

That's it for this month. I hope to post more new announcements without discounts on my Web site before long. 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> 

Is Your Computer a Zombie?

S. Jack Lewtschuk (blacklion@royal.net), Monterey Bay Users' Group – Personal Computer (MBUG-PC)

There are literally hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of “zombie computers” out there. Is your computer one of them? Creating zombies out of computers used by you and me has become a major tool used by computer hackers, unscrupulous marketers, and other malicious evil-doers. A computer becomes a zombie when it performs tasks as instructed by someone other than the computer owner. The instructions given to the zombie usually involve distributing information to other computers, which the zombie computer does without notifying its owner. In every spare moment, a zombie computer sends out data, most of which is spam that tries to get someone to purchase something.

Watch for “Zombie Computer” Warning Signs

- The computer seems sluggish.
- The computer seems to be accessing the hard drive constantly.
- The mouse or keyboard becomes unresponsive.
- Excessive “bounce” notifications from people you never knowingly tried to e-mail.

These warning signs may also be symptoms of other problems, but if you see any of them you should investigate. For more information on zombie computers and spam, see the Federal Trade Commission's Operation Spam Zombies website ftc.gov/bcp/conline/edcams/spam/zombie/index.htm.

Protect Your Computer from becoming a Zombie

- Install a good antivirus program and make sure you update it regularly.
- Install a good two-way firewall. It will notify you when information is being sent from your computer. Unfortunately the WindowsXP firewall is not adequate for this purpose—it is “one way” only.
- Update your operating system and other software regularly.
- Use an anti-spyware program to eliminate spyware on your system.
- Check your antivirus and firewall software occasionally to make sure they are running properly — often one of the first instructions given to a zombie computer is to disable the antivirus and firewall software.
- Don't open unknown/unexpected e-mail attachments!
- Use caution when downloading software — buy from reputable companies, and be sure to read every screen as you download and install any software.

Novice Corner

So, you've decided to download a program from the Internet. Are you sure that you really need it? OK, if you can't live without it, are all of your security programs active and updated? If so, click on “download” and cross your fingers.

An Internet download usually comes with a “prompt” from your browser—you'll be asked whether to “Run” (or “Open”) or to “Save” the file. What should you do? Here's the difference:

- If you select “Run”, the download file will go to your “Temporary Internet Files” folder. Then it will run or open automatically.
- If you select “Save”, you have to choose where the file will be stored on your hard drive (creating a “Downloads” folder on your C-drive might be a good idea at this point). The file will sit in this file until you decide to open it yourself.
- So “Run” is convenient, but “Save” gives you more control and it's generally safer. Once the file is saved, you can run a virus scan on it and examine the file. On the other hand, you shouldn't be downloading something of which you are unsure. Downloads from companies you know — for instance, Microsoft, Adobe or Apple — are always OK.

Even if you do choose “Run”, you may still have the option to do some checking. Internet Explorer often lets you view digital signatures from the download prompt. After you click “Run”, a digital certificate message will pop up. You can click on the name listed under “Publisher” for more information. Under “Digital Signature Information”, it should say, “This digital signature is OK”. Otherwise, the file is high risk.

Another option you might see is a checkbox labeled something like “Always ask before opening this type of file”. Other browsers might use different phrasing such as “Always perform this action with this type of file”. The phrasing can be tricky — the two examples mentioned here have opposite effects. So be careful with options that include “always”, “never” or “automatically”. Select the setting that will alert you with **every** download. Good luck!

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



Great Games for the Holidays

Changes in Industry & Technology Overcome

Timothy Everingham (teveringham@acm.org), TUGNET (<http://www.tugnet.org>)

We are now in the time when most of the computer & console games get released, right before the holiday season. This year it even gets more complicated because of Windows Vista coming out in January and we are in the early stages of a transition to the next generation of game consoles. What makes it even worse is the collapse of the computer game industry's major trade show, E3. Game developers have had to revamp their marketing strategies for the future, yet at the same time prepare for this holiday season. This should add to consumer confusion on what to buy and when and hopefully this article will reduce that confusion.

