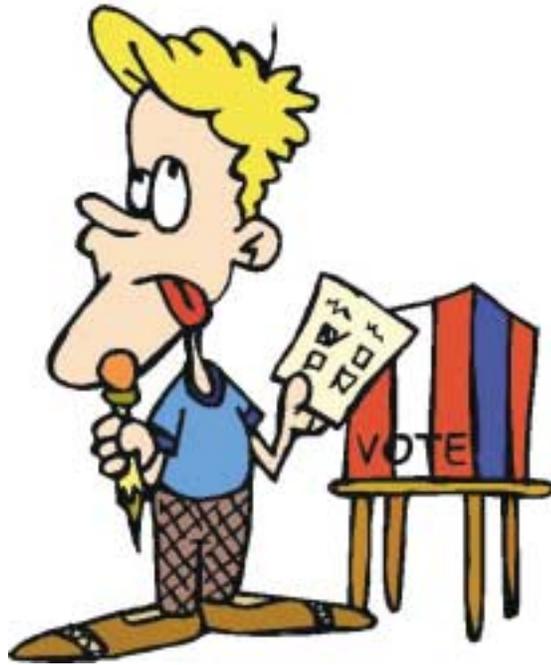


Amateur Computer Group of New Jersey NEWS

Volume 34, Number 12

December 2009

It's Election Time Again



Here are the Nominating Committee's candidates for the December elections:

Officers

- President ······ Paul Syers
- Vice-President ······ Evan Williams
- Secretary ······ Seery Syers
- Treasurer ······ Malthi Masurekar

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- Gregg McCarthy
- Arnold Milstein
- John Raff
- Bob Hawes

Voting for Officers and Board Members will take place at the December Main Meeting on December 4.

Plan on being there to cast your vote!



<http://www.acgnj.org>

Founded 1975

As usual, elections will be held at the Main Meeting on December 5. Nominations will be accepted from the floor until the actual voting begins, and yes, you can nominate yourself. ☐

In This Issue

Wrap It Up, <i>Bob Hawes</i>	3	DealsGuy, <i>Bob Click</i>	8
The Best Things in Life are Free, <i>Lou Torraca</i>	10	The Computer as Crime Scene, <i>Michael Gemignani</i> . . .	12
Book: Speed It Up, <i>Gordon Strickland</i>	13	SIG News,	14
Foxit Reader, <i>Sharon Walbran</i>	15	Guru Corner,	16
The Egg and You, <i>Charles W Evans</i>		18	

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Wrap It Up

Robert Hawes (bob.hawes@acgnj.org)

I thought about using the title “Wrap It Up and Stick a Big Red Bow on Top of It”; but that was a bit long, and it didn’t “sound” quite right, either. Normally, this article *would* have been my “year-end wrap-up”. Indeed, 2009 was a particularly eventful year, full of recap-worthy stuff; but I’ve still got material that was postponed from my October and November articles. So we’ll cover *those* topics now, and put off my annual wrap-up until next time. However, it *is* the Winter Solstice season; and what says “holiday cheer” better than taking a dig at Microsoft? Instead of lowering our spirits by citing one of their numerous deeds of actual evil, though, I’ll just mention something that’s really, really *stupid*.

For the last year and a half, I’ve been sending out monthly e-mail messages from one of my Hotmail accounts, announcing our two speakers for each month, and containing a link to our current newsletter. Those who read last month’s message all the way to the end would have seen this message: “Hotmail: Trusted email with Microsoft’s powerful SPAM protection. Sign up now”. Now, *I* didn’t put that there. Microsoft did. That’s right! Microsoft sent out SPAM advertising their *anti*-SPAM feature. Obviously, this feature just flat out *doesn’t* work. (If it did, it would have erased that message).

Knowing how I feel about Microsoft, you might reasonably ask; “Why keep using Hotmail”? Well, inertia and familiarity, mostly. I’ve had multiple Hotmail accounts for a *long* time, and I know exactly how to use them. Even as we speak, though, a group of college students is designing a new, state-of-the-art Internet database for us. When it’s done, I’ll be using *it* to generate my monthly e-mail address list, rather than my existing contact spreadsheet. *Then*, Hotmail bites the dust.

FSArchiver

Now, let’s get down to business. As Elmer Fudd might say; “Be vewwy, vewwy quiet. I’m testing dwive imaging pwogwams”. In *Something Spooky?* (two months ago, in the October 2009 issue of ACGNJ News), I began this series by testing the Linux programs Clonezilla and Partimage. Then, in *New Blood* (in our November issue), I tested Image for DOS (IFD from now on) and Image for Linux. (All previous results will be repeated in my conclusions below). Usually, I’d tie up my leftover loose ends involving IFD first; but this time, we’ll start out with the Linux program FSArchiver (FSA from now on) instead. It’s been quietly and patiently “waiting in the wings” for the past two months; and what’s more, it comes first alphabetically. In actuality, I tested both FSA and IFD two months ago,

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before I had to bump them. Last month, as mentioned in *New Blood*, IFD issued an upgrade, so I had to re-do all of its tests. This month, *both* FSA and IFD posted updated versions on the web. Thus, I had to download those new releases, then re-do my tests for each program. (Luckily, *all* of my Image for Linux tests and the vast majority of my IFD tests had already been published in our last issue, so I only had to repeat the IFD test that was held over).

Before we begin, I’d like to make a note about re-booting: I did it *a lot!* However, to save space and to be less boring, I’ve usually skipped saying so. Each time I changed my source hard disk or my target hard disk, I had to turn the computer off first, switch the disks, and then re-boot. The programs I ran (under either DOS or Linux) came on their own boot CDs or floppies. So most times when I merely say that I ran another program, I actually had to shut the computer down, change media, and then re-boot. The only exception was System Rescue CD below. There, because FSA and GParted were on that same CD, I could run both programs without having to re-boot in between.

System Rescue CD 1.3.2 (containing FSArchiver 0.6.1) paused only once after it started booting, to offer choices for its keymap. (I took the default). Then, it dumped me at the command prompt. Two months ago, when testing Partimage (which also comes on System Rescue CD), I defined and mounted my data partition at this point. Now, I just ran the startx command. That launched the GUI, which

came up with a terminal window already open; but I wasn’t quite ready to use it yet. First, from the graphic menu, I ran GParted (the Gnome Partition Editor) to confirm that my source hard disk had come in as sda, and that my destination hard disk was sdb, with its single partition designated sdb1. (I just had a Halloween flashback. GParted, *departed*. Get it? Well, *I* think it’s funny). Then, I entered the same commands as before; but in the terminal window this time:

```
mkdir /mnt/dest
mount /dev/sdb1 /mnt/dest
```

