

MONITOR

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Podcasting iPod Not Required

by Carmen Carmack
Smart Computing

Are you puzzled about podcasting? Although a podcast may sound like some kind of spaceage technology or the latest fashion for iPod users, it's much simpler than that. If you have a computer and a high-speed Internet connection, you can join the podcast craze. Even better, it won't cost you a thing to give podcasts a try.

Podcast Defined

A podcast is a radio program that's recorded to an audio file. The audio file is distributed on the Internet, almost always for free so anyone can listen to it. Although you don't need an iPod to listen to podcasts, the name is a combination of the words "iPod" and "broadcast."

Podcasts are usually recorded in the MP3 audio file format. You can listen to them with any device that can play MP3 files, including iPods. Conse-

quently, you can play podcasts on desktop computers, notebook computers, MP3 players, and PDAs (personal digital assistants) that support audio playback.

Because podcasts are relatively easy to create, nearly anyone with a bit of technical know-how, a microphone, and audio recording software can put one together. But podcasts aren't just for amateurs; many news organizations and traditional broadcasters podcast an assortment of their programming.

Podcasts are different from Internet radio. Internet radio is using your computer to listen to a radio station's current broadcast. By contrast, podcasts are audio recordings that you can download and listen to anytime. They are



similar to using a VCR or DVD recorder to record and watch television broadcasts. The difference is that the recording task is handled by the podcasters.

Gaining Popularity

For most people, the biggest advantage of podcasts is that they can listen to them at any time. With the popularity of iPods and other MP3 players these days, many of us can choose which music files to take along with us, completely bypassing radio. With podcasts, you can also take along talk radio, news, and other types of audio entertainment.

Juice is podcast client software that helps you find and subscribe to podcasts. It is available free at juicereceiver.sourceforge.net.

Getting content and information that you can't hear on your local radio station is another advantage of listening to podcasts. For example, there are book review programs, language classes, and career-related podcasts. A recent top 10 list from the PodcastAlley (www.podcastalley.com) directory included "Muggle-Cast" for Harry Potter fans, "Tips From The Top Floor" for digital photographers, and the "Joe Vitale Podcast" for fiery marketing tips.

Podcasts are not censored or regulated. Some software, such as Apple iTunes, has parental controls to prevent inappropriate content from reaching the wrong ears.

In addition to the other advantages we've discussed, podcasts are free. And if you have a high-speed Internet connection and podcast client software, they are easy to download and play. Podcast client software helps you manage and subscribe to the podcasts that you want to listen to regularly. Like podcasts themselves, podcast client software is freely available on the Internet.

Finding Podcasts

Podcasts are distributed via the Internet. You can subscribe to some podcasts by going directly to a podcaster's Web site.

Another way to locate podcasts is through a podcast directory Web site. Popular podcast directories include PodcastAlley, Podcast.net (www.podcast.net), The Podcast Network (www.thepodcastnetwork.com), and Pod Zinger (www.podzinger.com). In general, the podcast directory Web sites let you browse podcasts by category, view lists of popular podcasts, and learn about recent postings to the podcast directory.

In addition to going directly to a podcaster's Web site or checking a podcast directory, you can use podcast client software to find what you want. Podcast clients such as Apple iTunes ([\[.com/podcasting\]\(http://www.apple.com/podcasting\)\) and Juice \(\[juicereceiver.sourceforge.net\]\(http://juicereceiver.sourceforge.net\)\) include built-in directories that let you search for podcasts. We'll discuss podcast clients in the following section.](http://www.apple</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Receiving & Listening To Podcasts

You can receive podcasts and listen to them in several ways.

Play online. If you're interested in a particular podcast, but don't want to subscribe to it, you can use your Web browser to play it online. To do this, connect to the Internet on a computer that has a high-speed Internet connection. Next, go to the Web site or directory that lists the podcast that you want. At this point, the directions differ because each Web site and client software has its own navigation interface and tools. In general, look for a link to the podcast or a Listen, Play, or Web button that you can click. After you click the link or button, your Web browser should open a media player application and play the podcast.

Although most of us associate Apple iTunes (www.apple.com/itunes) with the iPod, the iTunes software is free and available to Windows 2000/XP computer users. You can use iTunes to find, subscribe to, and play podcasts.

