Microsoft Quietly Yanks OS Backup CDS

by Bill Petitt

Southeast Virginia Computer Group

Vendors must explain policy that offers limited backup in the name of anti-piracy.

Think Microsoft has been scared by the antitrust case? Apparently not scared enough to refrain from ramming a new "medialess" operating system policy down the throats of computer manufacturers and their customers.

As an anti-piracy measure, Microsoft has quietly implemented a policy through which hardware manufacturers who license Windows directly from Microsoft no longer ship a full backup CD of the OS with their systems. Instead, buyers receive two options for disaster recovery: a "recovery CD" locked into that type of system, or a hard-drive-based approach when a "recovery image" of the OS is loaded on a separate partition. Both approaches appear to have some serious shortcomings, not the least of which is that PC buyers might not realize what they're getting until it's too late.

Microsoft has made no formal an-nouncement about this, and not surprisingly, the PC vendors are saying no more than they have to about it. Vendors are telling customers different things, and that's also not surprising. Disaster-recovery solutions can vary greatly among vendors, and getting clear answers about how they work isn't easy.

"How is having a 'recovery CD' going to help me when I'm asked to insert my Windows 2000 CD to copy those files?" asks one buyer. The PC vendor "could only tell me that my concerns were very real ones, but Microsoft just says they know we're not going to like this, but this is how it's going to be."

A reseller reports being told by a PC vendor that resellers could not be trusted with a Windows CD to help customers in case of disaster. "We have been told that this new policy is designed to reduce piracy," says the reseller. "But it seems to me to be better designed to increase Microsoft's profit; they still collect all of the fees but no longer have to bother with duplicating, packing, and shipping the software. This sounds like a bad deal for the consumer. Isn't this the kind of thing that got Microsoft in trouble with the law in the first place?"

Microsoft representatives say that on April 1 the company changed its media policies for all versions of Windows except the Server Edition of Windows 2000, for which you still get a regular backup CD. For all other versions of Windows, PC manufacturers have their choice of the recovery CD or hard-drive-based recovery-image solutions, and some may offer customers different options (presumably at different prices). How recovery CDs are implemented is up to the PC vendor as long as it meets Microsoft's guidelines for assuring the media can only be used on the type of system with which it originally shipped. These policies are limited to those PC manufacturers with direct license agreements with Microsoft, so generic OS backup CDS will still be in the distribution channel.

"Essentially, Microsoft is providing the flexibility for [vendors] to offer the recovery solution that will be best for their business and best for their customers," says a Microsoft representative. "This change is based on feedback from end-user customers and PC manufacturers, as well as to address piracy concerns."

Some vendors have used recovery CDS without major complaints for several years, Microsoft says. But it remains to be seen how well the different recovery implementations will work and what types of problems they might cause. How many people will have to choose between sending a system for OS repair or losing their data? How will companies with a variety of PCS track which systems require which CDS? And will whatever dent this makes in Windows piracy be worth the trouble?

It's likely many PC buyers will be caught by surprise. With Microsoft leaving explanations to the system vendors, many customers won't know what they're getting until they open the box. And inevitably, some won't realize they don't have a backup of their OS until disaster strikes.

From the June 2000 issue *of The Umbrella Online,* the monthly newsletter of the Hampton Roads, Virginia Computing Community.

What's It All About, Alfie?

by Virtual_Jack

Danbury Computer Society

Somehow or other, civilization got along for quite a while without computers. Granted, not as well as it has with them, but, somehow, humankind muddled through. But for all the rest of civilized existence on this planet, or any planet we may colonize in the future, what the computer does is going to be as much a part of our lives as mechanical tools, written language, or social organization. There is no going back. We can no more erase what is in the written or spoken history of humankind as we can turn back time.

So, if computers are here to stay, let's consider what they are and what they do both for us and to us. We are in pretty much the position of Og the Cave Man being interviewed on his expectations of what the wheel would do for him.

"Mr. Og, how will the wheel effect your life?"

"It's too much. First fire and now this crazy wheel. Everything's moving too fast. I want the old days."

And Johann the Smithy at the time of Gutenberg would have dismissed the printing press because all the reading was done by the clergy; there was no apparent value to him in the printed page. So what we have to do is evaluate something that is as far out of our frame of reference as the wheel or printing press was to Og or Johann.

An insight might be gained from the general reaction when IBM's Deep Blue took Garry Kasparov in their monumental chess match. Reaction was partisan, much like the aftermath of a Super Bowl game, however, the most significant observation was made by Garry himself when he said that he sensed some sort of presence in Deep Blue.

Now, Deep Blue was not programmed as an Artificial Intelligence application.

There was no emulation of human logic or reasoning built into the program. It was a pure number-crunching algorithm written in C to grind out massive numbers of calculations. Big Blue simply modeled a finite set of the moves it could make against a set of countermoves that its opponent could make, then assigned values to them all. The highest value determined the move it selected. But from this mindless assault of unimaginable numbers of calculations came a presence that Kasparov could sense. The significance here is that the "presence" or "intelligence" came from the machine doing its own thing, massive calculations, not from trying to simulate or emulate the way that a human works. In a way it is similar to the mechanical age that Og could not see or the Age of Enlightenment that Johann the Smithy had no way of foreseeing.

Of course, we all use computers so we know all about them. Right? Actually all we really know about them is that they are going to get smaller, faster, and more ubiquitous. What we don't know is what life will be like when we wear one all the time like a wristwatch. But unlike a wristwatch, we won't be able to ignore it, or even take it off. Our life will be so wired into society that suddenly being disconnected would be as great a shock as plunking Og down on Fifth Avenue in New York City.

But the real intrigue is not the computer doing more of what it does now, but what it will be doing in the future. The evolution of our physiological capabilities is measured in terms of Darwins, the unit measure of genetic modification to environmental challenges. The units of Darwin modification are millennia. The human of one thousand years ago was not appreciably different from either you or me.

The evolution of the computer is measured in terms of Moores doubling every eighteen months. The computer increases its functional capabilities at least 2000 times faster than we do. But won't it saturate soon? Isn't the silicon substrate close to its physical limit? Yes it is. But the computer is not silicon. It started as germanium, and from silicon it will evolve to another medium, perhaps gallium arsenide, perhaps the nether regions of molecular structure, perhaps biological based media – it doesn't matter. The computer is based on a bistable element, any element that can be switched from one state to another and can maintain that state for an indefinite period of time.

Thus we have the magic of all that the computer has brought to our lives. From the utter reliability and switchability of this element, we have been able to model the arithmetic system. We can model the countability of integers, we can cause numbers to be negative, and we can approximate very large numbers. Even more important, we can implement the various logics using the conditionals, "and," "or," "not," and so forth to emulate the sequential conclusions of our evaluation of our outside world.