Briefly, the first command created a directory named /mnt/dest, and the second mounted sdb1 as that directory, thus making sdb1 accessible for read/write operations. Next, since FSA is a command-line-only utility, I had to enter an FSA command. How would I do that? Well, on the FSA website, there’s a very nice QuickStart page. I made a text-mode copy, and printed it out. (It took four pages). From that guide, I constructed the following bare-bones backup command, ignoring all unnecessary options:

```
fsarchiver savefs (destination path and filename) (source partition)
```

That’s a little counter-intuitive, as it puts the destination *before* the source; but they have a good reason for doing it that way. You can back up more than one partition into one file. That seemed to be a good thing for me, too, because my source hard disk contained two partitions: the operating

Continued on page 4

system (sda1) and the swap drive (sda5); and FSA *doesn't* have a “backup entire hard disk” option. So I ran the following command:

```
fsarchiver savefs /mnt/dest/fsatest1.fsa /dev/sda1 /dev/sda5
```

Unfortunately, I got an error message: “can't detect and mount filesystem of partition [/dev/sda5], cannot continue”. Now, no imaging program should actually *want* to make an image of a Linux swap partition. Like the Windows swap file, a Linux swap partition (and the information contained therein) is absolutely useless once its associated operating system has stopped running. An imaging program just needs to note its size and location. During restoration, it uses that information to create a new, *empty* swap partition. As an aside, our subject swap partition was named sda5 rather than sda2 because sda2 was the name given to the extended partition on that hard disk. In reality, sda5 was a swap *drive* contained *inside* sda2. (The names sda3 and sda4 were reserved for the two other primary partitions that could legally be created on that hard disk, even though they did *not* exist there in this particular case). Anyway, FSA apparently can't handle swap drives/partitions. So I had to re-run that command without the “/dev/sda5” part. Then, FSA proceeded OK.

However, if it wasn't for the way the drive indicator lights on my computer began flashing like crazy, I wouldn't have

known it. FSA hasn't advanced to the point where it gives *any* sort of progress indicator. Not even a simple “running” message on the command line. The cursor just sits there empty until FSA finally finishes. Then, it displays “successfully processed” totals in five categories: regfiles, directories, symlinks, hardlinks and specials. Plus, it displays “error” totals for those same categories. (Personally, I have *no* idea what those last three categories mean). Looking at my data hard disk, I saw a new 1.5 GB file named fsatest1.fsa. Accordingly, my next step was to replace my source hard disk with an empty “10 GB” hard disk. Then, I tried to restore that file by issuing the following command:

```
fsarchiver restfs /mnt/dest/fsatest1.fsa id=0,dest=/dev/sda1
```

Because there could be more than one partition stored in an FSA file, they've assigned a number to each partition, starting with *zero*, and made it mandatory even for a file containing only one partition. Thus, that “id=0” had to be added to the command. Unfortunately, I got the error message: “/dev/sda1 is not a valid block device”. Remembering my somewhat similar “empty disk” experience with Partimage two months ago, I tried giving FSA something to overwrite. I ran GParted, accessed my previously empty target disk, and created a single 9.32 GB FAT32 partition. (That's the *true* capacity of that so-called “10 GB” hard

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disk). Then, I reissued my command, and it worked (with, as before, absolutely *no* progress indication). When finished, it displayed the same statistics as the backup command. GParted now identified it as a 9.32 GB Ext3 partition, with 3.95 GB used. Unfortunately, it wouldn't boot.

I wasn't too surprised by this, since FSA never once mentioned the MBR (Master Boot Record), as Partimage hadn't done two months ago, either. Due to the fact that I still haven't learned how to install GRUB (the Linux boot loader) “after the fact” (that's the more complicated Linux equivalent of the simple DOS command FDISK /MBR), I had to repeat what I did with Partimage: I cheated by replacing my target disk (which had been wiped by a secure eraser) with a hard disk that had been successfully restored by IFD. Next, I used GParted to erase the existing partitions, and replaced them with one 9.09 GB FAT32 partition (the exact same size as the Ext3 partition stored in the backup file). I left the small remaining portion of that hard disk (where the swap partition *should* have gone) unsigned. Then, I ran my restore command one last time. Afterwards, GParted confirmed that the target disk now contained a 9.09 GB Ext3 partition; and when I booted from it, I got the regular “GRUB loading, please wait...” message. So, as expected, I'd successfully retained the existing MBR. Finally, though, I *did* get a surprise: It worked

perfectly. Up until this point, my new results had exactly paralleled my earlier results from two months ago; but previously, the partition I'd restored using FSArchiver 0.5.9 had bombed here with an error that was unfixable (even by GParted). This time, FSArchiver 0.6.1 got it right.

Image for DOS

Last month, based on highly *un*-rigorous math, I made a prediction: “...making IFD DOS 8 boot floppies could become impossible in roughly *fifteen* days”. Now, IFD version 2.51 (which I tested last month) was released on October 13, 2009; and IFD 2.51a (which I'm testing this month) came out on October 29, sixteen days later. That fits my prediction quite nicely; but guess what? It *is*, in fact, still possible to make an IFD DOS 8 boot floppy. Even though I *did* say “could” rather than “will”, that might not be enough to stop the Transdimensional Intergalactic Union of Prognosticators, Prophets and Seers from revoking my “Swami Hat”. As I write this, it's November 18th. Following previous history, another new release of IFD should come out any day now. I'd hoped that when it did, the sizes of the IFD files would have grown enough that my prediction would now have come true; but it's just a week before my deadline, and I need to finish this article (so I can send it to my brother for proof-reading). Furthermore, I had only one IFD test left to perform when I stopped last month. In fairness (because, as you'll see below, I made some criti-

Continued on page 5

cism), I wanted to test the absolutely latest version of IFD; but this article has to be wrapped up **now**. I just can't wait any longer.

It occurs to me that, as I described my FSA tests above, I never actually mentioned what operating system my source disk contained. It's the Ubuntu 9.04 installation that I made six months ago. Even though I've just made a new Ubuntu 9.10 system, I'll be keeping my 9.04 hard disk unchanged for a while, as an emergency backup. Since I used 9.04 for **all** of my other imaging tests, I decided to use it here, too. Currently, I have three swappable "10 GB" hard disks. The **true** size of each one is slightly different; and it was my misfortune to have picked the **largest** disk when I made my Ubuntu 9.04 installation. As I related in my two previous articles, this mischance caused some annoying problems. IFD was no exception. It wouldn't shrink my 9.04 image, even for the minuscule difference in "10 GB" disk sizes. For restorations, I had to use my next largest available spare, an "18 GB" hard disk.