Microsoft's new operating system, Windows Vista, increases questions for those uses of 3D oriented applications, especially games. A great part of this is DirectX 10, which is a major rewrite of DirectX and has much higher capability than current and past versions. DirectX 10 will only be available for Windows Vista and can only be used if you have a video card that supports it. (Those cards that do not have DirectX 10 support will be running DirectX 9.0L under Windows Vista). DirectX 10 cards based on Nvidia chips will start to come out in November and those based on ATI chips will start to come out in February. There will be few games with additional enhancements if you are running Vista with a DirectX 10 card when Vista launches, such as Microsoft Flight Simulator X and Crysis. It will probably be at least until mid-2007 when significant numbers of DirectX 10 enhanced or DirectX 10 only titles will arrive. So for giving gifts to 3D gamers who are going to be first adopters of Windows Vista you might want to consider giving gift certificates.

Microsoft's next generation console, the Xbox 360, has been out for about a year. It has been well accepted by the market-place and has a good number of quality game titles. Sony's Playstation 3 is more powerful and will be able to play high definition Blue-Ray disk movies, but it has been delayed by technical problems until November 17 and even then will have limited supply in the US. With the decision to allow Blue Ray Disk movies to the higher level 1080p High Definition TV instead of the former 720p only should help sales. It will also have some very good games available at launch. There will be 2 versions, the standard costing \$499 and the deluxe costing \$599. Nintendo's Wii next generation console will launch on November 19. It is not as powerful as its two rivals, especially in the graphics area (Maximum Video Resolution: Wii-480p, Xbox 360-720P, PS3-1080p). However it has a very unique gyroscopic controller that is shaped like a TV remote control, which could make some very innovative gameplay (actions are evoked by your physical movement of the entire controller). The Wii's retail price will be \$249. The safe bet for buying a console now is the Xbox 360, but I would advise waiting on your decisions until the initial opinions on the PS3 and Wii consoles come out. (These will probably be found online on the video game review websites before the end of November). Remember when buying a console it is

like buying a computer. First you determine what games/applications you want to run, and then you see which console has the games/applications you want to run now or in the future.

Simulation

If you are looking a simulation, Microsoft *Flight Simulator X* (Windows XP or Vista) is a great visual experience. It is greatly improved from the last version, 2004, with great scenery and other graphics plus good missions. Be aware that to get good frame rates on this you will need a mid to high performance PC by current standards. This is the first game that can take advantage of Windows Vista only features, including DirectX 10 capabilities if you have a Direct X 10 graphics card. Comes in both standard and deluxe versions.

Shooters

If you are looking for a first person shooter, *Call of Duty 3* (Activision; PS3, PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox, Wii) is third installment of the extremely successful World War 2 team-based first-person shooter series. This time it centers on the campaign from Normandy to Paris. Additionally the number of concurrent online/network players has been raised to 24.

Battlefield 2142 (Electronic Arts, PC) is Battlefield 2 set in the future in the middle of a new ice age. Since Battlefield 2 is such a great multiplayer combat title, this is a good thing. Like the previous members of the Battlefield series, it is usually played team vs. team online or at a LAN Party. Be aware that this game has in-game advertisements and spyware is installed when you install the game that analyses data on your PC to determine which adds to display in the game. So if you don't like such things on your computer you may want to pass on this game.

If you have dreamed of firefights using automatic weapons in the glamorous Las Vegas casinos this is for you. *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Vegas* (Ubisoft; PC, PS3, PSP, Xbox 360) is another in the successful Rainbow Six series about the adventures of a US antiterrorist commando team. This time a large group of terrorists are attacking the Las Vegas Casinos and plan to burn them to the ground and your object is to stop them.

Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent (Ubisoft; PC, Xbox 360, Xbox, PS2, Gamecube) is another in the great Splinter Cell series where you work as a spy/mercenary for the National Security Agency. However, this time you act as a double agent within a terrorist cell, so things get more complicated. This also has a multiplayer mode. This series is great for those who like to sneak up on the bad guys, take them out and steal or blow up their stuff.

Adventure

As for adventure games, *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* (2K games; PC, Xbox 360) has extremely beautiful and high-level graphics. It is considered an outstanding title and one with which all other adventure games are compared, but you need a

Continued

high performance PC to play it. **Gothic 3** (JoWood, PC) is a single player adventure game in a land where humans have been enslaved by orcs. There is an evil mode where you side with the orcs, but most of the gameplay you are on the human's side. The game is much more open ended than most games, so if you get lost in non-structured game play this title is not for you.