So perhaps we are seeing the first glimpse of intelligence outside of our human envelope. A machine presence that emerges from the massive calculations done by the computer doing its own thing. This emergent property of the computer will become as important to human interactions as our language or our social environment.

This machine presence will evolve from our growing use and dependence on computers. As Og invented spirits to explain natural events, we will begin to invent all kinds of culture-oriented images to explain what we can't understand because it is in our nature to have an explanation. Kasparov, unwilling to admit defeat, looked for an unearthly explanation for his loss. But perhaps he was on to something. His experience may have been the first of its kind, a human competing *mano y mano* with a machine on its own terms. Humans will do what humans do best, and machines will do what machines do best, but just what is that best?

Machines move things. The first machines were used to move rocks, big rocks, that people with muscle and sweat alone couldn't move. Eventually, the machines could move almost any rock, anywhere. What the humans did, however, was to decide which rock to move, where to move it, and why it would be better there than here. The key concept is that the tool can't and doesn't do anything unless the human uses it for some intended function. The stick lying there is not a tool until a person picks it up and uses it to move a rock. The glory and genius of the human is that we are able to augment our physiological capabilities. We can move one hundred times faster by flying in an airplane than we can by walking. We can lift one thousand times more weight by using a crane than we can by using

our backs. We can transmit data information ten thousand times faster over electrical wires than we can by talking face to face. But the significance is that it is we who are directing this augmented capability.

What it all comes down to is whether the computer machine is an extension of humankind, and therefore an integral and augmenting aspect of whatever it is to be a human, or whether the computer machine generates something outside of the human envelope. We can certainly envision, and even plan, a computer-type machine that could function on solar power, replenish its failing components, and continue its functionality long after the last human has succumbed to global pollution or annihilation. What we must think about is what would be the meaning of such a mechanical presence. It is the fundamental question of whether a falling tree in the forest makes a sound if there is no one there to hear it. Would a computer calculation be an element of intelligence if it occurred on a planet where all humankind was gone?

Virtual_Jack is an old, retired computer programmer who spends a great deal of time wondering what it's all about. It's obvious that Virtual_Jack needs help. He got it for this column from Richard-of-Rhetoric. Thanks, R-of-R. Reprinted from the electronic edition of the Danbury (CT) Area Computer Society, Inc.'s newsletter *Dacs.Doc*.

Software Review

Super Easy Windows and *The Registry Revealed*

Jorga Riggenbach
Tucson Computer Society Vice President

Super Easy Windows, like its brother, *The Registry Revealed*, is a tutorial in an executable e-book format. In our Computer Fundamentals workshops we are always looking for new material to help new computers users learn and progress as painlessly as possible. Signa Roswall of the Computer Buddies (Buddy@aztcs.org) Program brought this gem of a program to my attention. I called the owner, Tom Glander, and he sent copies for review and agreed to let the TCS use the programs in a controlled workshop setting.

For the individual, *Super Easy Windows* is a wonderful way to learn about Windows at casual pace that you control. The program works in your browser and it is like being on the Internet with the same sort of navigation and menus.

The program covers "Windows Manipulation & Navigation Techniques" and starts simply with "Windows Basics 101: The least you need to know." Then it ventures into navigation basics, the taskbar and the system tray, moving the taskbar, resizing windows, and adding programs to the Start menu. In addition, there are chapters on folder behavior, the Recycle Bin, housekeeping chores, diskette creation, downloading, customization, Outlook Express, and so on.

Tom has set up the program with yellow buttons that indicate a special tip. Other comments are found in the sidebar. Each explanation is illustrated with appropriate screen shots and they are so clear and realistic, that Computer Fundamentals attendees often think they are the real screen. Never mind, it is a simple matter to actually move between the tutorial and the actual Windows to try out techniques as you learn them. If all else fails, you can go in and change the appearance (Start/Settings /ControlPanel/Display /Appearance) of your computer so it is easily distinguished from the tutorial which is in standard Windows colors. (Try lilac, that's different.)

The program uses standard Windows buttons and covers all the bases with subjects such as "Drag and drop technique," "Cut, copy and paste technique," and "Switch between open applications technique."

The tutorial is simple to use and easy to understand and Tom Glander himself is the tech support department.

The Registry Revealed

This isn't for newbies and sometimes we just wish it would go away, but the Registry is a fact of computer life. Whether or not you ever choose to mess with it, it is a good idea to know what it is and what it does. This tutorial makes the learning process fun and takes some of the mystery out of the Registry.

According to Tom Glander's tutorial, the Registry is accessible and can be safely manipulated. The tutorial includes tweaks, tricks, additions and subtractions that the user can employ. The tutorial explains, "DWORD," keys, branches, and values, and a list of Class IDs and much more.

This is an e-book tutorial, like Super Easy Windows, and it uses the same format and style. It is laid out in twenty-four chapters and Glander suggests that, at least the first time, you follow them in order. The chapters include: Explaining the Registry, The Structure of the Registry, The Settings and the DWORD, The Big Picture, The Six Keys, Backing up the Registry, Automating Backups, Restoring a Corrupted Registry, About Patches, How to Apply Patches, An Example Patch, Creating a Valid Patch, Cool Tricks, Folder Options and Total Customization, Visual Properties of Folder Options Table, Registry Properties of Folder Options Table, Hex Roots Table, Tutorial on Creating Folder Options, Effective Searching, Compacting the Registry and Class IDs.

One of the best things about this tutorial, is that you can go back and review it at your leisure. This is one of those subjects that can be revisited many, many times and the more you learn and understand, the more you can pick up when you review the subject. We also used this program in a workshop and the everyone agreed that they learned more about the Registry in a few hours than they had previously learned in years. And best of all, it was pleasant and entertaining. Now those two words are almost never used to describe the Registry.

Cost and Contact Information

Der Glanderhaus LLC, 276 Capital Ave, NE, Battle Creek, Michigan, 49017. Phone 1-616-963-3949 or 1-888-901-2300. Http://www.derglanderhaus.com or info @derglanderhaus.com.

They offer a free demo that you can download of each program. They offer the option of an online purchase or you can purchase a CD by snail-mail. Both e-books purchased at the same time are $34.95. if ordered separately, *Registry Revealed* is $14.95 and *Easy Windows* is $29.95. When you purchase, you receive a longish registration key for your product. You can get more details be exploring the web site listed above. Glander also offers a free subscription to the "Newbie News."

From the May 2000 issue of the *TCS Journal.* Jorga Riggenbach can be reached at scribe@azstarnet.com.