So, shrinking just flat out **didn't** work. What about expanding? For my final test, I decided to tell IFD to expand my image until it completely filled that "18 GB" disk. So first, because I had a new IFD release, I used it to make a fresh backup file. Then, I did one more restoration; and this last time, at the [Restore] - [Options] screen, I checked both Scale to Target and Scale to Fit, as well as Validate

Byte-for-Byte. The screen that was displayed as my restoration ran had a Current Process message area, two slider bar indicators (Progress and Overall Progress), plus Time Elapsed and Time Remaining figures. First, Current Process said; "Restoring image ...", then it said; "Validating image ...", exactly the same as in every other restoration. I think that the second message should actually say; "Validating restored partition(s) ...", but that's just nit-picking on my part. Then, something new happened. Current Process said; "Adjusting... Do not turn off!", and the screen seemed to freeze. The Progress bar stayed at 100%, the Overall Progress bar stayed at 98%, Time Elapsed stayed at 9:32, and Time Remaining stayed at 0. Due to the continued flashing of my drive activity lights, I knew that my computer hadn't hung up, but nothing on the screen changed until the operation was finished. Then, Overall Progress changed to 100%, and Time Elapsed jumped instantly to 16:42.

Now, you remember that last month I mentioned an IFD manual? When I finally got around to reading it, it told me that what I'd just done was **not** possible; but by that time, I'd already done it. So "Hah!" on them. The manual said that if Scale to Target and Scale to Fit were both checked, only Scale to Fit would work. That part was fine with me; but it also said that both options worked only on "FAT, FAT32, or NTFS file systems". Furthermore, under Scale to Fit, the manual specifically said; "This option has no effect

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on images restored to hard drives using other file systems". Obviously, that's incorrect. I have a theory: Someone at TeraByte (the company that makes IFD) has been working to expand this functionality; but they haven't updated the manual because it **doesn't** work right yet. (As you'll see in a minute; if that's what really happened, it would, indeed, have been a good call).

Whatever the case, let's get back to my last restoration. When I tried to boot from that "18 GB" hard disk, I got Ubuntu's usual "Starting up" and "Loading, please wait" messages. Then, things went wrong. Picking just a few examples from the myriad of ominous looking text messages displayed on my cluttered screen, I saw "trying to resume", "No resume image" and "No init found". Then, I was dumped into an "initramfs" command prompt. Obviously, the resize failed. Now, I'm an "Old DOS Guy", so a little thing like a hard disk crash doesn't bother me overly much. However, as far as Linux goes, I'm a "newbie". As such, I was in way over my head at that point. All I could say for sure was that something had gone wrong; and all I had to fall back on was the "mystic healing powers" of GParted.

I love Partition Magic, and I still use it first whenever I can; but my biggest gripe has always been that it will identify partition errors, but it does almost **nothing** to fix them. GParted, on the other hand, can fix partition errors, but when it displays partitions, it absolutely **won't** identify any

of them containing errors. Nor does it have a stand-alone "Fix Errors" function. However, if you perform some other action, it will try its best to fix whatever errors it finds; and what's more, it will give you a detailed log file describing its results. Thus, I used GParted to shrink my target hard disk's 16.2 GB Ext3 partition to 16.0 GB. During that process, it examined said partition for errors, and attempted to fix them. When finished, it displayed: "Shrink /dev/sda1 from 16.20 GiB to 16.00 GiB 00:06:58 (SUCCESS)". After that, my target hard disk booted just fine. The following is an **excerpt** from that log file. (That's right! There were even **more** lines, originally). For easier reading, I've bolded the six sub-steps involved.

- **calibrate /dev/sda1 00:00:00 (SUCCESS)**
- path: /dev/sda1
- start: 63
- end: 33977474
- size: 33977412 (16.20 GiB)
- **check file system on /dev/sda1 for errors and (if possible) fix them 00:04:15 (SUCCESS)**
- e2fsck: Group descriptors look bad... trying backup blocks...
- Block bitmap for group 128 is not in group. (block 33603520)
- Relocate? yes

Continued on page 6

- Inode bitmap for group 128 is not in group. (block 585)
- Relocate? yes
- Inode table for group 128 is not in group. (block 0)
- WARNING: SEVERE DATA LOSS POSSIBLE.
- Relocate? yes
- Block bitmap for group 129 is not in group. (block 127)
- Relocate? yes
- Inode bitmap for group 129 is not in group. (block 0)
- Relocate? yes
- Inode table for group 129 is not in group. (block 1)
- WARNING: SEVERE DATA LOSS POSSIBLE.
- Relocate? yes
- Group descriptor 129 marked uninitialized without feature set.
- Fix? yes
- Resize inode not valid. Recreate? yes
- Pass 1: Checking inodes, blocks, and sizes
- Relocating group 128's block bitmap to 4194304...
- Relocating group 128's inode bitmap to 4194305...
- Relocating group 128's inode table to 4194306...
- Relocating group 129's block bitmap to 4227072...
- Relocating group 129's inode bitmap to 4227073...
- Relocating group 129's inode table to 4227074...
- Restarting e2fsck from the beginning...
- Pass 1: Checking inodes, blocks, and sizes
- Pass 2: Checking directory structure
- Pass 3: Checking directory connectivity
- Pass 4: Checking reference counts
- Pass 5: Checking group summary information
- Block bitmap differences: +(4194304—4194815)
+(4227072—4227583)
- Fix? yes
- Free blocks count wrong for group #0 (31020, counted=31021).
- Fix? yes
- Free blocks count wrong for group #128 (0, counted=32256).
- Fix? yes
- Free blocks count wrong for group #129 (128, counted=19592).
- Fix? yes
- Free blocks count wrong (3105481, counted=3157202).
- Fix? yes
- Free inodes count wrong for group #128 (0, counted=8160).

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- Fix? yes
- Directories count wrong for group #128 (127, counted=0).
- Fix? yes
- Free inodes count wrong for group #129 (0, counted=8160).
- Fix? yes
- Free inodes count wrong (821677, counted=837997).
- Fix? yes
- /dev/sda1: ***** FILE SYSTEM WAS MODIFIED

- 222803 inodes used (21.00%)
- 1638 non-contiguous files (0.7%)
- 222 non-contiguous directories (0.1%)
- # of inodes with ind/dind/tind blocks: 8545/77/0
- 1089974 blocks used (25.66%)
- 0 bad blocks
- 1 large file
- 172116 regular files
- 28458 directories
- 69 character device files
- 26 block device files
- 2 fifos
- 401 links
- 22115 symbolic links (19208 fast symbolic links)
- 8 sockets
- _____
- 223195 files
- **shrink file system 00:00:02 (SUCCESS)**
- Resizing the filesystem on /dev/sda1 to 4186932 (4k) blocks.
- The filesystem on /dev/sda1 is now 4186932 blocks long.
- **shrink partition from 16.20 GiB to 16.00 GiB 00:00:01 (SUCCESS)**
- old start: 63
- old end: 33977474
- old size: 33977412 (16.20 GiB)
- new start: 63
- new end: 33495524
- new size: 33495462 (16.00 GiB)
- **check file system on /dev/sda1 for errors and (if possible) fix them 00:02:40 (SUCCESS)**
- Pass 1: Checking inodes, blocks, and sizes
- Pass 2: Checking directory structure
- Pass 3: Checking directory connectivity
- Pass 4: Checking reference counts

Continued on page 7

- Pass 5: Checking group summary information
- 222803 inodes used (21.33%)
- 1638 non-contiguous files (0.7%)
- 222 non-contiguous directories (0.1%)
- # of inodes with ind/dind/tind blocks: 8545/77/0
- 1088950 blocks used (26.01%)
- 0 bad blocks
- 1 large file
- 172116 regular files
- 28458 directories
- 69 character device files
- 26 block device files
- 2 fifos
- 401 links
- 22115 symbolic links (19208 fast symbolic links)
- 8 sockets
- _____
- 223195 files
- **grow file system to fill the partition 00:00:00 (SUCCESS)**
- The filesystem is already 4186932 blocks long. Nothing to do!