For those who enjoyed the fantasy role playing game *Neverwinter Nights*, there is **Never Winter Nights 2** (Atari, PC). **Half-Life 2** (Electronic Arts) has moved to an episodic model, and so now has *Sam & Max* (Lucas Arts). **Sam & Max Episode 1: Culture Shock** is the first of seven episodes to come out on a monthly basis with an estimated 4-6 hours of game play each. Each episode will cost \$8.85, but you can subscribe to the entire set for \$34.95. This is an off the wall humor-ridden adventure game with a dog and rabbit team of freelance police as its heroes.

Sports Games

As for sport games, try **Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07** (Electronic Arts; PC, PS3, PS, Xbox, Xbox 360, Wii). It is extremely similar to the previous two versions, but is still a great game. For those who love golf games this is probably your best bet. **Need For Speed Carbon** (Electronic Arts; PC, PS3, PS2, PSP, Xbox 360, Xbox, Wii, Gamecube, Gameboy, DS), is the next in the successful *Need For Speed* street racing series. Its graphics are excellent and smooth, and there is a lot of game play and various options/paths to explore in the way you play the game.

In the good, but not expensive category look at **GTR 2** (10tacle Studios, PC). This is a GT car racing game that has gotten good reviews and has a lot to offer and you can find it for less than \$20. It was released on Sept 26; it is a new game too. For sports games, Electronic Arts has most of the best ones. You should look there first.

If you are into building rather than destroying I would recommend **Sid Meir's Railroads** (2K Games, PC). In this empire-building game you have 15 historical and fictional scenarios to chose from. Up to four players can compete online or over a network. The detailed graphic animation of the environment/world is impressive, but because of this it is recommended that you have a significantly better computer than listed in the minimum requirements.

Strategy Games

If you are looking for a real-time strategy game, look at **Company of Heroes** (THQ, PC). The detail in both the game play and the graphics makes this World War II game set in France in 1944 superior to other similar titles. You play either as the allies or the axis and control small units on a battlefield to accomplish objectives. You can play against another player or players online. Because of the graphics, low-end PCs are insufficient for this game.

Also you need to look at **Medieval 2: Total War** (Sega, PC), the fourth in the *Total War* historical combat real-time strategy series. The graphics and animation is so good that the game's engine is used to create animated visualizations of large-scale actual battles for documentaries shown on the His-

tory and Discovery channels. The graphics have been updated, making the even more real than in any of the previous versions and what you even saw in the TV documentary visualizations. The game takes place in Medieval Europe and you command one of the historical factions/countries that vie for power.

Look at **Warhammer: Mark of Chaos** (Namco Bandai, PC) too; a real-time strategy game with fantasy creatures and units, part of the excellent *Warhammer* series.

Something Usual

If you want something usual you may want to look at **Bully** (Rockstar Games, PS2). This is a boarding school simulator where you work your way up in this kid-dom.

Last year's best unusual was *Destroy All Humans*, a spoof on the 1950's alien invasion movies. Now **Destroy All Humans 2: Make War Not Love** (THQ; PS2, Xbox) has arrived and is set in the 1960's. It is not quite as good as the original; but with the original being so good, especially in the rolling on the floor laughing department, it still makes for a very good game. There are new consoles and a lot of new games for this holiday season, too much to cover here. For additional information go to www.gamespot.com (part of CNET), www.ign.com, www.gamepro.com, www.gamespy.com, or www.gamezone.com.

May your games be happy and bright (we don't have to worry much about screen burn-in anymore).

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



SIG News

PHP?