The Dealsguy

by Bob Click
Greater Orlando Computer User Group

Please Take Note

In the five and a half years I have been writing this column, several unwritten guidelines have arisen that help include necessary information for all readers, locations and for all platforms. Always short of time, I sometimes fail to follow up on something, and I hear about it. For example, the Pram battery checker I included three months ago – I checked the URL to see if it worked, but didn't dig down or I would have noticed it was for Mac only. I'm still getting e-mail asking where to find it for a PC. Many people now are aware of that important battery and, I hope, found a program on a shareware Web site.

Last month became an education you should know about. When including reader's feedback, one item sounding interesting was a URL e-mailed to many members of the local UG, myself included, by another member. It was a glowing description of a Web site as a *free* Internet Service Provider with no advertising or floating banners, etc. He said it was stable and urged everyone to "go grab it," stating he didn't know how they could do it (not exactly true). He also urged people to check out the freeware there, which he said was excellent. I asked his permission to include this information in the June column, using his name, and was given the go-ahead, but no caveats.

About a half-hour after e-mailing the column to my editor lists, I received e-mail from Ira Wilsker (a APCUG BoDA member) quoting the part with the URL. He said I might be interested to know that the URL was, in fact, a "paid multilevel referral scheme" (his words) and suggested I leave off the number string at the end of the URL.

I was unaware I had unwittingly included something to provide income for the person e-mailing everyone that URL. I phoned Ira in Texas who told me the number string at the end was probably the sender's registration number for that URL. He said not only would the author of the message receive money for each person clicking on the URL, but also any links clicked on within that Web site. Ira is a part time Justice Dept. employee who occasionally gives talks on Internet "situations." He also has a weekly radio program about computers that can be heard at [http:// klvi.com] each Tuesday at 7 p.m. Eastern time.

I e-mailed Ira's message to the author whose response confirmed that it indeed was a "paid" referral situation, but he objected to the words "scheme" and "multilevel." He "then" also suggested I omit the numbers at the end (too late since the column had already been released). I disagree with his ethics, unless I'm missing something here, even though there's nothing illegal about it. My opinion has nothing to do with user groups that make money for their treasury by having their members use certain "paying" URLs. In those situations, everybody knows the whole story right up front.

I decided to immediately send out a correction to editors asking them to remove the numbers from that URL. I then needed to change the file already posted on my Web site, and on the APCUG bbs. Another education! I opened the file in MS Word and placed the cursor at the beginning of the numbers at the end of the URL, deleting them one at a time (a mistake). It "looked" OK so I replaced the files on the necessary Web sites. I resubmitted it to the local newsletter committee who called a couple days later telling me that when they placed the cursor on the URL hypertext in MS Word, the pop-out box still included the numbers, even though they were not showing in the URL. How could that be!!

The answer turned out to be that I should have used the often-neglected "right-click" and chosen Hypertext/Edit from that menu. At any rate, last month was a very embarrassing and exasperating experience. The crux of it all is for you to take a good look at any URL sent to you by anybody, even friends. If it sounds interesting, but has a number at the beginning or end, or even a combination of numbers and letters, leave them off and see if it works. Why unknowingly create income for people trying to make money from your lack of knowledge. Officers especially should beware of people, including members, "exploiting" (my opinion) their membership in this manner.

Still Good

The PlanetWare travel planing offer is still good. E-mail [info@planetware.com] with the necessary information. Remember that e-mail is not a secure way to send credit card info to PlanetWare. The special-offer for the "Active Directory for Dummies" book is still good. Order at [http://www.fatbrain.com/shop/info/0764506595?from=XUU975].

I heard from Linda Barlow of User Group Connection who sent me this for the column.

"First, from 'amazingmail.com,' 5 *free* 'real' postcards just for trying AmazingMail. Here's how you do it. Simply go to [http://www.amazingmail.com] and enter the following source code at sign-up: h1132db38hhvdvd (special user group code). Choose your image, enter your message, address the card and click "Send." In a few days, you and/or your friends will receive an actual postcard via US Mail. Great for Birthdays, Thank You Notes, Advertising, or just to let your friends know you've caught on to something! This special offer comes from User Group Relations (Gene and Linda Barlow), representing Amazing Mail."

Next, from PowerQuest Corporation, who just announced Drive Image Version 3!
Special User Group Prices can be found at this hidden web site for user group members. Products are: PartitionMagic V5, Drive Image V3, DataKeeper V3, Second Chance V2, Lost and Found V1, and from Caldera Systems, OpenLinux eDesktop V2.4: [http://www.ugr.com/order/] The Special User Group Price Code is: UGDEALS00

Free Antivirus Protection

I mentioned F-Prot amtivirus last month. Another free antivirus software is Computer Associates' Inoculate-IT. It works with Windows 95/98/NT. If you want brand name, it doesn't get much more brand name than CA. Inoculate-IT looks for and takes care of any file and boot sector viruses. It also works on those Macro viruses that are automatic unless you turn the macros off on Microsoft products, such as MS Word and Excel.

You'll find information on this product at [http://antivirus.cai.com]. You can register and download it.

Update Your Web Site While On Line

Brad Williams (from a small company in southern California) sent me this and asked if I would put a link on our Web site [http:// www.OmniUpdate.com]. I visited the URL and tried its demo on my own Web site. It failed to finish loading my home page. I tried it twice, but to no avail, but that doesn't mean it won't work since I'm only using IE4. I've not had the time to download the software and give it a try. I noticed one place where they mention a small one-time fee. Here are excerpts from their Web site:

"OmniUpdate FREE™ puts you just one click away from directly updating your Web pages, right in your browser! View any page of your site and, with one click, you can update it right there, with WYSIWYG ease! Use OmniUpdate often to keep your Web site fresh and your visitors coming back.

"It's Free! Your use of OmniUpdate is completely free. No products to buy, download or install. OmniUpdate works right in the web browser you normally use and requires no plug-ins, Java, or server-side modifications.

"OmniUpdate is not a Web site hosting service but rather a quick way for you to make updates and changes to your existing Web pages wherever they are currently located. Your Web site may be hosted on your own server, on your ISP's server, on AOL™ , Geocities™ , or anywhere.

"How does it work? Start by signing up for a free account. Within minutes you'll be updating pages on your Web site in a word processor-like window. When you save the update, OmniUpdate places a small green button at the bottom of your page. Simply click this button to login and have this page automatically displayed and available for update. For a small one-time fee, you can customize the button using your own graphic, or choose no graphic at all. Seeing is believing . . . There's much more.

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

To Surge or Not to Surge
by Bob Click
Greater Orlando Computer User Group

People purchasing new computers often ask what to do about power line and lightning protection. To emphasize the importance, it's better to understand household electricity, what it is and what affects it. Lets analyze all this, but in a visual manner.

