

The NCTCUG Journal

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What Is APCUG?

By Charlotte Semple, President & Editor, Los Angeles Computer Society, California

The Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG) is an international, platform-independent, volunteer-run nonprofit body devoted to helping user groups offer better services to their members. APCUG is an organization dedicated to helping member computer user groups succeed. It helps to foster communications by operating as an informal network between user group organizations and also with companies that provide computer-related and Internet-related goods and services. APCUG also assists member groups in the fulfillment of their educational missions and activities by sharing with officers of member user groups the knowledge of what it takes for user groups to better serve their members. APCUG operates as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Is APCUG a user group?

Absolutely not. APCUG membership consists of user groups, not individual members. While APCUG facilitates information to the user groups and provides information about possible services, it is up to

the individual user groups to offer the services to their memberships.

Is membership in APCUG limited to user groups of any particular operating system or platform?

No. APCUG membership is open to all micro-computer user groups. Some of the members of APCUG are computer societies that serve many different platforms.

How did APCUG get started?

The genesis of APCUG came from a series of meetings by representatives from various user groups around the country. Whenever user group officers and directors met, there were continual discussions about the need to improve communication between the groups and to share information such as newsletters, strategies, ideas, etc. As a first step, the presidents from three user groups

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— Boston Computer Society, Capital PC User Group, and Houston Area League of PC Users - organized the First Annual User Group Summit meeting at the 1986 Fall Comdex. As a result of the feedback from that first Summit meeting and subsequent meetings among user group representatives, the leaders of 15 user groups met in Seattle in October 1987, and proposed the formation of an association for the purpose of fostering communication among and between user groups. That proposal was presented before 130 representatives from 50 user groups at the Second Annual User Group Summit Meeting in November 1987, and was unanimously approved.

What is the organizational structure of APCUG?

The primary governing body of APCUG is a 9-person Board of Directors. Each Director is elected for a three-year term, with one-third of the Board elected each year. The Board of Directors is responsible for the implementation of APCUG activities and daily management of the organization. A 15-person Board of User Group Advisors, each of whom is elected for a two-year, staggered term (one-half of the Advisory Board is elected each year), is the ombudsman for their assigned groups and is responsible for proposing new activities or directions for APCUG and for advising the Board of Directors on user group concerns. All of the members of the Board of User Group Advisors are active participants in APCUG-member user groups. In addition, each Member User Group designates a person to act as a representative to APCUG. The APCUG user group representatives are responsible for keeping their group's officers and members up-to-date with information sent to them by APCUG, as well as keeping their group's information in the APCUG database current. They also receive the yearly ballot.

What kinds of things does APCUG do?

APCUG has established and maintains a National Registry of PC User Groups and provides this information to participating groups, publications, and vendors. By making this information available, more groups will be able to take advantage of services provided by manufacturers, publishers, and publications. APCUG encourages hardware manufacturers and software publishers to establish formal user group support programs and provides them listings of AP-

CUG member user groups to facilitate the implementation of such programs.

APCUG provides a number of Internet services, including web pages with information about APCUG, mailing lists for User Group officers to communicate with their peers, Web Space for User Groups, and a number of other services, all accessible through <http://www.apcug.org>.

APCUG also plans and coordinates user group activities at major computer shows and expositions. These activities include a series of professional development seminars for user group officers; computer product showcase and exposition; the APCUG Summit Meeting held during the Fall conference; computer industry sponsored technology briefings; and sponsored breakfasts, luncheons and receptions.

APCUG serves as a clearinghouse for user group resources and vendor programs. In this way, each user group will not have to re-invent the wheel when it comes to creating something like a new member brochure or novice user diskette. Similarly, APCUG has developed a vendor database that summarizes the various programs and identifies the contact person within each company. User groups can then contact the vendors directly to enroll their groups into the programs.

Does APCUG take stands on issues or lobby?

No. It is more appropriate for individual user groups and not an umbrella organization to take positions on issues. As an information clearinghouse, the APCUG can, however, facilitate the exchange of communication on issues and help put user groups in contact with one another. Since the policy in most user groups is that only the Board of Directors can establish policy, it would be inappropriate and harmful for the APCUG to take positions on behalf of its member organizations. If it is to be successful, it is essential that APCUG not interfere or encroach upon the inherent responsibilities of its user group members.

How does APCUG pay for its directors, officers, staff, and offices?

Like many user groups, APCUG is a non-profit organization that depends primarily on volunteer ef-

fort. APCUG does not maintain its own physical offices but instead contracts for services on an as needed basis. APCUG employs an administrative assistant who handles updating the database, sends renewal invoices to groups, etc. All director and officer positions are unpaid volunteers. Thus far, many people have stepped forward from individual user groups and volunteered their services to APCUG. This spirit is expected to continue.

How much does it cost to join APCUG?

Each APCUG member user group is assessed an annual membership fee of \$50 to help defray administrative and operational expenses.

Is my group a member of APCUG?

Yes. Most APCUG member groups display the APCUG logo on their web page and in their newsletter.

APCUG Member Services

To help new User Groups to form, APCUG offers a collection of information, including sample Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. APCUG puts on one or two national events each year. The many Round Table Programs offered are set up to help leaders in running their user groups. There are also Regional Conferences held during the year where user groups can also meet to exchange ideas, share the highs and lows of running a user group, meet vendors, etc. on a more local level.

APCUG provides web space and other web services for user groups that have trouble finding a local ISP to host their web page. The WebBoard offers a ListServe for groups to contact their members, chat accessibility for on-line meetings, and conferences for a group's guru to answer technical questions.

APCUG publishes APCUG Reports four times a year, and copies are mailed to selected officers of all APCUG member user groups. It contains many articles to help officers do their jobs better. These reports are also published on the Net.