Anyone interested in a new PHP SIG (Interpreted Script Programming Language), please get in touch with John Raff (jraff@comcast.net). PHP is a widely-used general-purpose scripting language that is especially suited for Web development and can be embedded into HTML. If you are new to PHP and want to get some idea of how it works, try the introductory tutorial (<http://us2.php.net/tut.php>). ☞

NJ Gamers

Gregg McCarthy (greggmc@optonline.net)

<http://www.NJGamers.com>

www.lanparty.com

The next Friday Night Frag will be December 8, 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! ☞

Window Pains

John Raff (jraff@comcast.net)

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

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

December 15: Overview of Windows Vista, presentation by Microsoft ☞

Best Choice Investment Activity

Norm Wiss (cut.up@verizon.net)

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

This is a new event to ACGNJ. They will be using the Best Choice software for real-time trading. This new investing group had been previously meeting in South Amboy and has been in existence for almost a year. They are expected to join ACGNJ as members. **The group meets the first and third Tuesday of the month from 10:30 AM to 2:30 PM** at the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad building. ☞

Genealogy

Frank Warren (kb4cyc@webwarren.com)

<http://www.webwarren.com/kb4cyc/gensig.shtml>

Genealogy SIG is for genealogists interested in computers and computer users interested in genealogy, and is a forum to assist members in furtherance of both endeavors. Meetings usually focus on genealogy more than on computers. We meet at 8 PM on the fourth Thursday of the month, but we do not meet in November or December. In addition to our Web page, we also have an electronic mailing list. Messages to the list should be addressed to gensig@webwarren.com. To subscribe, include the line "subscribe gensig" in the body of the message. **Next meeting in January. No meetings in November or December.** ☞

LUNICS (Linux/Unix)

Andreas Meyer (lunics@acgnj.org)

<http://www.acgnj.org/groups/lunics.html>

LUNICS is a group for those who share an interest in Unix and similar operating systems. While we do quite a bit with Linux, we've also been known to discuss Solaris and BSD too. We generally meet on the first Monday of the month at 8:00 PM at the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad. See the web page for directions and more information. **Next meeting December 4.** ☞

Web Dev

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

WebDev should be an all-encompassing development and examination forum for all issues, applications, OS, languages and systems one can use to build Websites. We currently have two Web dev languages .NET and Java as SIGs but the other languages and OS need to be investigated, examined and tested; Windows, Linux, UNIX, DEC, Vax, HP etc. Intel-PC, Motorola-MAC etc. **Our next meeting December 13.** ☞

Online Auction

Bill Brown (onlineauction@acgnj.org)

Due to overwhelming response to a seminar held on April 7, the membership decided to form a permanent group. The group will meet on the first and third Wednesdays of the month at 7:30 p.m.

There are eight topics for discussion. We will cover all types of online auctions, as members choose. During the meeting, online presence will be established and examples will be given on screen.

1. Getting Started: Different Auctions Registering. Buyer account, sellers account Navigating websites.
2. Buying and selling. An overview of searching, sniping, snuffing.
3. Finding things to sell Gnoming, Clearance, Bargain Bins, Flea Markets, Garage Sales, Solicitation
4. Listing an item. Choosing a category, Setting a Price. Buy it now strategies
5. Maintaining your sales. Revising and re-listing.
6. Collection and payment follow ups.
7. Packaging, shipping, Inventory management.
8. Going further. Ebay express, stores ☞

Postscript to the HOPE 6 Convention

Cass and Ruth Lewart (crlewart@comcast.net), ACGNJ

In our previous report about the HOPE 6 Hacker Convention in NYC we mentioned that one of the speakers Steven Rambam, a well known private investigator, was supposed to show in the "Privacy Is Dead - Get Over It" presentation, how easy it is to find details past and present of any person in the audience. He even prepared a thick dossier on one of the previously selected volunteers.

Unfortunately he was arrested and led away in handcuffs earlier that day by seven FBI agents for supposedly intimidating

a witness and impersonating an FBI agent. Well, all charges against him have been dropped and the federal prosecutor in charge of his case has been transferred to a post in the official "Siberia."

Rambam's talk has been rescheduled and took place on November 16 at the Stevens Institute of Technology in Newark, NJ. You can download the audio portion of his interesting three hour presentation given to a standing room only audience. The three segments can be found at: <http://www.hopenumbersix.net/speakers.html> ☐

SIG News, continued

Java

Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net)

<http://www.javasig.org>

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

November 14: Using Aspect-Oriented Programming in Your Java applications

December 12: To be announced ☐

C/C++ Programming

Bruce Arnold (barnold@blast.net)

<http://www.blast.net/barnold>

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.