Manually download and listen. If you want to copy a podcast to your computer or other device, you can manually download it. After you locate the podcast you want, check for a Download Now or similar link. Alternatively, some Web sites list the name of the podcast episodes as links that you can right-click and then select Save Target As to save them to your computer. If those options don't appear on the podcaster's Web site, you may need to use your podcast client software to subscribe to the episode you want.

Once the podcast is on your computer, you can use an audio player to listen to the podcast. If you want to copy it to your MP3 player or PDA, you can use your syncing software or Windows Explorer to transfer the file.

Subscribe. Before you can subscribe to a podcast, you need to install podcast client software. If you don't have podcast client software, you can get it for free from a number of various providers. PC users can download and install Juice (juicereceiver.sourceforge.net) or iTunes (www.apple.com/itunes). Mac users also have access to iTunes, and they can also download and try Playpod (www.iggsoftware.com/playpod).

After you have podcast client software and the computer is connected to the Internet, open the

client software. If you locate the podcast you want in the client's directory, subscribing is a matter of selecting the podcast and adding it to your subscription list. The client software checks to see what episodes are available and lets you select those you want to receive during the next scheduled update.

The podcast client software includes a scheduler that lets you define when you want to receive podcast updates. Many people schedule the update to run overnight when the computer is not in use. You can set most client software to run once a day to download new episodes.

If the podcast you want isn't listed in your podcast client software's directory, you can still subscribe. Copy a link and paste it into your client software. On the Web page for the podcast you want, look for a button or box labeled POD or XML. Copy the link by right-clicking it and selecting Copy Shortcut or Copy Link Location. Paste it into the subscription area of your podcast client. After you add the link, the client software checks for currently posted episodes.

You might see an RSS button in addition to or instead of XML (Extensible Markup Language) or POD buttons. RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is used for automatic news feeds and blog subscriptions. It's also the engine behind many podcast subscriptions. Some podcast sites might use the term "RSS." On news-related and blog sites, you're likely to see RSS for textual feeds and a different link for podcast subscriptions. Check the information on the podcaster's Web page to verify that you're subscribing to a podcast and not a blog or news feed.

After the client software has downloaded your podcast episodes, you can play them, copy them to a device, or delete them. If you're using iTunes, you can also use it to play podcasts. Other podcast client software automatically links to your media player software.

If you want to copy podcasts to your MP3 player or PDA, you can use syncing software or the operating system's copy commands to transfer the files. iPod users (except the iPod shuffle) can set iTunes to automatically transfer podcasts to their player (shuffle users can transfer the files manually).

Thousands To Choose From

Podcasts are easy to find, free to download, and simple to play, and it won't take you long to join the fun.

From the Plugged In column in the May 2006 (Vol. 17 Issue 5) of Smart Computing.

Internet Fraud

by Bob Schneider

Editor of the PC Keyboard, the newsletter of the Spring Hill Teaching Computer Club, Hernando County, Florida

Internet fraud continues to be the fastest growing crime in America (and perhaps the world). The most common technique for fraud today is "phishing." This means that some nefarious person connives you into providing financial account information. They do it by mailing thousands of spam emails to lists of email addresses they have accumulated. Perhaps one of your friends sent a neat joke to 40 acquaintances, including you (your friend's email itself is, of course, spam). Someone out there farms email address. They love it when your friend sends out those appeals and jokes because they know that every email address they capture (including yours) is current and good. They then send a message like the one below (actually received by the author) to those thousands of email addresses. It matters not if you have PayPal or not. Many of the emails will hit someone who does, and they only need a lot of money from a few suckers to make the effort worth while. Of course, they substitute various bank names for PayPal, too.

Dear valued PayPal® member:

It has come to our attention that your PayPal® account information needs to be updated as part of our continuing commitment to protect your account and to reduce the instance of fraud on our website. If you could please take 5-10 minutes out of your online experience and update your personal records you will not run into any future problems with the online service.

However, failure to update your records will result in account suspension. Please update your records.

Once you have updated your account records, your PayPal® session will not be interrupted and will continue as normal. Go to the link below.

http://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_login-run

Thank You.

PayPal® Security Center.

Accounts Management. As outlined in our User Agreement, PayPal® will periodically send you information about site changes and enhancements.