Newsletter editors can often use more content for their newsletters. The APCUG Editorial Committee emails four to six articles each month to all editors in APCUG member user groups. These articles can

then be published in the group's newsletter. Articles are usually written by user group members from around the world.

The monthly NOOZ newsletter from your group's advisor contains information about APCUG and the group's region.

Tips & Tricks for Running your User Group are special articles written to provide assistance to a member user group on some aspect of running a User Group. Frequently they will be based on material presented at a Round Table session at an APCUG or regional conference.

APCUG maintains a Presentation-in-a-Box list that contains information about vendor-provided material that user group members can use themselves to make a presentation at their meeting.

Occasionally, member groups receive information about discounts being offered to their members. Many vendors have special programs set-up for user group members that offer continuous discounts.

APCUG maintains a user group locator on its website which anyone can use to find another user group to arrange joint projects, arrange a vendor tour for several groups, and enable officers to find other user group officers in their area to interact with to discuss topics of interest to the groups.

The APCUG logo is available for use by APCUG member groups. Different sizes of transparent GIF files (color) for the web, and BMP and TIF files (gray scale) for print use are included, as well as AI, EPS, and PSD formats for those who need different sizes or formats than those provided.

Help is just an e-mail away – groups can contact their regional advisor or a member of the Board of Directors. All officers are willing and available to assist APCUG-member groups.

Compiled from information gleaned from the APCUG Website, <http://www.apcug.org>.

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Get Rid Of Spyware And Popups

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG BOD; Columnist for The Examiner, Texas;
Radio Show Host and Police Officer

Next to spam mail and viruses, one of the most irritating facets of web surfing is the annoying popup ads that so many of us receive. What many may not be aware of is that about 80% of the popups that we get while online, and many that may also appear if we are offline, are generated by spyware that is unknowingly installed on our computers. Spyware are software programs that typically install without our knowledge or informed consent, and may also be a part of a program that we purposely installed. Spyware, as its name connotes, is software that often gathers information on our surfing habits and may send that information to third parties. At its worst, spyware may also be used to gather personal information from our computers, including passwords, user names, and other information, and send it to persons unknown who may illicitly use that information to empty our bank accounts, charge goods in our name, and commit other various forms of identity theft. Spyware can get on our computers by visiting some unethical websites, or by installing some downloaded or commercial software. Several forms of spyware can infect our computers via viruses and Trojans. Among the most notorious sources of spyware are popular file sharing utilities such as Morpheus and KaZaA. Some of the "cookies" or small text files placed on our computers by some websites can also be used to create personal profiles on us, and distribute that information to third parties. It should be noted that some software titles will no longer function if their attached spyware is deleted, as the spyware is intended to provide a continuing revenue stream for the software publisher.

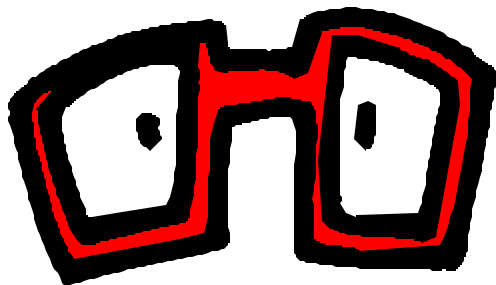
Fortunately, it is generally easy to detect and kill spyware, or otherwise render it inert. It should be

understood at this point that as a general rule, even the best antivirus programs, while effective at detecting and preventing virus and Trojan infestations, are generally ineffective at dealing with spyware. Firewalls, if properly installed and configured, can prevent many spyware types from sending information from the computer, but many spyware programs utilize known security weaknesses, and other vulnerabilities in our operating systems. Contemporary thought is that we all need a good anti-spyware program properly installed, configured, and updated, every bit as much as we need updated antivirus software and a firewall on our computers.

One of the top rated anti-spyware programs is the recently updated "Spybot Search and Destroy", version 1.3, available for free (donations encouraged) at www.safer-networking.org and other major download sites. Spybot can detect and destroy over 13,000 spyware products, and immunize our computers from future infection by almost 1800 types of spyware. Spybot can also prevent some pesky websites from changing our "home" or browser startup pages, and make it difficult for spyware to write itself into our Windows registry. An integral utility makes it easy for Spybot to check for, and install the periodic updates necessary to detect and kill the latest types of spyware.

Another popular anti-spyware utility is "Ad-Aware", available for download at www.lavasoftusa.com. The free version of Ad-Aware, the "Standard Edition", is possibly the most widely used anti-spyware program, with over 42 million copies downloaded since July, 2003. Ad-Aware comes in several versions ranging from the "free for personal use" Standard Edition, the \$27 "Plus" edition, and the \$40 "Pro" version. Ad-Aware frequently releases updated "reference files" which contain lists of newly created or revised spyware information.

A popular commercial program, which is a "Swiss army knife" type of program comprising many different utilities, including an excellent spyware (parasite) detector and killer is the "SpyHunter"



included with System Mechanic, version 4. System mechanic is available locally at retail (about \$49), and for download at www.iolo.com. A fully functional 30 day free trial version is available for download. As does its free standing competitors, System Mechanic's SpyHunter also checks for updated spyware listings, and installs them seamlessly. SpyHunter has been proven to be an effective spyware detector and killer, and the other utilities included in System mechanic make this a most useful program.

While not directly marketed as an anti-spyware product, "STOPzilla" is a very effective spyware remover that specializes in those spyware products that produce about 80% of the annoying popup ads that we may get while surfing the web. A recent update to STOPzilla also includes an integral utility that can detect and kill most other forms of spyware, including tracking cookies. With almost daily automated updates, and excellent 24/7 free tech support, including toll-free numbers, STOPzilla is available for \$30 at www.stopzilla.com.