November: Screen Saver - Colored Night Stars

The subject for this month was a simple screen saver program. It uses the latest C++ compiler in Microsoft's Visual Studio 2005. The object of the program is to display random colored stars on a black background. The program demonstrates the screen saver logic and graphical routines for the screen.

This is an exciting time for the C Language programming since Microsoft now has 4 different language compilers: C++, C++ Express, C-Sharp, and C-Sharp Express. These are all capable of creating Windows (tm) programs and the "Express" versions are free! Additionally, Borland has just announced that it also has four new programs that are also available in free versions. These are Turbo C++, Turbo C-Sharp, Turbo Delphi and Turbo Delpi for .NET. You may also want to check with Intel and others for their generally free evaluation versions.

Our next meeting December 19. ☐

Investing

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. **Our next meeting: December 14.** ☐

Main Meeting

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

Evan Williams (nhpressgo@blast.net)

December 1: Tips & Tricks for MS Word and MS Excel, presented by Paul Natanson

Layman's Forum

Matt Skoda (som359@aol.com)

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

We meet on the second Monday of the month 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. ☐

DotNet

Jim Wong

<http://www.jimw.net/acgnj/>

Next meeting: Meetings postponed until further notice. ☐

Macintosh Users

Keith Sproul (ksproul@noc.rutgers.edu)

This group is no longer meeting, but Keith is still available to help Mac users via telephone or email. ☐

Guru Corner

Jo-Anne Head (tinarock@aol.com)

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

	Hardware	
	Scott Vincent	973-539-8169
	Software	
HTML	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
	Mike Redlich	908-246-0410
CSS	Jo-Anne Head	908-769-7385
	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
ColdFusion	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
e-Commerce	Rick Elbanna	800-323-7575
Genealogy	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
Networking	Scott Vincent	973-539-8169
Home Automation	Charlie Huffsmith	732-549-1734
	Frank Warren	908-756-1681
	Operating Systems	
WindowsNT	Scott Vincent	973-361-5793
Windows95	Rick Elbanna	800-323-7575
Windows98	Rick Elbanna	800-323-7575
Windows3.1	Ted Martin	732-636-1942
	Charlie Huffsmith	732-549-1734
	Macintosh	
Mac O/S	Keith Sproul	(732) 821-4828

Discount Computer Magazine Price List

As described by the DealsGuy

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

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

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

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

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

ACGNJ MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Sign up online at <http://www.acgnj.org/membershipApplication.html> and pay dues with PayPal.

	US/CANADA	FAMILY OF MEMBER (No Newsletter)	Dues	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.O. 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	NY/NJ/CT Relational Database User Group: Corporate and independent users. (212) 839-0125	New York PC: 3rd Thurs, 7 pm, PS 41, 116 W 11th St. For info call hotline, (212) 533-NYPC, http://www.nyipc.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: 2nd Thurs., Bill Traywick, (201) 635-5393	Central Jersey Computer Club: 8 pm, 4th Friday, Rm 74, Armstrong Hall, Trenton St. College. 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) 842-9600. www.pacsnet.org	Fairlawn Computer Club: Last Monday, Fairlawn Senior Citizen Center. Joe Mathias (fair.lawn.computer.club@juno.com)	Princeton PC Users Group: 2nd Monday, Lawrenceville Library, Alt Rt 1 & Darrah Lane, Lawrenceville, Paul Kurivchack (908) 218-0778, http://www.ppcug-nj.org
Workshop, Hands-On: 2 P.M. to Midnight on last Saturday of the month. First United Methodist Church, Church and Atlantic Streets (one mile from GSP exit 117A), Aberdeen NJ. Bring your project, computer and extension cord. For information call Burke Mawby, (908) 566-7445.		

Classified

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



<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.