Visit our Privacy Policy and User Agreement if you have any questions.

http://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=p/gen/ua/policy_privacy-outside

The first link (to “account records”) does not go to PayPal, but goes to www.doctori.biz/pp <<http://www.doctori.biz/pp>>, a site run by thieves, waiting for you to log in and provide your user name and password for PayPal, or your bank account or other financial service. The login page will look exactly like that of your financial institution. Once you finish “updating” account information, you will be sent to that actual financial site where you can log in and see that everything is in order. The second link (to “Privacy Policy”) is a real link to your financial service. It is another part of their smoke screen. But at three o’clock the next morning, there may be some new account activity. The next day, when you log in, you will likely find that everything is no longer in order.

For your internet and financial safety, never respond to an email asking you to check your account. If you are curious, call your financial institution. Also, you can always log in to your account the usual way (not by clicking on a link you receive in an email) and check anything you wish.

A final note: tell your friends to stop broadcasting your email address to the world, to spammers, pornographers, body part enlargers and thieves. Tell them they can comply with your request if they stop forwarding jokes, requests and other such to you and their other friends. Better yet, send them a copy of this article. They deserve it.

[To report these people to PayPal click on the blah, blah, blah button at the top of the email (to expand the details of the crook’s address) and forward it to spoofo@paypal.com. This works for eBay as well –Ed.]

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.

Backup Awareness Month

by Ira Wilsker

APCUG Advisor; Columnist, *The Examiner*, Beaumont, TX;
Radio & TV show host

Websites:

<http://www.backupawareness.com>

<http://www.ntius.com>

<http://www.symantec.com>

<http://www.backupawareness.com>

[/bestpractices.html](http://www.backupawareness.com/bestpractices.html)

In case you had not heard, June was Backup Awareness Month. It is not a federally recognized holiday, nor is it one acknowledged by resolution from some governmental authority, but an awareness service of one of the largest manufacturers of hard drives, the newly merged Maxtor and Seagate.

Sure, Maxtor and Seagate will benefit if we all rush out and purchase a large capacity hard drive so we can backup our critical data in the event of a hard drive crash, or other tragedy that can damage or destroy our computers. This is really more of a win-win situation, as there is a very valid need for timely and comprehensive backups of our data. Lessons still unlearned from Rita, Katrina, and Wilma, as well as other countless disasters, fires, thefts, and other debacles should teach us that if we have a good backup of our files, we can easily survive a catastrophic data loss, and be back in operation promptly.

Imagine in any business or other commercial environment how much information is stored on hard drives. Hard drives are electromechanical devices, and as such will indeed fail at some time. Murphy’s Law dictates that a hard drive will always fail at the most inopportune time. Now imagine what would happen to that business or organization if suddenly all of its critical information was gone. No accounts receivable; no accounts payable; no client lists; no purchase orders; no employee or student data; no payroll and tax records; no correspondence; no records of any kind; and a plethora of other potentially devastating losses. Next imagine the time and cost that a company would incur if it had to rebuild that amount of information from paper records, if the paper records indeed exist. Can you conceive the utter devastation that a company would suffer with a catastrophic data loss?

Data loss is not just a corporate or organizational threat, but a personal one too. On my home computer, for example, I have countless family photos, tax records, family financial information, archives of correspondence and other important documents, music, bookmarks, address books, email, and other information that would probably be irretrievable in the event of a complete hard drive failure. I really do not think that the IRS would accept as an excuse the fact that my hard drive crashed, losing my financial records.

We can backup our data in many ways without any substantial expense, or we can utilize sophisticated backup solutions. Backing up can be as simple

as copying critical files to CD, DVD, flash drive, or other storage media, using the integral copy function available on all computer operating systems. We can use software, such as NTI's Shadow or Backup NOW! to manage our backup functions to our chosen media, or we can use utilities such as Symantec's (Norton) Ghost, to make a bit by bit copy of our hard drive which can be copied to a new hard drive, making it a mirror image of the original, ready to go. Now that broadband internet connections are more of a rule than an exception, there are commercial services that will do online remote backup and storage at off-premise locations, secure and separate from the host or home location.