One of the most comprehensive spyware detecting and killing programs on the market is PestPatrol (\$40), available at www.pestpatrol.com. This is an excellent program that can both detect spyware, and block many types of infection. PestPatrol has an integrated utility that enables all parts of PestPatrol to be updated on a regular basis in order to maximize the detection and removal functions. PestPatrol offers a free online scan that will detect, but not eliminate, almost all known forms of spyware.

While there are several other decent anti-spyware programs available, one caveat is appropriate here. There are some unethical purveyors of some anti-spyware programs that use spam emails, popup ads, and deceptive sales practices, including telling you that your computer is infested with spyware, and charging a fee to remove it.

Any of the titles referenced above will do a reasonable job of reducing popups, and securing your computer from spyware, provided they are frequently updated and run.

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Tech News

By Sue Crane, Editor, Bearly Bytes, Newsletter of the Big Bear Computer Club, California

Windows XP Service Pack 2, scheduled for release next month, will be available as a "critical" download on the Windows Update site and will ship with new PCs. The update will introduce technologies for network protection, memory protection, secure e-mail handling, secure browsing and PC maintenance. A new Windows Security Center allows firewall monitoring, Automatic Update and third-party anti-virus software and warns customers when they need to apply patches. Microsoft will probably ship free CDs, but consumers will probably pay for shipping and handling.

Chipmaker, Intel, and PC makers are shifting the PC to multimedia hub for the home. Intel predicts two new categories

Entertainment PCs will imitate stereo and video components, like a VCR, and will play music and DVDs, record TV programs and even show picture slide shows.

- ☆ Entertainment PCs will use your TV for display and be operated by remote control.
- ☆ Lifestyle PCs, designed to inhabit bedrooms and kitchens, will look like desktop computers and will be operable via remote control or keyboard, allowing users to write an e-mail and later play a video or music. Lifestyle PCs will also come with multimedia software such as Windows XP Media Center.

The new PCs will be pricey. An entertainment PC might start at \$700 - \$900 and sell for \$1,400. Lifestyle PCs could start at \$600, but with a large flat panel display could sell for as much as \$2,000. PC makers have also announced plans to offer special media adapters called the Windows Media Center Extender, which will let consumers view Media Center files on TVs.

SnapStream Media has also figured out a way to get your PC in touch with TV. Firefly is a remote

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Gadgets For Geeks

by Sherry Zorzi, Cajun Clickers Computer Club, Louisiana.

They say the only difference between men and boys is the cost of their toys, but the toys for gadget-geeks of any age or gender just keep getting better and, surprisingly, cheaper.

USB Flash Drive: These tiny solid-state devices are quickly replacing diskettes as the cheap and easy method for transporting or backing up data. A 256 megabyte flash drive will hold the equivalent of about 175 diskettes. That's about 3 hours of music or 1000 photographs, or thousands of common business documents – all in a \$40 device the size of a Bic lighter.

Flash Watch: These watches include a built-in flash drive device. Just connect the watch to your USB drive via a built-in cable. Cost: under \$100. Cool-factor: priceless.

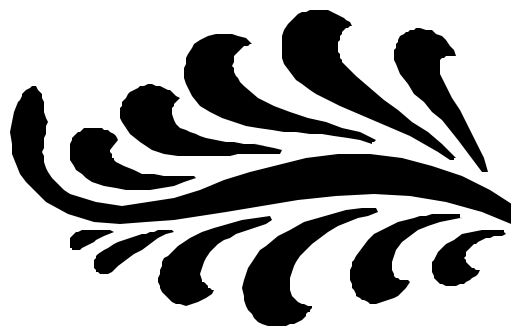
Camera Phone: The trend these days is to go totally cellular. My new Motorola flip-phone (about \$80 after rebate) has a camera, calculator, appointment book, voice recorder, alarm clock, text messaging, wireless web, games, and email. The sleek profile fits in any pocket or bag easily. Cellular coverage is getting better every year and service is becoming increasingly affordable.

Handheld Computer: Pocket PCs and Palms have been around for a long time, but the newest generation of both devices are slicker than ever. More than just a personal information

manager, these tiny computers now include word processing and spreadsheet capabilities, play MP3 music files, handle multimedia and Internet connections, in some cases even play full-length movies. You'll pay about \$200 at the low end and over \$1,000 at the high end for a computer more powerful than the desktop of a few years ago that fits in your pocket.

Digital Camera: The novelty has worn off digital photography now. These cameras have improved so dramatically in quality and have become so affordable that they barely qualify as gadgets. The average digital camera today has 3-4 megapixel quality with 3X-5X optical zoom and will cost under \$300. Mine goes everywhere with me. Within a minute of snapping a shot I can email it to a friend or upload it to my favorite photo-sharing website.

Satellite Radio: There are two flavors – XM Radio and Sirius. I've only tried XM, but all I can say is, "Wow!" Commercial-free music of any genre you desire – any time you want it. A scrolling digital display tell the title and artist of each tune, so no more sleepless nights trying to remember who sang that song that's been rattling around in your head all day. You can install XM Radio in your car and have an optional cradle in the house, making one subscription portable from home to road. Hardware is around \$100.



MP3 Player: These music machines, of which the Apple iPod (\$200-300) is the most recognizable brand, allow you to store many hours of music in a tiny portable device.

GPS: Portable global positioning systems use satellites to pinpoint your location to within one meter. Handheld devices are available or you can buy GPS add-ons to handheld computers. These are popular with hikers and sailors, but are also fun when traveling by car or to use in hobbies such as geocaching. A decent recreational GPS device can be purchased for \$100-200.