Electricity in your home (in the USA) is rated at an "average" of 117 volts and is referred to as "AC" (Alternating Current). There are basically two different types of electrical power, AC and DC. Direct Current (DC) is so named because it maintains a near constant voltage of a certain value at all times, such as the 12-volt system in your automobile. DC is not normally used in the home any more except in unusual situations. Alternating Current (AC) is electrical power with the voltage constantly changing from one polarity to another (from positive to negative to positive, etc.).

For long distance transmission, DC decreases in voltage and is expensive to convert from one voltage to another. AC maintains its voltage better with the assistance of transformers that greatly increase the voltage for long distance transmission, then drop it back down for home use.

To illustrate AC electricity graphically, lets visualize or draw a large "S" laying on its side with a horizontal line running through the middle of it. Let's call the horizontal line "0" volts, and the bottom of our S will be – 117 volts. The top of the S going above the horizontal line will be + 117 volts. Note that the value of our electricity starts at 0 volts dropping to 117 negative volts, then rises back up to the "0" volts line, continuing on up to positive 117 volts, then back down to the 0 level as the electron flow continually reverses. In our electricity, this complete "sine wave" takes place 60 times each second, continuing one after another in our graphical representation of electricity in your home.

In a perfect world, the voltages I described would remain constant, but in reality many things affect them. Electric Companies try to regulate power at a proper level, but certain conditions can still affect those voltages. For example, in hot weather many people turn on devices using large amounts of electricity, such as air conditioners, greatly loading the power line. The Electric Company has to compensate, although the voltage "could" still decrease if power lines are overloaded. If loads suddenly get lighter, the voltage can rise (dangerous for your computer) in spite of the Electric Company's regulation.

Sometimes a factory or business in an area has equipment using high amounts of electricity causing sudden surges up or down quicker than Electric Company equipment can adjust for. Some surges described would be seen as "spikes" in the graph you just drew, not to mention a possible low-voltage situation.

Lets draw a very narrow V upside down on top of the + portion of the sine wave. That will be the spike and you can see that it would exceed the 117 volts your computer equipment is designed to operate at, possibly damaging components in its electronic circuitry.

In your own home, turning on a high-consumption device (such as a toaster, or especially an air conditioner) can cause voltage spikes in the home's electricity and also causes spikes when turned off. In my case, the computer room is in one end of the home and the electrical service box (entry point) is on the other end, making a long electrical run to the plugs in my computer room. Turning on the copier in that room, which initially draws heavy current, causes my computer's Uninteruptable Power Supply (UPS) to "beep" me that the supply voltage has gone below acceptable limits. That didn't happen when my copier and computer were on plugs closer to the power panel.

Lightning often strikes power lines and the resulting spikes can be carried down the line into your home's distribution system and into any unprotected electronic equipment. The Electric Company can only regulate so much, so lets examine protection for all this.

Surge protectors have unique electronics built-in that can smooth out those surges, dips and spikes in the electrical sine waves just illustrated and are designed to maintain the power's voltage at the correct level. The cheaper ones have a minimal amount of components and are actually not good protection. Many people prefer to turn on the computer, monitor and peripherals with one master switch (laser printers should not be included). That's fine if you have surge protection to handle such a surge, but you should check that capability when choosing your protection. If it doesn't list those ratings in the brochure, it's probably not that good, so look for better equipment. Mine specifically stated that in its paperwork.

Good surge protectors will probably run about $60.00. Many also carry up to $25,000 insurance protection for excessive surges and lightening strikes. However, read the brochure to see if it's good in the event of a direct lightning strike. Some aren't.

You might think that if one is good, two might be better. Not necessarily, I'll explain later. If you can afford it I recommend an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS). Why? Many areas often have a very short interruption of the power that doesn't effect most clocks, VCR, etc., but the computer notices. All of a sudden, it is rebooting and you've lost everything since your last "Save," not to mention the improper shut down and possibility of file corruption. Everyone has had power go out at one time or another and that's when a UPS excels if you're using your computer.

UPS devices provide surge protection as well as a temporary electrical source if the power fails. They mostly come in two types. Some switch extremely fast to a backup battery, automatically keeping your computer going. Another type lets your computer actually run off the battery and keeps it fully charged to supplement what your computer needs. I have no preferences there. They are available in different capacities. For the home computer, I suggest a 400 volt/amp capacity. Should your power go out and fail to come back on, it offers temporary power for easily halting your task, saving your data and shutting the computer down properly, probably allowing a maximum of 20 minutes.

A cheaper one (with a 250 volt/amp capacity) allows about six-to-ten minutes. That's still OK if you're at your computer when that happens and work fast to shut down. These times are for the average home computer and monitor, not including a printer. A laser printer should not be on the same surge protection as your computer and monitor because of a laser's high power consumption. A UPS is not necessary for a printer or scanner, however, separate, but adequate, surge protection is advised.

While the UPS is also a surge protector, it is typically not as good in the role of a dedicated surge protector, but will still do the job well enough. So why not use both? Two surge protectors will combine their ratings. But if combining a surge protector and UPS, microsecond timing involved in surge protection could conflict with the timing in the UPS. Surge protection companies say you can use a surge protector in the line "before" a UPS, but not after if you really want to use both. In fact, in the event of a lightning strike, their $25,000 insurance may be void if they find you had both and connected them backwards.

A "Smart" UPS can also be upgraded to let your computer keep a continuous log of the power's voltage. Other software is available that will automatically save data, then shut down your computer if it is unattended when the power fails. Want another reason to buy a UPS – while a good surge protector can smooth out the spikes and maintain a proper voltage for you, "low voltage" on overloaded lines can also damage your computer equipment or cause data errors. A surge protector cannot make voltage out of thin air to accommodate a low voltage condition, but a UPS has backup batteries to compensate for it.

It's a known fact that lightning strikes ride in more on your phone line than they do on the power line, so it's also a good policy to include surge protection for telephone lines. Here in Florida, we are in the "lightning capital of the world" so many Florida residents make it a policy to unplug the power and phone lines to the computer as an added security during lightning storms (in the event of a direct hit), even though they own surge protection.

Does that fully insure me? Not necessarily – one of our club members did just that, dropping the power cord on the floor next to his receptacle. When he received a close lightning strike, it jumped from the wire inside the wall, through the wallboard, to the power cord attached to his computer. Considering the distance between the earth and clouds, that short jump was no problem for lightning. His case was certainly unique though.

In summary, my advice is to buy high quality surge protection. Better advice (in my opinion) is to buy a UPS for your computer and monitor and separate surge protection for a laser printer or scanner. It's also important to add telephone line protection, either incorporated in the power's surge protector (or UPS), or separate telephone line protection. The dual protection is better because of the built in ground to shunt away the surges. It always appalls me when I see a salesperson sell somebody a $1500 computer with a $12.95 surge protector, which is almost useless. Surge protection is sort of a "pay me now, or pay me later" situation.