Seagate/Maxtor have published some "best practices" (www.backupawareness.com/bestpractices.html) defining the tasks necessary to insure the ability to recover our precious data. These practices can be summarized by the following tips (details on the website):

Develop a backup schedule Make it routine, and not a task that we have to remember to accomplish. Most modern backup software and utilities either backup in real-time (NTI Shadow), or can be scheduled at predetermined times (NTI Backup NOW!).

Back up everything It is not necessary to waste time sorting data, as the speed of backup utilities, hardware, and hard drives, as well as the large capacity of new hard drives, make it unnecessary to determine what to backup.

Give yourself room to grow The rule of thumb listed on the site recommends that the minimum size of backup drives (or other media or storage solutions) should be at least double the current size of the hard drives being backed up.

Back up automatically Referred to in the industry as "Set it and Forget It," is a viable adjunct to backing up on schedule. Some real-time off-site backup services use a high speed internet connection to automatically back up all new data to an external location. Many software utilities are almost transparent, and perform backups automatically, and unattended.

Rotate backups Use more than one drive or other system for backup. There are always risks that the backup itself can be damaged or otherwise flawed, and there is safety in redundancy. It is a good practice to store at least one current backup physically away from the location being backed up such that a catastrophe (fire, flood, etc.) at the host will not destroy the backup. It is also a good idea to be

able to take a backup with you in the event of a crisis, such as when I took my external hard drive with a current backup of all of my files, when I evacuated from Hurricane Rita. With this external drive, I could also access critical files from another computer if needed, prior to returning home.

Don't procrastinate Do not put off until tomorrow what you must be doing today. The complete Murphy's First Law of Computing is, "A properly backed up hard drive will never fail, but the first time that you do not have a current backup, your hard drive will always fail at the most inopportune time." Sadly, all too many of us learn the importance of a backup immediately after our hard drive fails, as we come to the realization that all is lost.

June should not really be backup awareness month; every month should be backup awareness month!

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Essential Processes:

How You Can Tell

by Vinny La Bash

Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida

Every other computer article these days seems to be about Windows Vista, a long promised operating system that won't make its appearance for almost another year. Why all the fuss about something that doesn't even exist yet? It's as far advanced over Windows XP as Windows 95 was over 3.1, that's why. That's nice, but we don't have Vista to take us to Nirvana today. We common folk have XP. That's not bad, but we don't have Vista as promised. Maybe this time next year I'll be writing about a Vista tip to make life easier while we're all anticipating the release of Vienna, the follow on to Vista. While we're waiting, here's something to make the wait easier.

If you press Ctrl+Alt+Delete to bring up the Windows Task Manager and then activate the Processes tab, you see a long list of computer services that run in the background while you're working with your system. You've undoubtedly received recommendations that you should shut down or disable the unessential processes to improve system performance. This is sound advice, but how can you tell what's essential from what could be shut down without clobbering your operation? Try the following to get a fighting start in that direction.

Restart your system and when it begins to reboot

press F8 repeatedly until the Start Up menu appears. Select the Safe Mode option from the menu. If you get another screen asking you to select the operating system, choose the one which applies to you. In most cases, you will see one choice and it will be Windows XP Home Edition, Windows XP Professional Edition or Windows XP Media Center Edition. A bunch of programming gibberish may fill up your screen next and your system may appear to be 'frozen' for a minute or two. Relax, but don't touch anything, especially the keyboard or the mouse.

Eventually something like the normal Windows Welcome Screen will appear and you will be asked to sign in. If you are the only one using your system and your user profile has full Administrator privileges, you can safely log on to Windows Safe Mode. If you're not certain, use the Administrator Profile.

You will now be confronted with a formidable looking dialog box containing an ambiguous explanation of Safe Mode. Click the Yes button. When the desktop appears, don't panic. The icons may look very different, but nothing is wrong. One of the characteristics of Safe Mode is to load only the minimum number of video drivers that will support the lowest resolution your monitor can handle. This guarantees you will have a visible screen in Safe Mode. Everything will be back to normal when you restart, but you will probably have to rearrange your icons.

Press Ctrl+Alt+Delete. This time the Windows Task Manager displays a considerably shorter list in the Processes section. This list represents what's really essential to keep Windows running. Don't shut down or disable anything in this short list when you are running in Windows normal mode. You run the risk of not only crashing your system, but you may not be able to boot up again without doing a repair reinstall of your operating system. The idea here is to improve the performance of your system, not put yourself out of business.