Wireless Laptop: Intel's new *Centrino* technology combines integrated wireless LAN capability, improved battery life, and thinner, lighter design to make laptop computing what I always dreamed it would be. Imagine a laptop computer less than an inch thick and weighing less than 3 pounds. Add to that the ability to connect wirelessly to the Internet from thousands of "hotspots" around the country, including airports, coffee shops, even downtown Baton Rouge. That's a laptop to love, priced between \$1,000 and \$3,000.

No matter your age, gender, interests, or budget, there's a gadget somewhere for you to drool over. It's never too early to start making your Christmas wish list.

Sherry Zorzi is Secretary of Cajun Clickers Computer Club and host of "The Cajun Clickers Computer Show" heard every Saturday morning at 9 a.m. on WJBO Radio.

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control that lets people manage media and entertainment on their PCs — TV tuning, DVD playback, streaming video, digital music players and photos. Firefly is compatible only with Windows XP and Windows 2000 PCs equipped with a 500MHz processor, 128MB of memory, 100MB of free hard disk space, and a CD or DVD drive. Firefly will cost \$49.99.

HP's Media Center PC of the future has a remote control with a built-in LCD screen for programming recordings. The PC, known as the Windows Home Concept, also supports Internet telephony, dual high-definition TV tuners, biometric security, and a built-in cable modem. For a web-based slideshow and more information about these new concept PCs, see: <http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,1759,1586428,00.asp>

Internet2, the high-speed network designed to facilitate scholarly collaboration among university researchers, has spawned a new turbo-charged file-trading network dubbed i2hub. University network administrators are concerned that copyright violations are occurring and a computer support specialist at Florida State University says: "The fact is, (the network) cost a lot of money and downloading games and music should be the last priority on any campus network."

Yury Gitman, a self-described "wireless and emerging-media artist" in New York, has outfitted his bicycle with an iBook laptop and Wi-Fi antennas so that everywhere he goes, a cloud of free, high-speed wireless Internet access follows. Demand for wireless Internet access in automobiles has been picking up, and plans are to offer it in airplanes soon.

Memory designer Rambus, has begun to license designs for interfaces for DDR DRAM, or double data rate DRAM, the most common type of memory found in PCs and a technology that's often used in consumer electronics devices. The interfaces let another component retrieve data out of DDR DRAM chips. A new version, called DDR 2, will be released soon that runs at 533MHz. It will soon speed up to 800MHz.

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Picture And Video Files: Size Matters

By Timothy Everingham, TUGNET (The User Group Network),
Granada Hills, CA teveringham@acm.org

You may have gotten a bunch of spam that try to sell you something because they are telling you that size matters. However even though they may be trying to con you, in regards to the size of picture, graphics, and video files size does matter. Some of it is because it is related to image size. However, when you try to compress files there reaches a point where you start to lose something.

First you have to understand that if it is either an image or video file each little pixel or time interval is represented by bits of data. You may have heard 8, 16, 24, 32 bit color. The number of bits represents the color of each pixel. On an 800x600 image you have 480,000 pixels (800 multiplied by 600). Then you multiply the color bit depth to get the size of the image representation (800 x 600 x 24 bit equals 11,520,000 bits). Divide by 8 and you get the number of bytes (11,520,000 bits divided by 8 equals 1,440,000 bytes). It get worse with video because you have to multiply by the frames per second and by the number of seconds in the video (at a standard 30 frames per second it would be 41 Megabytes per second or 2.4 Gigabytes per minute). Now if you have a lot of large image or video files you are trying to transfer through a dial up connection to the Internet you have problems. If that is the case, you just figure you will save and send things using a smaller image size and blow up when it will be used. The problem is that when you go to a smaller image size you loose detail in the process. Then when you try to blow it up again it just gets blocky. The same thing goes for video files, the smaller the file size the less detail and nuances are in the file. This really shows up when you take a small image and then try to project it using a good LCD projector. So if you want to project it, show it on a large monitor, or print it out large you need to keep the image size up. This is one reason there is so much hype on the amount of megapixels a digital camera has.

So how then do we get the small file size of images we do. We use compression algorithms, also known as codecs (compressor/decompressor). There are lossless and lossy compression algorithms. But how can there be lossless compression? It is because nature is filled with patterns and uniform things, which is what we take images of. So if we record info about the pattern instead of each pixel of it a lot of file space is saved. An example would be if a person in your image is wearing a blue sweater. Instead of recording every pixel individually you record this area of the image, where the sweater is, in blue. The Tiff image format (.tif) uses only lossless compression techniques, so it is a good format for achieving purposes or something you may wish to edit later. But then there is lossy compression. You lose some of your detail, but a lot less than if you just shrank the image. One of the regularly used lossy compression techniques is color palette reduction. With 24 bit color you have 16 million colors available. However, there are far less that many colors in an image. It takes less space to analyze which colors are in an image, and create a custom color table that will represent all the color in the image in less than 24 bits, write the color representation of the pixels with the custom table code, and then include a copy of the table in the file. This can be used as a lossless technique, but usually this is taken one step farther. In the analysis of the image it is detected how often each color is used and ranked. As the compression rate increases then the number of colors that are less used are converted to colors that are close to it but are widely used in the image. This compresses the size of the color table, which decreases the bits per pixel representation of a color used and the blending to nearby colors increases the space that areas of the image that can be described as having one color (this is a situation of compression techniques complementing each other). Some formats start out using only lossless compression techniques but as the level of compression increases they start to use lossy compression. Some common formats that use a combination of lossless and lossy compression

are GIF (.gif) and JPEG (.jpg). Remember once you lose image data using a lossy technique you will not have it anymore unless you still have the original or a lossless copy. The compression methods discussed so far are referred to as spatial compression because they reduce the file size by compacting the description of the visual area (space) of an image.