Surge protectors and UPSs are rated in "joules" and I recommend a rating of 90. Lesser ratings will still protect your equipment, but will often destroy themselves when hit by a surge if their rating is exceeded, and will require replacement. Surge protectors are mainly for upward surges and spikes. UPS devices can handle both upward and downward voltages, but are not quite as good at surge protection. In spite of everything I have described above, "absolutely nothing" will protect you in the event of a direct lightning hit.

One other thing to keep in mind is that the "metal oxide" devices in most surge protectors do wear out and it's wise to replace a surge protector about every four years. If the many choices of surge protection confuse you, seek a "knowledgeable" person in your user group for advice. Don't depend on the store's salesperson.

Note: Special thanks to my friends Paul Witherage from the Sarnia Computer User Group and Ron Klair of the Central Florida Computer Society for critiquing this article and offering their suggestions to improve it.

Software Review

The Cleaner, Version 1.02

by Susan Ives
The Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

I get a bunch of messy e-mail. Messages that have been sent from you to him, then forwarded to her, then after about a gazillion other pass-thoughs, end up on my desktop. They have an endless string of >>>>>>> marks, each one of them indicating a time when the message was forwarded, and the lines get chopped up in random places. There are hard returns, which put the kibosh of text wrapping at the end of each deformed line.

If I want to forward this messy message to some other poor fools, I can just click on the forward button on my e-mail program and they will get it with more >>>> marks and even weirder line breaks. But what if I want to send someone a clean copy? Or if I want to cut-and-paste the e-mail message into a word processing document or a web page?

I could, of course, manually remove all of the >>> marks, and tediously take out all of the hard line breaks and oh, maybe ten hours of mind-numbing labor later, I will have clean copy. In your dreams. This Susan is most definitely a lazy Susan. I use a free shareware utility, The Cleaner.

First, I open up the original e-mail message and copy onto the clipboard the text I want to clean up. To do this, hold down your left mouse key and drag it over the text so that it is highlighted. Then, use the keyboard combination Ctrl-C, or use the mouse to select Edit-Copy from the screen menu. The text is now in your computer's memory.

Next, open up the Cleaner. Click on the little smiley face and your text will be pasted into this program, all cleaned up. No >>> marks. No hard returns. No weird line breaks. The cleaned-up text is automatically transferred into your Windows clipboard's memory.

Finally, open up a new e-mail window, or a new word processing file, and position the cursor where you want to paste the cleaned-up text. To get it onto the screen, either use the keyboard combination Ctrl-V or use the mouse to select Edit-Paste. Done!

Cleaner has a few options: Remove hard carriage returns; assume first line is title; don't wrap lines starting with numbers; don't wrap lines ending in punctuation marks; don't wrap upper case lines and leave blank lines.

They results may not be perfect, but in my experience it gets the text back to about 95% of its original, pristine condition. And saves you lots of time!

You can get e-mail Cleaner for free at *PCWorld*. The developer, Steve Chin, has a newer version out. You can visit his web site at <http://members.tripod.com/schin26 /index.htm> to download the version 2.01, which has more text formatting options and integrates smoothly with Outlook 2000. I've been so happy with the first version I haven't bothered upgrading.

Now that I've figured out how to clean up my e-mail, I just have to figure out how to convince my friends to clean up their jokes. . . .

Susan Ives gets lots of e-mail; most of it clean. From the June, 2000 issue of *PC Alamode* magazine.

Technology Territory

Will CD-R and CD-RW Become the Floppy of the Future

by Surya Singh
East Tennessee Computer Society

Ten years ago the common method of sharing files was via a square piece of plastic, five and a quarter inches in diameter. This "floppy" disk held either 360 kilobytes or 1.2 megabytes depending on which type was being used. With today's ever increasing need for removable storage however, CD-R and CD-RW may become as popular as the floppy disk was in its heyday.

CD-R and CD-RW are acronyms that stand for Compact Disc-Recordable and Compact Disc ReWriteable, respectively. Both CD-R and CD-RW drives are extensions to the standard CD-ROM (Compact Disc Read Only Memory) drive format found in most every computer. These two systems are related to each other and present the consumer with a wide number of upgrade choices in this brave new world.

The key feature of CD-R and CD-RW drives over their now commonplace relative the CD-ROM drive is their ability to write data to a disc. CD-R media can be written once only to any particular area on the disc. CD-RW drives build on the CD-R standard and allow the user to write and rewrite to any particular area on a CD-RW disc many times. Most CD recordable drives available today have rewriteable features and can process both media. However, a CD recordable must have rewriteable features to rewrite CD-RW discs. In other words, a CD-RW drive can only rewrite CD-RW media (not CD-R discs) and a CD-R only drive can not process CD-RW media.

One of the caveats with CD-R media is that once it has been written or marked it can never be erased. Thus, working with CD-R media is quite similar to writing everything with a permanent ink pen: Nothing can ever be erased. Moreover, if a mistake is made, the whole process must be restarted and the erroneous disc is simply trashed. It was because of this vexing problem that CD-RW technology, using phase-change media, was developed.

CD-R and CD-RW drives, unlike most drives, can record in a variety of formats, each of which effects the final utility of the finished disc. The most common CD-R and CD-RW formats are discussed as follows:

1. The Packet Writing Format – This means of using the disc allows for the disc to easily act as a removable media drive. If CD-RW media is used, the drive responds and acts as a diskette or Zip drive would. However, the disc first needs to be formatted to the UDF format style which reduces the storage capacity to approximately 550 MB. CD-R packet written discs can be read by any CD-ROM drive as long as they are at least "temporarily closed." If the UDF drivers are installed on a PC, a CD-RW packet written disc can be read by modern CD-ROM drives as long as they support packet reading.

2. Standard Data Track Format – This means creates a CD data disc similar to most CD-ROM disc distributed with software. This format allows the user to store the full 640 MB that the disc can hold; however, the disc data must be processed using a CD recording application (e.g., Adaptec's CD Creator) and can not be written to directly.

3. The Audio Track/Multisession Format – This is the standard means that digitalized forms of audio are added to CD discs. However, each time a series of songs are recorded, a new session is created. For a "multi-session" to be read, the CD player must support the multi-session format.

Why is CD recording such a complex system? Basically, it stems from the history of CD technology. CD technology was invented by Phillip's Electronics and others almost two decades ago. The original CDS started out as an optical incarnation of long-playing vinyl records (LPS). For this reason CDS, unlike diskette and hard drives, read/write along a continuous, spiraling track instead of sectors. This causes the drives to vary their speed as data is read at various points on the disc because on the outside, more "media" goes by for a given angular velocity.