• _____

Wow! Quite a mouthful, huh? Notice that it asked a bunch of questions, and then automatically answered them itself. That's because GParted had called another Linux program (named e2fsck), which can also be run step by step from the command line, interactively. (By an expert, **not** by me). Also note that **none** of the items either "fixed" or "relocated" mention a specific filename. They all involve the structure of the file system, which IFD got **wrong**. However, when I did another test restoration of the same image file, **without** the Scale to Target and Scale to Fit options checks, the restored hard disk booted perfectly. So my image file was **not** itself corrupt; and IFD **is**, in fact, capable of restoring all of those erroneous structures correctly. It was that "Adjusting..." step that messed everything up.

Actually, I suspected as much from the moment I first saw that message, and realized that it was taking such a long time to run: seven minutes and ten seconds. **Longer**, in fact, than either the Restoring or Validating steps had taken by themselves. The only process that would take that long has to involve actual relocation. That is, reading data from one part of the hard disk, and then writing it to another; and that just flat out **shouldn't** have been happening. **Every single bit** of the data restored from my image was already **exactly** where it was supposed to be. The **only** thing that should

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have been "Adjusted" was the size of the **empty** areas on the hard disk, which had **not** actually been backed up in that image. Consider the sizes involved. The true size of my "10 GB" hard disk was 9.32 GB. Ignoring the swap partition, the size of my Ubuntu Ext3 partition was 9.09 GB, and the total size of the data stored in it was 3.9 GB. I didn't actually mention it above, but the size of my image file was 1.7 GB. Back in the "good old days", when I first started using compression regularly, 2X was a dream. I considered myself lucky if I got 1.5X. Dividing 3.9 by 1.7, we get 2.29X. (Remember, this **isn't** Windows. There are no swap or hibernation files to ignore, so every single bit counts). Compression algorithms are a lot better now, but that's still pretty good. Obviously, the 5.19 GB of free space in the original Ext3 partition had not been physically backed up to my image; just information about how much of it there was.

That information is the **only** thing that needs to be changed, for either expanding **or** shrinking. (In real life, the partition's degree of fragmentation would also have to be considered, but we don't have to take that into account for this approximation). When expanding, you just add to that information. When shrinking, you take away from it. Shrinking would be limited by physical reality. In this example, 3.9 GB would be the **absolute** lower limit for target hard disk size. My guess is you'd be lucky to restore both the Ext3 **and** swap partitions to a 5 GB target. Expansion would be essentially unlimited; and that "Adjusting..." step

would **not** be necessary, either. The calculations for either expanding or shrinking can be done "on the fly"; and either process should take so little time that I could use the word "instantly" to describe it. That wouldn't be absolutely correct in a technical sense, but it wouldn't be **wrong**, either. That's the way the late, great PowerQuest Corporation's Drive Image did it, that's the way Ghost does it, and that's the way IFD should do it, too.

Results

Clonezilla can be depended upon to do **same-size** backup and restore operations. Instead of a single file, Clonezilla produced a directory with a name based on the date and time created as its output. Inside that directory were a dozen files carrying **non-unique** names. One was a large image file of my single Ext3 partition, the rest were small text-based files. I didn't include restoration from a DVD as part of my tests, but I would guess that this design might cause problems for hard disks larger than 4.37 GB (the true size of a "4.7 GB" DVD). Clonezilla **can't** change hard disk sizes, and doesn't seem to have any plans to change this behavior. It's listed in the documentation as if it were a **good** thing.

FSArchiver does **not** back up or restore the MBR (Master Boot Record), and it can't restore an image to an empty hard disk. (It requires an existing partition to overwrite). FSArchiver **can** change sizes; but due to its MBR problem,

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I didn't investigate this feature as much as I might have done otherwise.

Partimage doesn't back up or restore the MBR as well, and it can't restore to an empty hard disk, either. (It, too, requires an existing partition to overwrite). Partimage also *can't* change sizes. What's more, it seems *proud* of this deficiency.

TeraByte, Inc. (doing business as TeraByte Unlimited) makes two non-free proprietary programs which caught my interest: Image for DOS and Image for Linux. I'm satisfied that either could be depended upon to do continuous *same-size* backup/restore operations *perfectly*. Furthermore, they're working on size-changing capabilities; but they

haven't succeeded yet. However, their *long-term* plans seem to be the best fit to my own needs. While I can't, in good conscience, continue using their evaluation versions regularly, I'll be keeping an eye on them.

Conclusions

For my purposes, at least, both FSArchiver and Partimage are "not ready for prime time". In the future, FSArchiver might be. I really like Image for DOS and Image for Linux, but in their current condition, I wouldn't actually *pay* for either one. Maybe someday. Finally, Clonezilla is an adequate substitute for Ghost (even with its size-changing limitations), so at least I've got *something*.

See you next month. ☺

From The DealsGuy For December 2009

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

People I've seen since releasing the November column commented on my vacation, but missed that some pictures of Port Huron, Michigan's Boat night would be on my Web site. Check http://www.dealsguy.com/Boatnight_Images.html for the pictures and descriptions.

I was surprised to hear from as many readers as I did about the GM bankruptcy thing. I was unaware that so many of

my readers were also affected. Good luck to us all. I wonder why most of the people that ran GM into the ground are still running it, with our money. I hear people complaining about the unions, but their pay cuts didn't make the news. Many GM workers took pay cuts, some as much as 50%. That must have hurt, although some people feel that even workers at a 7/11 make too much money. Sal-

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aried workers involuntarily took health care cuts long before the union people had to. Where I worked in Michigan is pretty much a ghost town now where former GM plants are now fields of weeds. When I hired into my GM plant, I was overwhelmed by the size of the plant (eight blocks long and four blocks wide) where over 7,000 people worked in 1950. Buick City was much larger, but it's also gone.

*Recreation Time

My wife and I took a bargain cruise in September with two other couples and found that corporate cutbacks have also invaded the cruise industry. At least that's what we were told when we asked crewmembers, or customer service, questions. Customer service urged us to e-mail our concerns to the corporate Web site. Our ship was the Freedom of the Seas, a Royal Caribbean beauty. It can carry about 4,300 passengers and has 1,400 crewmembers. Last December (2008), we cruised on the Mariner of the Seas (also Royal Caribbean) and it's slightly smaller than this one, but they are both large. There are no more free gifts for "Crown & Anchor" members (people with multiple cruises on RC). We did get coupon books, but discounts in them don't amount to much.