Video is made up of sequential images played over time. This means we can not only use spatial compression; but also use temporal compression, which compresses the file using analysis of the difference and similarities of the frames in an image. This usually exhibits itself by the first frame in a video sequence being compressed just like a still image using spatial compression, but in the following frames only the changes from the previous frame is recorded. Periodically or when there are major changes between frames, a new initial frame, also called a keyframe, is produced followed by more just recording of differences between frames. These temporal compressions can be lossy or lossless. As with still images you should achieve them using only lossless compression. However, using only lossless compression may be impractical because of the limitation of your computers or hard drives' speed or hard drive space, but keep lossy compression at a minimum.

If you are creating a video DVD for achieving that uses the MPEG-2 format that uses both lossy and lossless compression techniques, it is better to achieve the file using the DV codec it was originally imported in from your video camera and writing that file to a data DVD or CD. Be aware that some compression techniques and settings are better for some types of video than others. If you just have a talking head in your video with a static background you can compresses it greatly without degrading the image much, But if there is a lot of fast action or panning of the camera, the amount of compression you can successfully have you have to be more picky on what codec you should use.

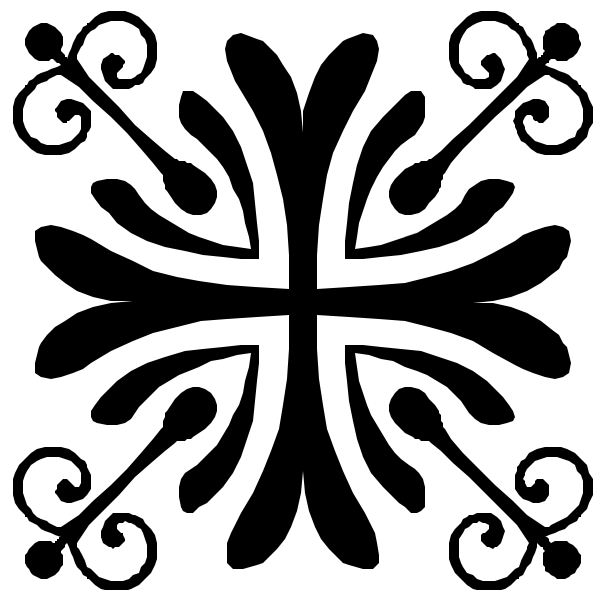
File size matters because it limits what you can use the file for. If you just want a small file you can send to a friend's dial up connection or have friends using a dial up connection view via a website a small file

is good. However in printing large photos, showing on a large computer display or having it projected on a screen small files are not good. Use only lossless compression techniques on things you want to achieve or edit later because it keeps your options open. Keep your archival file large and make smaller copies of it for other purposes.

It is fortunate that hard drive and DVD and CD blank prices have come down a lot so doing this does not cost a fortune, but not planning ahead on image size and which compression techniques can cost you not being able to fully use your precious digital photos and videos.

Timothy Everingham is Vice Chair of the Los Angeles Chapter of ACM SIGGRAPH, the largest chapter of the Association for Computing Machinery's (ACM) Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques and one of Southern California's significant professional organizations within the entertainment and media industries. He is also part-time press in the areas of high technology, computers, video, audio, and entertainment/media and has had articles published throughout the United States and Canada plus Australia, England, & Japan. Further information can be found at <http://home.earthlink.net/~teveringham>

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The Intel PC User Group Website

<http://www.intel.com/go/pcug/>

“A portal to a wealth of information”

By Steve Peyrot peyrots@bellsouth.net APCUG Treasurer,
APCUG Board of Advisors, Region 13,
Vendor Relations Director, East Tennessee Computer Society

We members of user group communities throughout North America have a tremendous resource within a few simple keystrokes as we surf the internet. This resource is the web site developed by Intel® for the purpose of educating and facilitating the transfer of highly desired information into the hands of PC User Group members.

Let's face it, every one of us wake each day with more and newer technologies being developed and introduced so rapidly that it's quite a challenge to keep up. As user group members we are continually challenged not only with knowing about new technologies for our own use but also because many folks within our circle of acquaintances, colleagues at work, neighbors, and other members of the community rely on our expertise and knowledge to assist them with numerous hardware and software issues.

The web site that I will be discussing with you has been developed by our partners at Intel to assist us in tackling our everyday challenges through a vast portal of information and knowledge. They have always realized the importance of user groups and are providing us this repository of information and support. Follow me over the next few minutes as we tour The Intel PC User Group landing page.

The Home Area

When a user logs in to the Intel PC User Group page for the first time, it does not look like there is much there, being so unobtrusive and uncluttered. However, once the user begins his journey through the few pull-down menu tabs that are easily accessible at the top of the screen, it becomes clear just how much information is available on this web site.

From the home area, a number of pull-down menus and some single items are available to the user. The first thing I would recommend to every user is that they look on the left side of the page and click on the area that allows the user to sign up for the Intel® Tech Wire, an email formatted newsletter delivered free on a regular basis with a wide variety of the latest personal computing information. The information delivered includes product information, articles and information on customizing your PC and maximizing your PC experience, application software, recent news, tools and resources, technology trends, human interest stories, and much more.

Just above the area for signing up for Tech Wire is PC User Group Tools. This is an area that expands out and is where a user group officer can order and schedule one of Intel's "Seminars-in-a-Backpack," or anyone can download some of the best Intel seminar materials available to user groups. Complete PDF presentations and associated materials are available to download free of charge. I would recommend that users check this area out at least once a quarter for the newest subjects and tools available.

Finally on the main home page of The Intel PC User Group Web Site are the centralized main menu pull down tabs conveniently located along the top center of the page. These menu tabs contain tremendous amount of information, neatly compiled and sorted into five simple categories. Let us briefly go through each of these pull-down tabs in sequential order:

Resource Centers

The Resource Centers link sends the user to an area where they can easily access usable information on Personal Computing, Business and Enterprise, Hardware Design, Software Development and the Intel

Reseller Center. For example, under the Personal Computing Center, there are tools to help you find the right notebook or the right desktop system for you, learn how to build your own PC from Intel-validated, quality components, and compare performance of various processors. And that's just one of the Resource Centers!