You can make a handwritten list of the processes that are running in Safe Mode and use that as a reference, but here is another method.

1. Click on a blank area of the Windows Task Manager to make sure it is active. Click the Processes tab.
2. Press Alt+PrtScrn to capture the image of the dialog box and store it in the clipboard area.
3. Close the Windows Task Manager Dialog box.
4. Click on the Start button.
5. From the Start Menu, open the All Programs section.

6. Open the Accessories Menu.
7. Start the Paint program.
8. From the Edit menu select Paste to put the stored image in the canvas area.
9. Save the image on the Desktop, the My Documents folder or in any folder where you can retrieve it easily.
10. Close Paint.
11. Restart Windows.
12. Rearrange your icons if necessary when the desktop appears in normal mode.
13. Open Paint as you did in Safe Mode.
14. Retrieve and print the Task Manager Dialog box image.

You can copy and paste the image in your word processor or another application if you prefer. When you shut down or disable any process not on your short list, you can be confident that you won't inadvertently clobber your system while trying to improve its performance. What about all those other programs running in the background? That's a subject for another article.

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The New, the Best, and the Worst

collected by Pim Borman
Website Editor, SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc.

Times Change

Leafing back through old copies of The P-See UrGent, I notice that I started this monthly column in February, 1998. That makes this about the 80th installment - hard to believe. It started out as a discussion of things New, Best or Worst in the computer world, but much has changed since then. We are no longer impressed with incremental improvements in CPU performance. Arguments over the most proficient Web search engine have pretty well been settled for now. Discussions of viruses and other malware have grown way beyond the scope of this column. LCD monitors are no longer "prohibitively expensive, suffer from poor brightness, a narrow viewing angle, and relatively sluggish refresh rates."

I began to look for long-range trends in computer technology. In my July-August 1999 column I mentioned the birth of a new Web search strategy based on evaluating hyperlinks to identify the most relevant Web sites for a given search term. I specifically described a search program, called *Clever*, that

was being developed by the clever folks at IBM and was highly successful. Typically, IBM used it only internally and did not make it publicly available. As a footnote I added that a similar program, being developed at Stanford University, was made available in beta form. Its name? Google.com. IBM missed the boat again.

It is no coincidence that I read about Google in the June 1999 issue of *Scientific American*. The most interesting new developments with potential long-term importance are not first reported in *PC Magazine* or *PC World*, but in high-quality publications with a more general readership. I often find interesting developments reported in *The Economist*, the outstanding British weekly news magazine, as well as on the Web site of the *BBC News*. Other good sources are national newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*, but I don't get to read those regularly. As a sign of the times, the April 22nd issue of *The Economist* carries three full-page in-your-face ads touting the energy advantages of AMD Opteron processor-based servers (e.g. "You could've hired 250 engineers, 570 IT support people, 5,235 interns, and one new CIO with the amount of money wasted by non-AMD powered servers"). No mention of Intel (which is feeling the competition). David is starting to kick sand in Goliath's face!

On the other hand, *PC Magazine* is now mostly dedicated to gadgets, including a review in its May 9, 2006 issue of the Mercedes ML 350, which is loaded with electronics and sells for up to 70 thousand dollars. A 20-page review of Vista, not expected to become available until January 2007 at the earliest, reports that only 50% of current computers will be able to use it. Very few will be ready for the much-ballyhooed Aero Glass interface without upgrading their graphics capabilities.

PC World stays closer to specific computer topics, but how many "50 Best New Sites" and "Best Free Stuff" do we need? The most important contributions of these PC Magazines are their product evaluations. Otherwise, how would we have known that AMD managed to overtake Intel in CPU technology?

Wi-Fi Progress

In just a few years, as equipment cost dropped to affordable levels, wireless connections between computers in households have become commonplace. Several IEEE standards assure interoperability between different makes of equipment. The most popular standard today is 802.11g, capable of connecting at speeds up to 54 megabits per second

(Mbps). It is backwards compatible with the older 802.11b which operates at up to 11 Mbps. A third standard, 802.11a, operates at up to 54 Mbps and uses a different frequency range to minimize interference with other equipment. It is not often used.