We weren't the only ones who noticed that portions at dinner are now smaller, although I have no problem with that.

The buffet was only complete in the morning. For the luncheon buffet, half of the area was cordoned off, but the selection was still good. We never went to the evening buffet so we don't know about that one. Servers told us that with part of the area cordoned off, there was less food that had to be thrown away. Everybody did get whatever food they wanted. We noticed a few other cuts, but we still enjoyed the cruise. Of course, some of these policies could actually be "that ship's" policy. The cruise in December on the Mariner of the Seas was better, but it's been moved to Las Angeles and the Freedom is taking its place out of Port Canaveral. Corporate cuts probably took place since we took the cruise on the Mariner.

The Freedom of the Seas is about 1,100 ft. long and 126.64 ft. wide; and is much too large for the Panama Canal. As I said, we had a fun cruise, but it is often crowded in certain places. The evening shows were great and one person in our group managed to get us tickets to a show at the ice rink, and that was also a spectacular show.

We think our next cruise will be on a smaller ship. There seems to be some great cruise bargains available these days. How about \$399 for a 7-day cruise on a Holland America ship! Also, Norwegian Cruise Lines, which I have never tried, called to offer us a five day cruise at \$129, but we weren't quite ready for their fast approaching open dates. We did sign up for the Florida Association of PC Users

Continued on page 9

Groups spring conference, which will be held on a three day cruise next spring. Registration for it has been great and it seems to be well received.

Enough about our fun (which is destroying our savings); here's a few things that might be of interest to you.

***Just the Ticket For Dark Restaurants**

If you haven't seen (or heard) them, you'd be impressed with "Talking Menus." I saw them at a food show some time ago, but haven't been to a restaurant that uses them. I've been to a few restaurants with a dark ambience and tried everything to see what was on the menu. These talking menus would be the answer, and according to the brochure, they can also tell you the nutritional facts if you are interested. Look them over at <http://www.talkingmenus.com>.

I could have asked them for a discount, but I doubt your budget would have tolerated a \$399 menu for your dinner table at home (from the prices in the booklet they gave me), and I doubt the cook offers multiple selections to choose from. Ask your favorite restaurant if they'll be getting them soon. We don't frequent the dark places much and our favorites, the fast-food places, don't need them. However, my wife has to read the menus behind the counter to me because the print is too small. Have you noticed that on their dollar menus?

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***Tool For Repairing Access Files**

I ran this product back in March, but if you missed it at that time, DataNumen is now offering a 20% discount by using the coupon code DATA-E2OI-TWEN when ordering at <http://www.datanumen.com/aar/order.htm>.

This is a better deal than the discount last March which was only 10%. The discount code may also work for ordering their products for repairing Excel and Word; and for the Outlook and Outlook Express files. Check their Web site for descriptions of the products. The version for Access is 2.1, updated from the one in March.

***How's Your Battery Doing?**

Hewie Poplock of Central Florida Computer Society <http://www.cfcs.org> mentioned this product to the members of his SIG (Special Interest Group) and it sounded to me like something that my readers might be interested in, considering the proliferation of laptop use these days. According to their product page, "BatteryCare is a free utility that gives you much more information about your battery than how much charge you have left for the current session: The app changes power profiles for you when you connect your laptop to a power source, lets you know how many recharge cycles your battery has left, and more, all for free." I know my laptop is not accurate about its remaining time, but I

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have not used it very much while depending entirely on its battery.

It sounds like a handy product, and how could you go wrong if it's free. However, the developer does appreciate any donations to help keep his work going. Makes sense to me. <http://battery.care.bkspot.com/en/index.html>

***Having problems reading the screen?**

A while back, I read a review of DeskTopZoom written by Bonnie Snyder in Bits of Bytes, newsletter of the Pikes Peak Computer Application Society of Colorado Springs <http://ppcompas.apcug.org/bb0903.pdf#page=5>. This product does a good job of giving you options for enlarging parts of your screen for easier reading, or to study something you can't see very well on a page. It does have a few shortcomings, but all in all, she speaks highly of it, and the price is "nada." If you would like to find out more, read her article in the above link, or go to softpedia.com/get/Desktop-Enhancements. There may be improvements since her review was written.

***Magnifier You May Already Have!**

Let's say that you sometimes need simple magnification for something. Like me, you may not have known about the screen magnifier in XP. It's nothing exciting, but simply click "All Programs, then Accessories, then click Accessibility" and you'll find Magnifier. I tried it and it's pretty basic, but I'm told that more information about it is on the

Microsoft Web site. The article I read said there's a link for that, but I didn't see it. On my screen, large text appeared at the top with a large cursor, and while there wasn't much magnified screen area, I was able to make use of it. Try it; it may be all you need. Clicking "exit" stops it. I was unaware of this gem until I read it in a newsletter.

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>. ☺



The Best Things In Life Are Free

Lou Torraca (AF06HI(at)gmail.com), President, The TUG (www.the-tug.org)

The moon belongs to everyone,
The best things in life are free.
The stars belong to everyone,
They gleam there for you and me.
The flowers in spring, the robins that sing,
The moonbeams that shine, they're yours, they're mine.
And love can come to everyone,
The best things in life are free.

So goes the song, written in 1927, way before PCs were all the rage! Well, guess what, some of the best programs and utilities for your PC are also free, yup, I said free! I have been asked a lot of questions recently about some of them so I decided to do a list of the ones I use plus others I know about and have been tried and recommended.

Thinking about a new computer? Are you a bit techie? If so, you could save yourself some money as well as have the satisfaction of putting your own together by yourself. Not so inclined? You can still save on programs and utilities. Without further ado, here is a list for you to consider.

First for the techie who wants to put together their own PC...an operating system that is totally free.

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The graphical installer enables you to get up and running quickly and easily. A standard installation should take less than 25 minutes.

Once installed your system is immediately ready-to-use. On the desktop you have a full set of productivity, internet, drawing and graphics applications, and games. Pretty neat isn't it? Download: <http://www.ubuntu.com/>

More Free Stuff

Now for everyone else, here are some really excellent programs and utilities you can have at no cost. (BTW, many of these free programs and utilities have a donation button where you can voluntarily help the developer with updates, new apps, etc. I suggest you try the app first and then if you really like it and decide to keep it, you can make a donation, however this is strictly a voluntary thing.)

First is the number one priority...anti virus. I've used both AVG and Avast for a long time and, knock on wood, have never had a problem. Both also have pay versions that include lots of other stuff, but I'll be listing all those types of apps as we go along.

To download AVG:

<http://free.avg.com/download-avg-anti-virus-free-edition>

What is Ubuntu?

Ubuntu is a community developed operating system that is perfect for laptops, desktops and servers. Whether you use it at home, at school or at work Ubuntu contains all the applications you'll ever need, from word processing and email applications, to web server software and programming tools.