Products And Services

The menu tab for Product and Services leads the user to an area that lists just about every Intel product there is. Here one will find information about motherboards, processors, memory, flash cards, adapters, chipsets, controllers, servers, software, mobile, media centers, and so much more. This area also provides links to highly requested information such as The Intel Processor Roadmap; a vision into the future of processing technologies. When visiting Products and Services, I can highly recommend exploring the Intel SOFTWARE COLLEGE accessible through the "Software" tab. Some of the best training resources available worldwide are found by following this link!

Solutions

The Solutions web page is a very informative area specializing in hardware, software, services, and tools. This area provides information and answers for a variety of solutions for business needs and technical challenges. Here one can find answers and solutions from not only Intel but from other third party providers. Listed also in this area are announcements of seminars and developer conferences or forums. This is the optimal resource to locate solutions and answers.

Technologies And Trends

This web site area is certainly one of my favorites; I could stay logged on here for a long time! Here, you can dive into the Intel Technology Journal, read the Technology @ Intel Magazine, find out about the latest research and development news, catch up on the latest developments involving wireless technologies, the digital home, digital media

adaptors, Intel processors with Hyper-Threading™ technology, and much more. In a nutshell, if someone wants to know the latest information regarding any of the newest technologies, this web page is the place to come first.

Support And Downloads

Last but certainly not least is the Support and Downloads page. If you have a product with the name Intel on it, chances are that you will find complete information, product support, and a host of software drivers and patches. This web page also provides product information and technical research support regarding a wide array of Intel products.

This web site provides complete support for motherboards, notebook products, processors, network cards, communication products, graphic cards, chipsets, controllers, flash memory, pc cameras, and many other pc accessories. This area of the web site is of significant value to all us owners of Intel products. The high level of support available on this web site clearly exemplifies the commitment by Intel Corporation to its users.

As we close, I want to invite you to log on to www.intel.com/go/pcug and explore the areas I have mentioned plus the dozens more I have not had the space to discuss in this article. Our main philosophy as user group members is for users to help other users, so we are very fortunate to have a company such as Intel support our User Groups the way they do and provide us with so many resources and so much information. At Intel's user group support site, Intel stands ready to help us in this quest of educating our communities and furthering our knowledge into the future.

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Selections From The DealsGuy

Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer User Group

Correction

Last month one of my items was PopFile, a product to filter spam. I misunderstood Paul Witheridge's comments and said it was also an antivirus, which was incorrect. What he had meant was that with training, it could filter out spam with a virus in it, which means it might substitute for an antivirus. Sorry for that misconception on my part.

HOW LONG?

I can hardly believe I've been writing this column for ten years now and have never missed a month. I never dreamed it would end up being so widely used. It all started when a group of us from Central Florida Computer Society traveled to attend the 1994 FACUG fall conference in Cocoa, FL. During our travel time, the president at that time (Miguel McCormick) told me the group was getting many special offers and he didn't have time to announce them at meetings. He asked if I would mind putting them together as an article for the newsletter if he

channeled them all to me. Hesitantly, I agreed since Miguel has always worked hard for the group, but I knew nothing about writing articles.

I received much criticism for the first column from the desktop publishing SIG I attended in an effort to help me improve it. They said nobody would read it the way I was writing it. I was having no luck understanding techniques to improve it when e-mail arrived from two editors, because of newsletter exchanges, asking if they could reprint it. Since many offers were time sensitive, I offered to put those editors on a list. I originally sent the column to editors individually for some time because I knew nothing about BCC or CC, or even how to attach a file to e-mail. That first column had 22 special offers in it. I also started giving it to Space Coast PC UG since I was also a member there. Surprisingly, the third editor to ask for the column was from Portland, Oregon PC UG and I was then published from coast to coast, but in just three newsletters. After three months of trying to improve it, with no success, my friends in the DTP SIG finally remarked that since it seemed to be working, just forget improving it.

A few editors feel that this is the "deals" column and should only contain deals, nothing else. Two editors have always felt the column is over worded. They insist that all you need is the name of the product, the price and ordering procedure, thus reducing it to about three paragraphs. I've always felt that those editors were missing what seemed to make it work. I often get feedback from my personal comments. Most editors feel differently and often e-mail me that their readers enjoy the column however I write it, which is always good to hear.

One problem lately is with myself. I don't devote the additional time required these days to dig up deals and I also get turned down more, along with just no response even though I had talked to them at a show. Items I find in UG newsletters, and suggestions sent by editors, help. I still have a few



Washington Area Computer User Group (WAC) Meetings

WAC Meeting will be held on Sat. Nov. 20, 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM. at the Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA

You do not need to be a member to attend. For more information on WAC meetings and events, call the WAC AnswerLine (voice) at (703) 370-7649. Also see WAC's Web Site at

<http://www.wacug.org/>

leads that I plan to follow up, but I'm writing the column from month to month, seeing where it leads. I also use occasional unknown products now that I receive announcements for, if they offer a discount. I still get a lot of support from many editors wanting me to continue. Many editors depend on the DealsGuy column, and for a very few, my column is the heart of their newsletters along with the group's member news. One thing seems certain though, and that is that the DealsGuy column is on borrowed time.

You need a tough skin to do this job because there is no way to please everybody. Complaints seldom come from the readers though, and those that do are usually because of a problem. However, editor's complaints sometimes lead to changes. Interesting that for the last few years though, the DealsGuy column has not been published in the original newsletter that started it all.