The IEEE has almost completed work on a new standard, 802.11n, that should increase the transmission rate to a maximum of 540 Mbps. In anticipation of the new standard, several wireless connection providers have been marketing new products that provide faster connections over greater distances. According to *PC World* (February 2006) Netgear's \$180 RangeMax 240 Wireless Router and \$100 Notebook Adapter can connect at close range at about the same rate (100 Mbps) as a standard wired 10-100 Ethernet connection. The router has 3 antennas and transmits over 3 non-overlapping bands within the allotted 9.4 Mhz frequency band to achieve this performance.

The high speed may be useful when you use bandwidth-gobbling applications such as VoiP telephony, network gaming, or streaming audio and video. If you mostly use a wireless Local Area Network (LAN) in your home to share an Internet connection you have no need for premium high-speed wi-fi equipment. The fastest download speed available from my local cable provider, SIGECOM, is 6 Mbps with its premium Xstream service. At that speed, even the slowest 802.11b equipment is adequate for short distances. The 802.11g standard is preferred for connections at greater distances while maintaining sufficient transmission rates.

Since I bought a new computer I moved the laptop upstairs to my den at the other end of the house. As a crow would fly, if it were allowed inside and capable of penetrating floor joists and air conditioning ducts, the distance between the computers is about 35 feet. This is well within the range of 802.11g equipment in open areas, but due to the intervening obstacles I was unable to establish a reliable connection between my standard Netgear router and the Dell laptop with its built-in Dell-brand, 802.11g capable Wi-Fi adapter. I disabled that adapter and plugged in a standard Netgear wireless USB adapter (WG111v2) with the included USB cable. This gave me a strong connection to the router at the other end of the house, with a reported transmission speed of the full 54 Mbps. Although the cable allowed me to set up the adapter within several feet of the laptop computer, it was actually sufficient to Velcro the adapter to the lid of the computer so that it was roughly parallel with the

antenna of the router. It goes to show that the quality of the Wi-Fi equipment can make a significant difference in the results when conditions are less than optimal.

Should You Shisen Sho?

Browsing through the games available with Linux distributions such as Linspire and Xandros, I happened on a Mah-Jongg variety called Shisen Sho. If you like to play Mah-Jongg you ought to give it a try - it is definitely habit forming. The game starts out with a square grid of Mah-Jongg tiles. The size of the grid can be varied, but I found 24x12 a suitable size. The goal of the game is to remove identical tiles in pairs, with the restriction that a pair of tiles can only be removed if they can be connected with no more than 3 straight lines (horizontal or vertical) without crossing other tiles. You can specify that the game must be solvable, although that doesn't guarantee that you'll actually solve it on a first try. The secondary goal is to solve the game in the shortest time. The game remembers previous scores to let you assess your increasing proficiency. My first game took me 40 minutes, but since then I have managed a few in slightly under 20 minutes.

There are many versions for Windows available. A listing is available on <http://home.halden.net/vkp/vkp/shisensho.html>. I downloaded a game by Daniel Valot from <http://dvalot.free.fr/games.htm> that is well implemented, but Google displays many other versions also. Shisen, in culinary circles usually called Szechuan after the Chinese province, is also known as Four Rivers. Give it a try!

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Computer Hysteria: Pew

by Berry F. Phillips

Computer Club of Oklahoma City

Pew” could conjure up several images in your mind. For example, you might think of a human expression uttered upon inhaling the exotic perfume of a skunk! Perhaps you might think of an aching back from that hard wooden pew at church! What does pew have to do with computing? Perhaps nothing caution because you are reading in the CHZ, the Computer Hysteria Zone!

The Pew Charitable Trusts, an independent nonprofit, was established between 1948 and 1979 by the children of Sun Oil Company founder Joseph Pew and his wife, Mary Anderson Pew, with the creation of the Pew Memorial Foundation honoring their parents' memory. In 2005, the foundation

invested \$177 million to fund the various trusts including the founding in 1999 of The Pew Internet & American Life Project which studies the social and civic impact of the Internet, often considered the most far-ranging, behavior-changing communications innovation since the invention of printing.

The Project produces reports that explore the impact of the Internet on families, communities, work and home, daily life, education, health care, and civic and political life. The Project aims to be an authoritative source on the evolution of the Internet through collection of data and analysis of real-world developments as they effect the virtual world.