Ubuntu is and always will be free of charge. You do not pay any licensing fees. You can download, use and share Ubuntu with your friends, family, school or business for absolutely nothing.

New versions are released every six months. That means you'll always have the latest and greatest applications that the open source world has to offer.

Ubuntu is designed with security in mind. You get free security updates for at least 18 months on the desktop and server. With the Long Term Support (LTS) version you get three years support on the desktop, and five years on the server. There is no extra fee for the LTS version, we make our very best work available to everyone on the same free terms. Upgrades to new versions of Ubuntu are and always will be free of charge.

Everything you need comes on one CD, providing a complete working environment. Additional software is available online.

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To download Avast!:

<http://www.avast.com/eng/download-avast-home.html>

Both of these work well and provide you with protection from viruses, but do yourself a favor and read the information that both provide and follow the instructions...this applies, of course, to all programs, apps and utilities!

Next, you need a firewall and the most popular and the one I use is Zone Alarm which for a free app, provides a lot of flexibility and prevents the bad guys from getting into your computer as well as making your computer invisible to anyone on the internet. To download the free version:

zonealarm.com/security/en-us/zonealarm-pc-security-free-firewall.htm

10 years of malware experience combined in one dynamic application. Ad-Aware - Anniversary Edition offers radically improved performance and efficiency, along with comprehensive malware protection. With real-time monitoring, threat alerts, and automatic updates you can rest easy knowing that you are protected. Download:

http://www.lavasoft.com/products/ad_aware_free.php

SpyBot-Search and Destroy complements adaware. If you see new toolbars in Internet Explorer that you didn't install, or you experience other problems, you may have spyware. This program helps prevent marketing companies from

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gathering information about your Web surfing and purchasing habits, and selling it to advertisers. Download:

http://download.cnet.com/Spybot-Search-amp-Destroy/3000-8022_4-10122137.html

Windows Defender is a free program [from Microsoft] that helps you stay productive by protecting your computer against pop-ups, slow performance and security threats caused by spyware and other potentially unwanted software. All 3 of these programs work to keep your PC running smoothly. I use them and they definitely make a difference.

Productivity: Now you have your PC pretty well protected, how about productivity apps? No problem; OpenOffice.org 3 is the leading open-source office software suite for word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, graphics, databases and more.

It is available in many languages and works on all common computers. It stores all your data in an international open standard format and can also read and write files from other common office software packages. It can be downloaded and used completely free of charge for any purpose. Sounds like the big guys Office? It does and it also does pretty much everything that other guy does! Download:

<http://download.openoffice.org/>

Next, a free program that rivals Adobe Photoshop... and we know what that costs! The name is a bit misleading but

the program is spectacular! GIMP can be used to process digital graphics and photographs. Typical uses include creating graphics and logos, resizing and cropping photos, changing colors, combining images using a layer paradigm, removing unwanted image features, and converting between different image formats. GIMP can also be used to create animated images using an improved layers method. The full capabilities of the GIMP extend much further, however, and include advanced image editing, manipulation, and professional graphics creation. It is often used as a free software replacement for Adobe Photoshop, which is the dominant bitmap editor in the printing and graphics industries.

Download:

<http://www.dphotojournal.com/download-gimp-photo-software/>

To keep your system running at its best, CCleaner is a freeware system optimization, privacy and cleaning tool. It removes unused files from your system - allowing Windows to run faster and freeing up valuable hard disk space. It also cleans traces of your online activities such as your Internet history. Additionally it contains a fully featured registry cleaner. But the best part is that it's fast (normally taking less than a second to run) and contains NO Spyware or Adware! :) Download: <http://www.ccleaner.com/>

While you're there, I'd also recommend downloading their defragger, another app which will help keep your system running smoothly. You can schedule daily, weekly or just

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manual defrags...it's pretty easy to use and does an excellent job.

Last, but not least, a program I can't live without. Yankee Clipper III, a powerful Windows clipboard extender/memory-now in its third generation. Handles Pictures, Richtext, URLs, etc-any size. Features printing, drag and drop, optional permanent storage of clippings. Familiar "Outlook" interface. Just a couple of its features: Saves past 200 text and RTF, 20 BMP and Metafile, and 200 URL clipboard entries. Has the ability to save and re-use "boilerplate" clippings. Simply right-click on the item and select "send to boilerplate". Unlimited boilerplate collections can be created. Download: <http://www.intelxual.com/products/YC3>

That's it until next time.If you like the freebies on this list, let me know; there are lots more out there. Enjoy all the goodies, but remember to be careful as the bad guys are lurking!

Aloha, Lou

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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. ☐

The Computer as Crime Scene

Michael Gemignani, HAL-PC (www.hal-pc.org)

When most folks think of criminal activity, the computer is not the first thing that comes to mind., but computers are arguably one of the most powerful instruments of crime in history. A poor sucker who robs a bank may get a few thousand dollars. He will almost invariably be caught and may wind up spending decades in jail. But a cybercriminal who causes billions of dollars in damage (witness the conficker worm), or who manages to steal millions of dollars electronically, may not even get caught and, if caught, is not liable to spend a much time in prison as the low tech robber. Computers offer the opportunity for theft and vandalism on an unprecedented scale. Some feel that the next world war may not be fought by soldiers with guns and bombs but by hackers who try to destroy a nation's power, utility, economic and communication capabilities.

However, we do not have to think in terms of grandiose acts or international plots for a computer to be associated with criminal activity. The fact is that even seemingly innocent activity can get a user in trouble with the law.

Suppose, for example, that pornography, or worse, child pornography, was found on your computer. Many companies will fire an employee if they find pornography on a computer that the employee uses at, or for, work. If child pornography is found, the computer user is subject to harsh

criminal penalties. But one need not even download pictures to be subject to prosecution.

The relevant federal statutes are sections 2252A and 2256 et seq. of chapter 110 of Part I of Title 18, which is the United States Criminal Code. Child pornography basically involves the depiction of someone under age 18 engaging in sexually explicit activity.

It is not required that someone actually have downloaded child pornography. The law applies if someone attempts to violate the provisions against possessing child pornography. Thus, if the FBI were to establish a decoy website that purports to provide child pornography, as some allege has already happened, someone clicking on the website could trigger an investigation and possible prosecution. Lest you think such language is overly broad and therefore unconstitutional, be aware that the Supreme Court of the United States has already ruled the statutes to be constitutional in their entirety as written.

I am not by any means defending the loathsome trade in child pornography. Nor do I seek to defend those who deliberately seek out child pornography. However, as is well-known to those who do not exercise appropriate caution, malware can play all sorts of tricks on a computer, including downloading images that the user would

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ordinarily avoid completely, usually without the user's knowledge. If a worker is provided a computer by his or her employer, the computer may already have illicit files stored on the hard drive and the new user may be none the wiser.