Lets Understand The Darn Weather Better

I love this item and was able to put together a deal just in time for Christmas (what a great gift). I can't adequately describe this full-featured weather station so check their Web site. [<http://www.peetbros.com>] I am just now learning everything about mine. It's certainly full featured and I'm having great fun. I installed it just hours before our latest hurricane, Jeanne, and spent more time checking the Ultimeter 100 data than checking the storm. It offers about any type of data and display you want and recorded my highest wind gust at 66 mph., 9/26/04, at 10:05 AM. I could have shown it in other units, as with all the data. Data can also be accessed by phone line. I'm now working on a better mount and location for my rain gauge. Ultimeter 100 can be set to continuously scan wind speed, wind chill, temperature, today's rainfall, time and date, or just certain data. It also shows the wind direction. An alarm can be set for the danger of an impending flash flood if your area is prone, or for other possible situations. A 9V-battery backup retains your data in the event of a power failure. Pushing a button will give you highs or lows for any of the last seven days, or for long term.

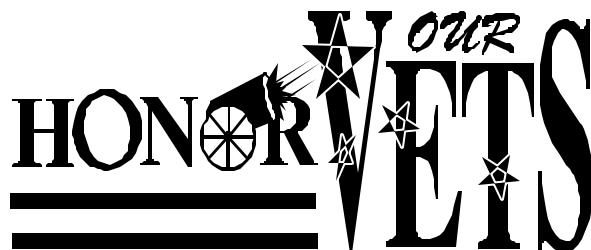
This deal is a scoop since they are introducing a new feature, which is a "serial text" interface that works with your computer to view the weather station's accumulated data. Simply connect the serial cable, start Windows HyperTerminal on your computer, then by pushing buttons on your weather station, quickly view data from the Ultimeter 100 system's memory for various time periods and format it as you like on your computer. The feed updates each minute.

For just \$199.00 you get the "Ultimeter 100" weather station (MSRP \$199.00) bundled with an indoor temperature sensor (MSRP \$12.95) and a 15' serial computer interface cable (MSRP \$20.00), both of which are normally optional. The unit does include the anemometer wind vane and other necessary cables. There are other peripherals such as a self-emptying rain gage and "The Weather Picture" (a large digital display that can be read across the room), extensions for the cables and more.

The Ultimeter 100 is the only product offered with the bundle, but obviously they have other models and accessories to offer. Please mention the code "DealsGuy" when ordering this special \$199.00 bundle. E-mail them at [peetbros@peetbros.com], or call them at 1-866-446-1216 or 1-321-206-6214. Shipping varies according to the dollar amount, but orders between \$200 and \$299 will cost \$15.75 S&H. FL. residents should add 7% tax. If you're not convinced, call for their beautiful 10-page brochure that tells it all.

This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound.

Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [bobclick@mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for interesting articles from user group newsletters. I also posted some interesting Web site pages for your viewing. They contain new product announcements that I received over a period of time in 2003. More will be forthcoming when I get the ambition.



NCTCUG Annual Financial Report, FY 2004

Paul Howard, Treasurer

This was an exciting year for NCTCUG, with more than sixty percent of our support coming from donations and only forty percent from dues. Member donations, both direct and from Pizza SIG, totaled \$951.15. We received \$725 from the Verizon Foundation in the form of grants and matching gifts. (Because of retirement, the Verizon gifts and grants program will no longer be available.)

This support enabled us to acquire a half interest in a Dell 3300MP computer video projector, in conjunction with the Washington Area Computer User Group. The donation of a motherboard and processor by Intel allowed us to equip a powerful new demo computer with a 3.06 gigahertz Pentium 4 processor for \$451.16 more. As a result, we now have the best equipment for demonstrating and displaying programs and intern

The following members made donations this fiscal year: Colder, Fishbein, Howard, Johnson, B. Jones, Keys, Leggett, Newhall, Pafford, Schmidt, Throneburgh, Wenri. Other members made contributions at Pizza SIG, in circumstances where the collections for that evening's meal exceed cost, resulting in a \$1 to \$5 donation to the club. Other times, an individual will pick up the tab, as a celebration of a birthday (a tradition established by Blair Jones about ten years ago), retirement, or generosity, and other members present will kick in their usual pizza tab as a donation to the group, resulting in \$20 – \$40 donations to the group.

Our account balances at the close of the fiscal year (September 30th) are: CD account - \$3483.71; Checking Account (unrestricted) - \$2381.42; (restricted - projector replacement fund) - \$155.82. Our agreement with WACUG requires that both groups set aside a replacement fund for three years, at which time a decision will be made on projector replacement, and/or continuation of the agreement.

This Annual Treasurer's Financial Report for Fiscal Year 2004 has been approved by the Board of Directors of NCTCUG. The account balances noted above, and the Cash Flow Report (above right) are hereby certified as correct.

Cash Flow Report	
FY'04 - 10/1/03 - 9/30/04	
Revenues	
Pizza SIG Donations	\$266.00
Donations by Check	\$685.15
Corporate Donations-Verizon	\$725.00
Total Donations	\$1,676.15
Dues	\$1,050.00
Interest Income - CD Account	\$22.79
Reimbursement	\$34.85
Total Revenues	\$2,783.79
Expenses	
Insurance	\$100.00
Annual VA Corporation Fee	\$25.00
APCUG Membership Fee	\$50.00
PO Box Rent	\$160.00
Admin. Shipping	\$34.85
Total Administrative Expenses	\$369.85
Domain Registration	\$26.85
Total Web Site	\$26.85
Computer & Video Projector	\$1,452.85
Total Meetings & Other Svcs	\$1,452.85
Newsletter Postage	\$240.00
Newsletter Printing	\$700.17
Total Newsletter Expenses	\$940.17
Total Expenses	\$2,789.72
Results from Operations	(\$5.93)

James W. Rhodes, President, NCTCUG

Paul L. Howard, Treasurer, NCTCUG

(Continued from page 7)

Last year, Congress increased the amount small businesses can write off on new equipment purchases from \$25,000 to \$100,000. Known as the Section 179 deduction or the SUV tax, the increase is serving as motivation for sport utility vehicle purchases, but also is an incentive to purchase technology-related equipment. It's available only through 2005, so businesses should decide quickly whether or not to spend while the spending's good.