The basis of the reports are nationwide random digit dial telephone surveys as well as online surveys. This data collection is supplemented with research from government agencies, academia, and other expert venues, observations of what people do and how they behave when they are online, in-depth interviews with Internet users and Internet experts alike and other efforts that try to examine individual and group behavior. The Project releases 15-20 pieces of research a year, varying in size, scope, and ambition.

Latest trends from the project reports show the number of adult users are now almost equally divided between men and women representing 73% of American adults who use the Internet which currently represents approximately 147 million people. Here is what we do online: Send e-mail (91%), use a search engine to find information (91%), search for a map or driving direction(84%), look for health/medical information (79%) , research a product or service before buying it (78%), check the weather (78%), look for information on a hobby or interest (77%), get travel information (73%), get news (68%), buy a product (67%), surf the web for fun (66%), buy or make a reservation for travel (63%), look for political news/information (58%), and for lesser percentages of use on online activities visit www.pewinternet.org <<http://www.pewinternet.org>> whose website was used to research this article with my appreciation.

While researching this Pew article, I began wondering if the article might be good enough to be submitted to win a “Pewlitzer” Prize! On second thought that would be just plain “pewlish!”

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings his article to you.



From The DealsGuy

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

We worked some great trade shows last month including the McDonalds Worldwide show. Attendees were from around the world and food was all over that show. Most of the food was from around the world and didn't appeal to me at all, such as the burgers with "rice burger" buns, and the shrimp burgers. An attendee could take a 15-minute tour showing some of their methods for preparation and quality control, then get a Big Mac and fries. Another day I had the largest Big & Tasty (a McDonald's burger selection) I ever saw. An ice cream booth continuously gave out plenty of cones and sundaes.

I was stationed at some exit doors one day and heard music I knew was hit country & western music. I finally looked inside and there on a small stage was Jo Dee Macina, live, performing some of her hit songs. There were only about 100 people there, but it was an unannounced performance sponsored by an exhibitor. I also worked at a door for their sessions area (including concerts) during a rehearsal by Destiny's Child. While I enjoyed the music, I was extremely impressed by the sound system setup for that concert. A convention hall is very difficult to get quality sound unless expensive speakers are used that specifically direct its sound to control reverberations. This was one of the best sound systems I have heard in those halls. I'm sure there was easily a million dollars worth of sound and video equipment there.

We just finished working the SAP Sapphire Show <<http://www.sap.com/sapphire>> that was combined with the ASUG (Americas' SAP Users' Group) <<http://www.asug.com>> show with about 14,000 attendees. Very few major companies were not represented. I was told that attendees paid anywhere from \$1600 to \$2400 depending on the Sapphire Show category they registered for. Fortunately, I was watching the computers for registration. They had food daily for their staff and I was invited. In July we might work a Microsoft show that will be one of the largest trade shows ever held in Orange County Convention Center.

Do Your Homework!

Below are some announced freebies and I am passing them on with reservations since I have not tried any of them. I asked my proofreader, Bob

Clyne, to just take a look at the announcements and will include some of his comments. The first product might pique your interest, as it did his, but be sure to look it and the others over thoroughly before you make your decision to try them. I have edited out much of the announcement text so go to their Web sites listed for more complete information.

DVD Copying Anyone?

ShrinkTo5 has released version 2.02 of ShrinkTo5 GUI, a new DVD copying engine distributed at no cost to anyone. This application lets you copy and shrink your favorite DVD disks in brilliant quality, which is complemented by a surprisingly high processing speed. You can copy an entire DVD, copy the main movie only, or copy its content elements selectively. The output can be saved to the hard disk drive as an ISO image or compressed and burned onto one DVD disk. The best thing in copying DVD disks with ShrinkTo5 is that it no longer involves tedious and sometimes confusing configuration. ShrinkTo5's AI chooses the perfect balance automatically.

DealsGuy Note: Bob Clyne says the free version contains Adware; WhenU to be specific and recommends against it. He also says the \$19.95 version, containing no adware, is available from Download.com and you can try it for three days before you have to buy it. He suggests getting the Machinist2.dll before getting ShrinkTo5 if you intend to copy encrypted DVDs. The program will not work on encrypted/copy protected DVDs i.e. most commercial DVDs, without the Machinist2.dll, which for legal reasons, they don't supply. The Machinist2.dll can be challenging to find, but he did find it a few places, some of which were Warez sites.