However, data storage is best done using a sector or packet based approach and not the spiral-track approach of CDS. To accommodate data, CDS often place all their data in the first "track" along with a Table of Contents that stores information about all the files and where they are located. Even the speed ratings of most drives are a product of CD history as drive multipliers (e.g., 8x) are in proportion to the speed of the first drives that operated at a rate of 150 kilobytes per second.

Another reason for the great popularity of CD recorders is their economies of scale, which makes them extremely cost competitive for the storage of a large amount of data. CD-R discs or media cost about one dollar per disc and CD-RW discs are approximately five dollars a disc. This results in exceptionally low unit costs, or cost per megabyte (measured in ¢/MB). CD-R discs have a unit cost of less than 1/6¢/MB and CD-RW disc have a unit cost near 1¢/MB. In comparison, hard drives have a unit cost ranging between 3 and 6¢/MB and Iomega Zip disks have a unit cost almost 100 times greater than CD-R (i.e, 12¢/MB). In addition to cost, CD-R and CD-RW are gaining popularity because of their backward compatibility with the CD-ROM standard. This allows distribution of data on CD-R discs to a wide number of users without having to worry if the user has the right drive to read the media.

CD-R and CD-RW systems, however, are not perfect. One key disadvantage is that CD-R and CD-RW drives can be somewhat expensive. For example, CD-RW drives range from $200 to $400 depending on the drive's speed and interface. A second disadvantage with CD-R and CD-RW drives is that they are relatively slow. Most of these drives operate only two or four times the speed of the original CD-ROM specification. Thus, even the fastest CD recorders are 10-15 times slower (while writing) than a hard drive and two or three times slower than CD-ROM readers.

In terms of marketability and support, CD-R and CD-RW have not seen a major advertising campaign (excluding a small campaign by Philips Electronics) nor have they been endorsed by any major computer vendor. Nonetheless, CD-R and CD-RW drives have generated a great deal of end user support and are increasing tremendously in popularity. Since CD-R and CD-RW are not proprietary standards, there is a great deal of competition between a number of CD-R and CD-RW manufacturers. This competition should not only lower the prices on the drives, but may help CD-R and CD-RW become more widely accepted in the computing industry.

In summary, the complexity of today's software and the data files associated with it, has grown exponentially. One of the most promising and cost effective solutions could be the CD-R and CD-RW system. However, for this technology to "replace the floppy," the price of the drives must come down and performance must be increased.

This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs. Surya Singh is a member and SIG leader of the East Tennessee Computer Society in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Software Review

51 Languages of the World
Transparent Language, Inc.
by Charles Grover
Rochester Computer Society, Inc.

I obtained a review copy of 51 Languages of the World, published by Transparent Language, Inc., while in the midst of an introductory course in conversational German. I have tested this program as an adjunct to my course. Additionally I have some knowledge of several ancient and modern languages and have briefly reviewed the software's approach to them.

This is an introductory program. Therefore it has only a limited amount of material for practice in reading and speaking and acquiring vocabulary. However, the approach it takes is comprehensive.

The user can go through a series of phrases and basic dialogs reading and hearing them in the language under study. Additionally, one can stop on a word or phrase and while there, hear it repeatedly, see its translation, and for each word see the root and obtain grammatical information (part of speech, gender, number, conjugation or case, etc.)

With German I have found these features a useful addition to the simple, basic course I have been taking.

But in addition to this limited material there are summaries of grammar that appear to be quite complete and provide help of another kind. Within the past year I wanted to review some Latin grammar and borrowed and consulted a text or two, co6pying out the most basic stuff I wanted for reference. Now here is all of that, readily at hand. I, for one, find this valuable and very
interesting. (There is no real dialog in Latin, however, just lists of phrases one will find in literature, scholarly references, and mottoes.) I found the grammar summaries in Spanish also to be of help and quite thorough.

However, there appears to be unevenness in the usefulness and thoroughness among the 51 languages explored. Most languages that use a different alphabet rely on transliteration into the alphabet we use. I know there are many differences between modern Greek and the numerous ancient forms of Greek. My own familiarity with Greek is almost exclusively with Biblical Greek, a kind of *lingua franca* used throughout the Roman Empire about 2000 years ago. I found trying to work at the Greek in this software, using a form of the Latin alphabet, to be disconcerting. Moreover, the grammar summaries I found for Greek seem much less complete than those for Latin, German, and Spanish.

Packaged with the software I received is a feature that allows one to record and compare one's own pronunciation with the standard pronunciation supplied. I had no microphone handy so have not evaluated this, but it can only add to the already valuable ear and speech training I discovered.

Another bundled item I have not evaluated is a word processor to work with the languages included.

In sum, like any educational software I have explored, there are benefits and limitations in *51 Languages*. Use it for an introduction. It is very helpful for getting the sound of a language into your ear and for practicing sounds in speech. Or use it for review. The grammar summaries are a valuable reference.

System requirements: Windows 95, 98 or NT, 486 or better, 16 M>B RAM, 35 MB disk space for full installation, 25 MB for Minimum Installation, Sound Card, Speakers, VGA 256 Color monitor, 2X CD-ROM drive.

Transparent Language, Inc., 22 Proctor Hill Road, P. O. Box 575, Hollis, NH 03049
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E-Mail Info@transparent.com, Web: www .transparent.com

The Windows Registry

Unlocking the Configuration Key

by April Miller Cripliver

THE HKEY is Microsoft's language for a program handle to a key that contains configuration information. A "key" looks identical to a folder or subdirectory, except that the name applies to levels and sublevels within the Registry. Looking at the various HKeys in REGEDIT is the same as looking at a drive in Windows Explorer. Each key is represented by a folder icon that can be expanded or collapsed just like folders and subfolders.

The Windows 95/98 Registry contains six primary HKeys. Each HKey is like a primary folder located in the root directory of a drive and has many levels of subkeys that descend like a directory tree. The root directory is called HKEY_CLASSES _ROOT. The six primary HKeys are:

1. HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT File extensions and applications used for OLE (Object Linking and Embedding).
2. HKEY_USERS Data stored in USER.DAT that keeps network information and user configuration options.
3. HKEY_CURRENT_USER User in-formation specific to the Windows 95/98 user at the moment (if networking is disabled, this is a duplicate of HKEY_USERS).
4. HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE The hardware and software configurations for a computer (multiple configurations can be stored for the same computer).
5. HKEY_CURRENT_CONFIG Printers and display settings.

6. HKEY_DYN_DATA Dynamic data in RAM having to do with how Windows 95/98 is running (shown by the System Monitor applet).

Remember. The Windows 95 Registry is a set of two files. SYSTEM.DAT is the main file and can become very large. USER.DAT is the second file, containing mostly configuration information. The Windows 95 Registry is built around six master sections (Hives) called Hkey_ [SectionName] where [SectionName] is the name of each specific section. At the top of the Registry tree is Hkey_ Classes_Root.