IBM plans Web-based desktop software. Lotus Workplace strategy, is a bundle that includes e-mail, word-processing, spreadsheet and database applications aimed at business users. The new software is designed to be distributed and accessed through a Web server, and accessible from systems running Windows, MAC, Linux, Unix and handheld devices. IBM hopes to sway customers to Lotus Workplace with ease of management, mobility and price. The new software is designed to be used offline, so mobile users on laptops or handheld devices can connect, quickly access applications and disconnect to work offline. IBM plans to charge \$2 per user per

month for access to the software, plus the cost of server software to make the system work.

The History Channel's 13-episode series on "Decisive Battles" that debuts July 17 makes use of a not-yet-released PC game to re-create the epic battles that mark ancient Rome's colorful history. "Rome: Total War" will be published by Activision this fall.

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.



NCTCUG Information

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Club Information call: 301-577-7899

Web Site: www.nctcug.org

Board Of Directors

Officers

All officer terms expire 2005

President	Jim Rhodes	703-931-7854
1st VP	Ron Schmidt	301-577-7899
2nd VP	Roger Fujii	703-426-5917
Treasurer	Paul Howard	703-860-9246
Secretary	Roger Arnold	301-946-7770

Members-at-large term expires

Bill Walsh	2006	703-241-8141
Charles Throneburgh	2006	703-476-6283
John Keys	2006	703-451-0896
Nick Wenri	2006	703-759-3938
Fred Cook	2005	703-921-1749
JJ Davies	2005	703-379-9222
Sy Fishbein	2005	703-536-5894
Dean Mires	2005	301-931-2400

Article Submissions

Articles, helpful hints, and other items of interest to readers of the NCTCUG Journal are always welcome and will be published as soon as possible after submission. Priority is given to members' contributions. Items may be submitted via modem to the BBS or on diskette. Submissions to the BBS should be uploaded to the Newsletter Conference and a message left for the Editor. Files should be straight ASCII, unformatted, with CR only at end of paragraphs; no indents for paragraphs should be used. Preferred format for diskettes is MS-DOS 3½ 720k or 1.44Mb. Diskettes in other formats may be submitted but there will be a considerable delay in processing. If absolutely necessary, items may be submitted in hardcopy only but these will also meet with delay.

Membership Policy

The National Capital Tandy Computer Users Group, Inc. is a non-profit [501-c(3)] organization founded in 1977 to educate users of all Tandy computers and MS-DOS compatible computers. Membership dues are \$25.00 (U.S.Funds) per year, with a \$5 surcharge for international mail. Membership in NCTCUG includes membership in all SIGs, access to the BBS and software libraries, and subscription to the Journal published 10 times per year. Applications may be obtained at any club meeting, by downloading from the BBS, by calling one of the officers or board members, or by writing to the club. A sample newsletter, membership application and related information may be obtained by enclosing \$1 and mailing your request to Jim Rhodes, 201 S. Kensington Street, Arlington VA 22204.

Advertisement Policy

Members' advertisements: Ads are accepted from members for non-commercial purposes at no charge. Copy should be sent to the Editor in the same format as article submissions. Commercial Advertisements: Ads are accepted from commercial advertisers at the rate of \$60 per full page, per appearance, with discounts for multiple insertions. Smaller ads are priced accordingly. Payment for ads must be made in advance of appearance. Advertisers must supply a permanent address and telephone number to the editor.

Reprint Policy

Permission to reprint articles from the NCTCUG Journal is given to school, personal computer club, and nonprofit organization publications, provided that: (a) NCTCUG Inc. receives a copy of the publication; (b) credit is given to the NCTCUG Journal as the source; (c) the original author is given full credit; and (d) the article author has not expressly copyrighted the article. Recognition is one means of compensating our valued contributors.

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Articles Editor

Ron Schmidt 301-577-7899

COMPUCENTER BBS

Is no longer in operation. It has been replaced by the 'compucenter' mailing list at <http://groups.yahoo.com/>

If you are moving

Please send your change of address to the club PO box as soon as possible to avoid missing issues.

Thank You!

What's On Your Mailing Label?

By **Paul L. Howard**
NCTCUG Treasurer

Deciphering the Mailing label code

The first line of the NCTCUG Journal mailing label indicates your membership expiration, in the format YYMM. Thus, "0503" means your membership expires in March of 2005. An invoice is included in the Journal issue prior to your expiration date.

November 2004

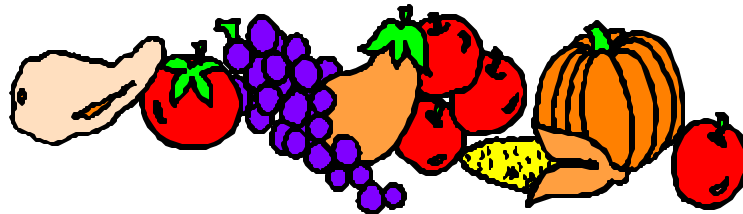
1st Wed. (11/3) 7 p.m.
Virginia General Meeting

4th Wed (11/24) 7 p.m. Internet SIG

3rd Monday (11/15)
7 p.m. Board of Directors



All meetings are at **Carlin Hall**, 5711 S. 4th St., Arlington VA: East off of Carlin Springs Rd, just south of Arlington Blvd/Route 50.



NCTCUG, Inc.
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Arlington VA 22216

First Class