What of it, you might ask? Surely the police would understand that it was not the current user but, rather, the previous user or malicious software that downloaded the illegal files. But suppose such files were found on your own computer. How would you prove that you were not the one who downloaded them? If child pornography were found on your hard drive, how could you convince someone that you were not the one who put it there?

Indeed, if someone at work wanted to get you fired and the person had the requisite expertise, he could put incriminating files on your hard drive and then let it be known to your superiors that he had observed you downloading pornography on the job.

The saving grace in all this, if there is one, is that one is presumed innocent until proven guilty. Hence you would not be required to prove that you did not download the files. Rather, the police would be required to prove that you did, and this might be quite difficult, particularly if your computer were found to be riddled with malware, or it could be shown that someone had hacked into your machine, or that your machine had been used by others.

Even if the charges were dropped, or never even filed, because they could not prove that you downloaded the illicit files or even knew about them, you would still suffer unimaginable emotional trauma, legal expenses, and the probable loss of your job. Moreover, the failure to prosecute would not be the same as exoneration. You would still be under the cloud of having the material found on your machine. Mere pornography can get you fired. Child pornography can get you five to twenty years in prison.

Detective stories often feature someone poisoning another's food or attempts to frame someone for a crime. Now we have the added possibility of poisoned computers destroying lives or being used to frame others for crimes they did not commit. Hope it does not happen to you.

The Rev. Dr. Michael Gemignani, an attorney and Episcopal priest, is also a former professor of computer science who has written extensively on legal issues related to computers. Although he is now retired, he enjoys writing and speaking about computer law and security.

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Book Review: Speed It Up!

A Non-Technical Guide for Speeding Up Slow Computers

Gordon Strickland (editor (at) noccc.org), North Orange County Computer Club (www.noccc.org)

Almost anyone would like his computer to run faster. This book may therefore be regarded as being aimed at a very wide potential readership. It discusses measures for restoring the performance of a computer whose performance has degraded from what it was originally and hardware modifications to enhance its performance perhaps even over the original. However, if the measures discussed in the main part of the book will not yield sufficient improvement, the author also includes a final section offering guidelines for buying a new computer. The specific discussions in the book are applicable primarily to machines running Windows XP and Vista, although some of the material would also be applicable to earlier versions of Windows. Apart from some hardware issues, there is little applicable to Linux and Apple machines.

The book is organized into an introduction, eighteen chapters, and an appendix. The chapters are grouped into six sections, with titles that I will abridge as follows: Quick Diagnosis, Simple Speedups, Power Speedups, Upgrading Your PC, Internet and Network Speedups, and Buying a Faster PC.

Under Quick Diagnosis, the author rightly notes that the perception of performance degradation can be very subjective. He describes instances where acquaintances thought

that their machines were slowing down, when in fact that had not really happened. Perceptions of degraded performance are particularly apt to occur when an older machine is asked to run new, demanding software. Windows Vista and some of the newer games can be very problematical in this respect. The author then discusses various symptoms of actual performance degradation, and emphasizes the importance of doing a thorough backup before moving on to the tasks of repair and enhancement.

The Simple Speedups section deals with removing spyware and viruses, cleaning out unnecessary programs, optimizing the hard disk, and making Windows go faster. The Power Speedups section discusses cleaning the Windows registry and reinstalling Windows from scratch (“when all else fails”).

Under Upgrading Your PC, the author discusses hardware upgrades such as adding more RAM, installing a larger hard disk, upgrading the video card (perhaps particularly beneficial when going to the more demanding versions of Vista), and installing a faster CPU. This last measure is sometimes possible with machines that are of fairly recent vintage. Alternatively, the author suggests that one can provide for a new CPU by also installing a new motherboard, but this

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would seem to get one into the area of the final section, Buying a Faster PC.

The appendix, entitled “PC Performance Resources,” consists of useful lists of available software packages for the performance of the various optimization and repair tasks discussed in the previous text. For instance, under “Registry Cleaners,” ten different programs are listed, including a number of free ones.

Other categories of programs presented include General Performance Suites, Benchmarking, Startup Optimization, File Cleaning, Hard Disk Optimization, Internet Speedup, and others. Altogether, the appendix lists 61 programs.

By way of criticism, it is curious that there is no discussion of the possibility of reflashing (reloading) the BIOS of a machine. This procedure, admittedly only for the more courageous user, might provide important benefits where the originally loaded BIOS contained bugs, had become corrupted, or did not provide proper support for software or hardware developed since the date of the originally loaded BIOS. The author misleadingly states (pg 166) that the BIOS is loaded into ROM that cannot be written to, but this is not true in modern machines. Indeed, some BIOS’s can be reflashed even from within the Windows operating system.

With the printed book, the purchaser also receives, for 45 days, access to a free online edition of the book. Presumably the access period can be extended for a fee, if the user

desires. The object here seems to be to make the book more convenient to use when one is already working at the computer. I tend to prefer to use a printed version of a publication in such situations, if it will stay open at the page you are consulting while typing at the keyboard. Unfortunately, the book is assembled with the now near-universal “perfect” binding (was there ever a more outrageously misleading terminology?), and therefore is quite likely to change pages, or close, spontaneously. Depending on your monitor size and other factors, the online version might be more convenient in some situations.

I thought that the book was very informative and potentially useful. The experienced user, opening up the book at random and examining a particular topic, might be inclined to say, “Oh, I already knew that,” but most should find the detailed, systematic, and thorough coverage very helpful. Even the experienced user may find that the book fills in occasional knowledge gaps.

The 2009 book is authored by Michael Miller and from Que Publishing (Pearson Education, Inc.) (312+xvi pages). <http://www.informit.com/store/product.aspx?isbn=078973947X>. List price is \$22. If your group is a member of the Pearson User Group program, a 30 % discount is available to members plus free shipping.

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SIG News

C/C++ Programming

Bruce Arnold (barnold@ieee.org)

<http://acgnj.barnold.us/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.



November: Visual Studio C++ includes many Graphics functions. The object of this program is to create a simple clock for your desktop. It looks like the Clock Gadget included in Windows Vista and Windows 7, but it is not a "Gadget". It's a simple program designed to show how simple programs can be developed. It uses some of the most sophisticated Dot Net Library functions including:

ScaleTransform(), TranslateTransform(),
RotateTransform(), DrawPolygon(), FillPolygon(),
FillEllipse(), SmoothingMode and PixelOffsetMode

These functions make the mathematics and geometry much simpler. For a comparison see the clock program from March 2001. <http://acgnj.barnold.us/Csig0103.htm>

Other features: In this age with company computers on secure networks and home computers running Vista or Windows 7 there are special issues. How to save the screen position of the clock so it always starts at the same place on the screen when you put it in your startup folder? In the old days you could put an ".ini" file in the Windows folder, but this is now write protected. Another idea is to place the data in the Registry, but this is also write protected in most cases. The clock program provides a modern solution to this dilemma. Code has been added to save the location upon closing and restore it when it is opened again.