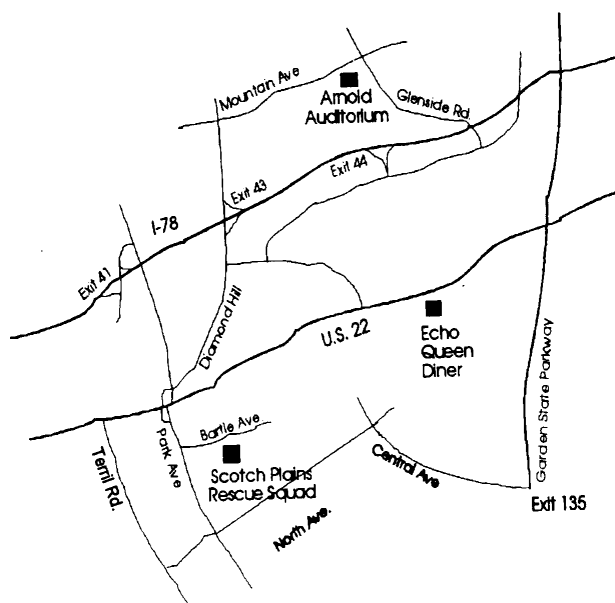
PC Talk, Sunday from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m., 1210 AM Philadelphia. 1800-876-WPEN, Webcast at <http://www.pctalkweb.net>.

MarketPro Shows

<http://www.marketpro.com/>

June 3-4: NJ Convention Center, Edison

June 24-25, 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. ☐

Save time. Use [NM] or [EOM] (they stand for “no message” or “end of message”) in the subject line as a shorthand way of responding with a simple “thank you” or an acknowledgment. This helps reduce the number of e-mails I need to open; many of the people at PC World use the trick and it’s increased everyone’s productivity.

And Your Point Is?

Once I actually open an e-mail, I need to get the point quickly so I can reply to the sender if necessary, then move on to the next one. But lots of the missives I get are, how to say it?, a mess.

Use paragraphs. Obvious, right? Nope. I get e-mails with one long paragraph the length of the Gettysburg Address. Break it up into three or four smaller ones. By the way, my limit is three or four paragraphs; after that I start dozing. [Editor’s note: I noticed.] And send a test message to a buddy to make sure your e-mail program isn’t removing paragraph returns.

By the numbers. If you have more than one question or point, number them. It makes replying a whole lot easier if I can refer to the numbers.

Subject shorthand. When you reply or forward an e-mail, it’s helpful if you stick one or two descriptive words in front of the original subject so the recipient has an idea of what’s in store. For instance, I use tags such as “Update,” “Confirmation,” or “Really Dumb.”

Miscellaneous Gripes

Think I’m done kvetching? Nope, no such luck.

Attachment don’ts. Don’t attach anything executable—period. If on the off chance I’ve asked you to send a program, stick it into a zipped file.

Keep it private. Don’t reply to a mailing list with “great idea” or “I agree.” Reply privately instead. Select a small part of the original message for context’s sake.

Stay plain, Jane. Avoid fancy formatting, gaudy colors, and flowery backgrounds. Two reasons: first, what’s cool on your monitor looks like hell on mine; and second, that extra coding increases the download time for folks with slower connections.

Dear [InsertName]. Private note to PR flacks: If you can’t use mail merge properly, don’t.

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World, a 23 year veteran of PIBMUG, and a founding member of APCUG. He’s also the author of PC Annoyances: How to Fix the Most Annoying Things about Your Personal Computer, O’Reilly Press. It’s available on Amazon at dirt cheap prices.

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

ACGNJ MEETINGS

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

Friday, December 1, 2006

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

Monday, December 4

8 P.M. - Lunics (Linux/Unix). Andreas Meyer (lunics@acgnj.org).

Tuesday, December 5

10 A.M. - Best Choice Investing, Norm Wiss (Norm.wiss@acgnj.org)

Wednesday, December 6

7:30 P.M. - Online Auction, Bill Brown (onlineauction@acgnj.org)

Friday, December 8

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

Monday, December 11

8 P.M. - Layman’s Forum, Matt Skoda (som359@aol.com), 908-359-8842.

Tuesday, December 12

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

Wednesday, December 13

7 P.M. - WebDev SIG, Evan Williams (nhpressgo@blast.net)

Thursday, December 14

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

Friday, December 17

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

Tuesday, December 19

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

Tuesday, December 19

10 A.M. - Best Choice Investing, Norm Wiss (Norm.wiss@acgnj.org)

Wednesday, December 20

7:30 P.M. - Online Auction, Bill Brown (onlineauction@acgnj.org)

Thursday, December 21

8 P.M. - Dot Net, Jim Wong, no meeting.

Thursday, December 23

8 P.M. - Genealogy SIG, Frank Warren -- No 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.**