The section used for hardware is Hkey_Local_Machine. Information about hardware and software is stored in many places within the Registry, and uninstaller programs have varying degrees of success in finding all occurrences and references to their own programs. This substantiates the belief that a PC should be "trashed" and rebuilt (i.e. FDISK and format the drives) to truly eliminate problems.

When Windows 95/98 is set up for the first time, a SYSTEM.NEW file is created as the first Registry. This file contains the hardware and software configuration information made during the detection phase of Setup. If everything works well and Windows 95/98 starts successfully without crashing, SYSTEM.NEW is renamed SYSTEM.DAT.

Once Windows 95/98 is installed and working, the first successful Registry (SYSTEM.DAT) is renamed SYSTEM.DAØ and held as a backup of the original Registry.

The very first SYSTEM.DAT used when Windows 95/98 starts from the hard drive is also copied to SYSTEM.1ST in the root directory as another backup of the clean, first installation.

SYSTEM.1ST includes everything up to the first reboot of the system. If you replace SYSTEM.DAT with SYSTEM.1ST at any time and reboot the computer, you'll get the "Starting Windows 95/98 For The First Time" screen and Windows 95/98 will go through the configuring hardware process, initializing the Control Panel, Start Menu, and all the other aspects of a first-time start. Windows 95/98 will then reboot and start up normally.

Every time Windows 95/98 starts successfully, it backs up SYSTEM.DAT to SYSTEM.DAØ and USER.DAT to USER .DAØ (overwriting any existing DAØ files). If something goes wrong, the DAØ files are used automatically on restart to return the computer to the successful previous startup.

Here is a summary table showing the names of the Windows 95/98 or Windows 3.x Registry files, where they are stored, what the backup files are called, and how they are edited.

April Miller Cripliver is a network and training consultant in northwest Indiana. She has earned her MCSE, MCT, and several CompTIA certifications, and runs her own W2K domain at www.cripliver.com.

Games

Deus X

http://www.eidosinteractive.com

This is a demo game. Civilization is near collapse. The world economy is in chaos. The middle class no longer exists. Deadly viruses have ravaged the earth's population. Terrorism runs rampant. It's five minutes before the apocalypse.

From this maelstrom of violence and suffering, an ancient conspiracy bent on world domination emerges from the shadows of legend. The conspirators' greatest strength? No one believes they exist. No one but you. Travel the globe as you develop your skills and build a network of allies. Employ stealth, strategy, or action where appropriate. But remember, trust no one. Even your allies may be more than they seem (see screen shots).

Note: This demo features one full mission and the training mission taken from the retail version of game.

The full game features the following: A richly simulated world of interactivity, engineered to react logically to your every action A globe-hopping, epic adventure that allows you to travel the world exploring locations recreated from detailed maps, blueprints, and photographs. Character interaction that affects the outcome of the game. The ability to create a compelling alter ego: the charismatic master manipulator, the shrewd and stealthy tactician, or the deadly avenging angel. The ability to select and develop a unique set of skills and nanotech augmentations. The ability to determine which weapons and objects you need to survive and solve problems.

Company: Eidos Interactive, Version: 1.0 File size: 139MB Approx. download time: more than 3 hr. at 28.8 kbps.

Minimum requirements: Pentium II-300, Windows 95/98, 64MB RAM, 3D accelerated video card, DirectX Drivers.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

July 2000
by J. Joseph Pia

Here we are at the end of the academic year. East High School is closed in the evenings until September. Elsewhere in this issue you will find the information about the July meeting place.

We have had a good year overall with some very interesting programs. Some of them came from outside agencies. Our thanks to New Horizons for the January program on Quicken. Also to Rowe Photo for the program on the new digital cameras. I want to thank also my spouse, Dr. Judy Trabert, for holding up the weightier end of the program last month on WordPerfect. In August is the annual picnic. Elsewhere is the information about time and place.

You are now reading the last of my president's columns. This is probably enough anyway. You have been patiently reading these every month from me. It's now time to turn over the privilege of communicating with you to The Other Joe, Joe Varga, who takes over for real in September.

As I said in my last column, these past two and half years have been quite a ride. I'm sorta sorry it's coming to an end. On the other hand, there are some other things calling me. Some of them associated with our Society. Others connected with other concerns in the City. I'm eagerly looking forward to getting to work on those issues. So, as the Romans used to say, hail and farewell. Thanks for a great two and half years.

Minutes

Program Meeting

June 13, 2000
by Charles Grover, *Secretary elect*

The membership met at 6:30 p.m. June 13 at East High School for Help's Half Hour, followed by the business and program meeting at 7.

Frank Howden announced the Geek Olympics at the picnic August 27. He suggested we bring all our extra AOL disks for a round robin Frisbee game. We were further informed that when warm, CDS can be bent to make diffraction grating ornaments we might decorate a Christmas tree!.

We got down to serious business with Joe Pia announcing that the July meeting will be at another site. Ron Matteson will lead Help's Half-Hour.

Further announcements were made. Charlie Sumner is leaving the area, and had he been here we would have given him a round of applause. Larilyn had informed Joe that updated membership cards are available. Discussions at board meetings have not yet produced any firm new program ideas. Geek Olympics and Picnic sign up sheets were made available.

Joe Varga announced that the Buffalo users group has contacted us about collaborating for program presentations from organizations requiring larger total audiences than either their group or ours provides. Examples mentioned were Adobe and Microsoft. He asked if we would be willing to reschedule to the third weekend so that a program might be done in Buffalo one day and here another. A show of hands indicated we are willing to try it. Alternatively we might change to a Wednesday evening adjacent to the Buffalo meeting.

Frank Howden said that with IBM pushing Linux and owning Smart Suite he wonders if IBM would be porting Smart Suite to Linux and then might do a presentation. Another member suggested contacting other user groups in the Rochester area for sharing.

The location of the July meeting will be announced in the Monitor.

Someone suggested that a link to the buffalo group might be found at the APCUG site (http://www.apcug.org/). Another person mentioned that the Rochester Genealogy Society has a SIG.

Ron Matteson and Joe Pia have talked about trying to attract more new members by offering tutorial programs. Some of us will be called on to help, and two volunteered on the spot.

Joe Pia and his wife, Judy Trabert, presented a program about WordPerfect.

At the picnic a copy of Windows 98, Second Edition, will be available for the drawing.

We adjourned at 9 p.m.

New User Group Meeting

June 6, 2000
by John McMillan

Two newcomers joined eight previous attendees at the June 6th New Users Group meeting which started with a request for the source of Star office which is reported to have filters to facilitate transferring Windows 3.1 WordPerfect files to a Windows 98 environment. Star Office can be down loaded free from the Internet by searching for Sun.com.