Our [download site](#) has code and programs from most meetings. **Our next meeting December 15.** ☐

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 8 : Cold Fusion by Bill Brutzman. ☐

Web Dev

Evan Williams (ewilliams@collaboron.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 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 November 11.** ☐

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 18: Ubuntu 9.10 Upgrade, Running Windows programs on Linux, Bob Hawes ☐

Main Meeting

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

Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net)

December 4: Introduction to Home Theater, Mark Steitman. ☐

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: December 10. ☐

Hardware Activity

Mike Reagan (hardware@acgnj.org)

This group is dedicated to repairing, refurbishing and/or recycling older computers.

On **May 28th**, ten people attended the first meeting of the ACGNJ Hardware Activity; showing that there is, in fact, still a market for this type of event. One guy even came all the way from the Bronx! Although we did look at some of

the older equipment stored in the back room, most of our time was spent in “random access”: talking about past experiences and planning for the future. Hopefully, we can establish a viable long-term schedule of projects, and keep the interest of those who attended this inaugural meeting.

No Meeting in December. Our next meeting Jan. 28.

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. ☐

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 December 21. ☐

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 as well. We meet on the first Monday of the month at the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad. See the web page for directions and more information.

Our next meeting December 7. ☐

NJ Gamers

Gregg McCarthy (greggmajestic@gmail.com)

<http://www.NJGamers.com>

www.lanparty.com

The next Friday Night Frag will be December 11, 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! ☐

Foxit Reader

A Worthy Alternative to Adobe Reader

Sharon Walbran (SQWalbran(at)yahoo.com), Twin Cities PC User Group

When one of my clients was concerned about hacker threats to Adobe Reader last winter I went in search of alternative software. I found the free version of Foxit Reader at <http://www.foxitsoftware.com/pdf/reader/>. It’s well worth a look! Here are just some of the advantages:

- **Small Size.** The file is about one-sixth the size of the latest free version of Adobe Reader and takes seconds to download and install. The small footprint is great for older computers or those short on hard drive space. There is also a U3 version for flash drives.
- **Speed.** It starts up fast and runs fast. No delays while splash screens load. Printing is also speedy.
- **No surprises.** Foxit Reader will remind you of Adobe Reader — same interface, menus and toolbars so the transition is painless.
- **Open multiple files in tabbed format.** If you like the ability to open several web pages on tabs in Mozilla Firefox you’ll like the tabbed format of Foxit Reader as well. View several PDF files at a time and switch between them easily by clicking the tabs.

- **Mark up and leave comments on PDF documents.** You can insert text boxes with comments right in line with text in the PDF document or draw arrows and graphics or highlight text. This is very helpful, especially when you are collaborating on a document with others.

Take it for a test run. You will not be disappointed.

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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:

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

Telephone: 561-488-4465, e-mail: hgoodman@prod-igy.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	Dues	STUDENT	SENIOR CITIZEN (Over 65)
1 Year	\$25	\$10		\$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	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.

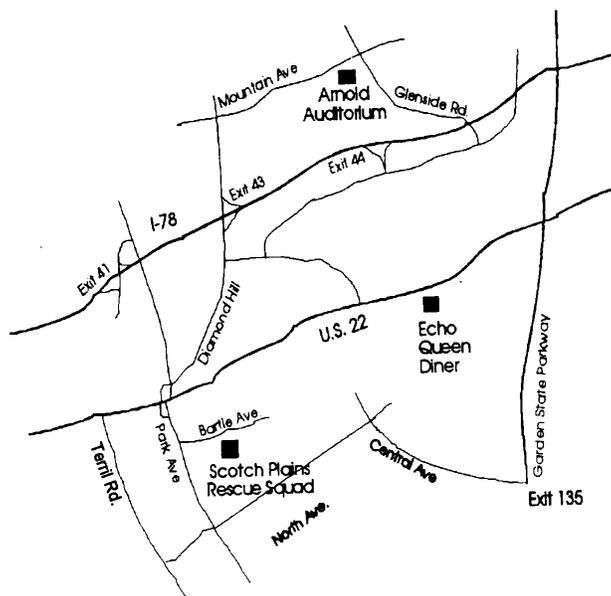
Radio and TV Programs

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>.



<http://www.apcug.net>

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. ☺

The Egg & You

These “eggs” are subversive and fun!

Charles W. Evans, HAL-PC (www.hal-pc.org)

Crack one open. Did you ever marvel at the engineering of an egg? What else makes an egg so fascinating, you ask? Enjoy these web sites, from real eggs to man-made eggs, including the “care and feeding” of eggs!

I hope you don't think computer programmers are dry as bones and boring as cactus. The fact is, sometimes they will just outright surprise you. Buried within many software applications are delightful, little, hidden, amusing tidbits called “Easter Eggs”. Some are ordinary and others will amaze you. Several seasons of “Lost” have eggs. Learn where to find them at: www.eggs.com.

Next time you crack a farm fresh egg, think about the road it traveled from the hen pen to your plate and all the stuff along the way, plus egg safety. Surf to: www.aeb.org.

OK, before you read #5 and for those who are chronically egg-chef challenged, the eternal question is now answered here, plus egg selection, separating, poaching (eggs, not deer), etc. Yah, yah, I know, real men don't “separate” eggs, but this site will show you how, for those times when you are alone! Surf to: www.joyofbaking.com/eggs.html or www.fabulousfoods.com/school/csingred/eggs.html.

And now for something completely different. Magnificent manmade eggs, courtesy of Mr. Faberge of Russia. Surf to: www.pbs.org/treasuresoftheworld/faberge/fmain.html.

The flames of your passion, or whimsy, will explode because there is an egg recipe for all occasions, all tastes and all people. Surf to: www.recipelink.com/rcpeggs.html

I know, I know, enough is enough, but I thought this brief foray would be eggsactly perfect to break the doldrums of working at your computer...and the tedium of thinking about your CY2008 taxes.

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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 1

7 P.M. - Board of Directors meeting.

Friday, December 4

8 P.M. - Main Meeting, Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net).

Monday, December 7

8 P.M. - Lunics, Andreas Meyer (lunics@acgnj.org)

Tuesday, December 8

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

Wednesday, December 9

7 P.M. - WebDev SIG, Evan Williams
(ewilliams@collaboron.com)

Thursday, December 10

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

Friday, December 11

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 14

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

Tuesday, December 15

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

Friday, December 18

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

Monday, December 21

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

Thursday, December 24

8 P.M. - Hardware, Mike Reagan (hardware@acgnj.org)

No meeting in December. Next meeting January 28.

Tuesday, December 29

7 P.M. - Board of Directors meeting.

Friday, January 1

8 P.M. - No Main Meeting (cancelled due to Holliday), Mike Redlich (mike@redlich.net).

Monday, January 4

8 P.M. - Lunics, Andreas Meyer (lunics@acgnj.org) ☐

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