Several alternative sizes and configurations were described for a new user anticipating her first computer purchase. Based on her description of desired usage, a used 486 or Pentium1 would suffice at a much lower cost than a 500 MHZ that she

was contemplating. The public libraries were suggested as learning places to try out software packages and systems before making any purchase. New Horizons was suggested as a source of elementary training in some software packages.

An Internet user complained about sometimes going to a link and getting trapped in a loop. The back button did not always get out of the loop. It was pointed out that just to the right of the back button, there was a downward pointing triangular button which when double clicked gives a listing of the most recently visited sites. This lets you select which one you want to skip back to providing an alternative way out rather than leaving the internet completely. It is also possible that selecting home would get you out of the loop.

One user commented on the number of Microsoft web sites presented as favorites on a new computer. Many of these could probably be removed and some of the more popular search engines substituted. At this point someone suggested using *Ask Jeeves* or other frequently used search engine as a home page. A question on how to customize Yahoo went unanswered as no one had any experience with that process.

Owners of new machines that came with pre loaded anti virus software were cautioned to check about registration and updating since it is highly likely that both the program code and the virus patterns would have been updated after their machine was loaded. The best way to start is to contact the Anti virus producer and ask about registration and down loading updates since each manufacturer might strike a different deal with Symantec.

Firewalls came up again as a new user asked if she should get Black Ice. Another user said that Black Ice was not available at CompUSA but if not available locally, it could be charged to a major credit card and down loaded. Zone Alarm which is available as a free down load from Zone labs is also a good firewall. With all of the hacker activity that is being written up these days, a firewall is essential if you spend any time with E-Mail or on the internet. It is particularly important if you are using roadrunner or the new DSL, (Direct Subscriber Link) service.

During the course of the meeting other questions were also raised but multiple conversations prevented sorting out the topics and their responses. The next meeting will be held August 1 at the Monroe Developmental Center, 630 Westfall Rd. Come join us and bring your questions.

Treasurer's Report

by Steve Staub

Income

Dues	$200.00
Picnic	30.00
Total income	$230.00

Expenses

Park Permit	$15.00
Attorney	70.00
Mailing Permit	100.00
St. Stephen's	15.00
Heveron Copier Rental	100.00
Pizza	13.47
Total expenses	$313.47

Balance as of 6/21/2000 $2766.33

Planning Meeting

June 20, 2000

by Charles Grover, Secretary-elect

Joe Pia called the meeting to order at 710 p.m. at his home. Also present were Steve Staub, Treasurer; Frank Howden, Vice President; Ron Matteson, Trustee-elect; Larilyn Bauer and Jim McGrath, Members at Large; Sally Springett, Monitor Editor, and Charles Grover, Secretary-elect.

Joe Pia had two announcements(1) An amendment to our 501 © 3 papers had to be sent in to the Federal Government and there is a $70 fee due. (2) The folding machine is expected to be available Saturday for Monitor production.

Sally will seek use of a room for the July Program Meeting and the location will be announced in Monitor.

Joe said that he, Ron, Bill Statt, and Frank are interested in helping with the tutorial project for beginners. Joe suggested developing lesson plans during the summer. The room at Rundel Memorial Library has eight computers and will serve a conveniently sized class.

Program planning for next year is needed. Larilyn suggested a program on Access (Microsoft's data base program). Sam Scozarri teaches Access and could be asked to present. SoundBytes, and Microsoft or another large company presentation shared with the Buffalo users group, have been suggested. Photo Shop and Paint Shop were mentioned. A demo of moving things from one application to another, as from a spreadsheet into a word processor, was requested by Larilyn.

Conversation shifted to the *Monitor* with two suggestions from Frank (1) 'Shopping Tips'. For instance, he discovered a Macintosh vendor had a low price on SCSI cables. Sally will print this suggested column if someone writes it. Frank offered to try putting it together for the time bring. (2) Make a list of magazine reviews of new software so members can locate information more quickly, as by seeking a known issue of a particular publication rather than having to search through a lot of magazines. Sally indicated there is something like this on the web site of the San Antonio users group http//www.alamopc.org/ under 'product reviews.'

We returned to discussing future programs with Frank suggesting a process of elimination procedure for solving problems, such as starting by checking plugs, cables and connections.

Steve talked about letting our membership know if an article written for *Monitor* is copied by another group. Sally will put the Web Ring URL in the Monitor so we can find URLs for other user's groups.

We adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

The Lighter Side

Act Locally, Think Globally!

by Steve Bass
Pasadena IBM Users Group

You toss aluminum cans, plastic bottles, and newspapers in the recycle bin without even thinking, right? Well a new dot.com wants you to think the same way about – get ready – bits and bytes. Don't laugh.

The company is Bit-Recyclers (their www.BitRecycle.com web site is often unreachable because of excessive traffic) and their business plan is simple: Don't delete old programs – recycle them.

But there's a twist, one that's going to turn the computing world on its head. And turn a tremendous profit for Bit-Recyclers.

The company has no plans for using or reselling the old software you send to them. Instead, they're simply going to recycle the bits. Like reuse them.

It sounds strange but it makes sense. Every time you delete a program (ironically, not to the recycle bin, but really delete it), untold numbers of bits and bytes are destroyed. Throw away a floppy or CD, and it's gone forever. Toast. History.

The company wants them all, each and every bit.

Jeff Grayschvanser, Bit-Recycler's CEO, proposes reusing the bits for new programs. "Upload unwanted applications, utilities, or even Mac programs, and we'll turn them into new programs."

The company promises to supply individuals who have slow Internet connections with postage-free mailers in order for them to mail in their floppies and CDS.

Who buys recycled bits? You'd be amazed. Start with Microsoft. "Without Bit-Recyclers, Windows 2000 would have never reached the marketplace before 2001," explained a Microsoft representative who requested anonymity.

Producers of clip art, photography images, and MP3 files are also major users of recycled bits.

"Don't send manuals and boxes," warned Grayschvanse, "because they are of no value to us – unless they're in digital form." He recommends dumping the paper docs in the real recycle bin.

Microsoft representatives explained they were all for the new dot.com's idea provided no one actually reused program code, and would probably start their own recycling strategy early next year.

Over the last four months, venture- backed Bit-Recyclers increased their staff level at a rate over three times that of most start-up dot.coms. Joseph Pelassio, account executive with Pelletier Capital Market reports initial earnings could reach those of eBay by the end of Q4 2001.

Me? I'm going to stick those CDS and floppies in a desk drawer. I just can't bear the thought of the next version of Word recycled from Wordstar (www.bit-recyclers .com).

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with *PC World Magazine*, frequently writes for *Forbes ASAP*, and is the president of the Pasadena IBM Users Group. Bass often writes about the effects of phrenology on upgrading software and other tongue-in-cheek topics.