Some of the features for ShrinkTo5 GUI are:

- Support for Machinist2.dll. The program has been modified to support new Machinist2.dll. Now, ShrinkTo5 has a unique ability to make DVD backups that cannot be handled by other DVD copying software like DVDSHrink.
- Free burner plug-in. The ShrinkTo5 GUI package comes with FoxBurner, a shell plug-in that allows you to burn directly from the Windows Explorer. You don't have to donate or download a burner separately.
- ISO Image. Along with burning onto DVD disks, copied images can now be saved as ISO images on the hard disk drive and burned onto disks later if the need arises.
- Auto-Repair. New ShrinkTo5 lets you automatically restore scratched and defective DVD disks so

that their content can be accessed and copied.

- **Dynamic Compression.** The code of the dynamic compression rate has been enhanced, which now allows users to get an even sharper picture.

- **Built-in Player.** New ShrinkTo5 features a built-in player that allows the user to view selected video tracks. This gives you more control over the copying process.

Read more information about ShrinkTo5 GUI at <<http://www.shrinkto5.com/software.asp>>

Watch the online tutorial demo at <<http://www.shrinkto5.com/gTour.asp>>

ShrinkTo5 is available as Basic and Professional. Both versions run under Windows 2000/XP. The Basic version is available as a free download from <<http://www.shrinkto5.com/software.asp>>. The Professional is available as a three-day trial. The price of the Professional version is \$19.95 download, or \$24.95 plus S&H box USD. Both versions are compiled without DeCSS. To enable ShrinkTo5 to decrypt CSS, users should download "Machinist2.dll" from the Internet.

Product page link: <<http://www.shrinkto5.com>>

Download link: <http://www.shrinkto5.com/_data/ShrinkTo5AdFree.exe> (4.77 Mb)

E-mail: <info@shrinkto5.com>

Postal address: ShrinkTo5.com, 2005, Fritz-Windisch Str. 11, 40885 Ratingen, Germany.

Might Be a Good Service, and Free!

Trisnap Technologies has released System Spyware Interrogator 3.0 Tech Edition. "They say that, "System Spyware Interrogator (SSI) is a free tool that detects and removes malicious software from clients' computers. It uses Trisnap's unique Predator technology to compare applications running on a client's computer with an online database of spyware definitions to immediately reveal all suspicious applications. The consumer edition of System Spyware Interrogator offers monthly, quarterly and annual priority fee-based automatic removal options. The Tech Edition also offers Alternate Directory Scans, File Hash Generation, Intelligent Hijackthis log parser and a memory process killer. SSI is linked directly to one of the largest malware databases in the world at <www.spywaredata.com>."

DealsGuy note: "Note the fee based options! You'll find out more on their Web site, but Bob and I had trouble understanding it. The Tech Edition also offers Alternate Directory Scans, File Hash Generation, Intelligent Hijackthis log parser and a memory process killer. SSI is linked directly to one of the largest malware databases in the world at <[www](http://www.spywaredata.com)

.spywaredata.com>."

Learn more about Tech Edition at <<http://www.spywaredata.com/spyware/download.php>>.

Download and try it in action from <<http://www.spywaredata.com/download/ssisetup.exe>>

SSI 3.0 Tech Edition runs under Microsoft Windows 2000/XP/2003. Additional information on the product, as well as its free version is available from <<http://www.spywaredata.com>>

Postal address: Trisnap Technologies, 4519 Santiago Ln, Bonita Springs, FL 34134, USA

Protect Those Passwords, OK, and Free Tool

The program uses a strong encryption mechanism which prevents unauthorized access (256-bit AES –Advanced Encryption Standard). Every user can create a file of his/her own (the program is virtually an SQL database, featuring simultaneous work of several users). In this file, every user has a hierarchically structured list of folders (you can create the new ones, delete, rename, etc.). Each password record you add to one of these folders contains the following fields: subject, user name, password, URL, file path, comments. The user has an ability to create an unlimited number of extra fields to store data. In addition to this, you can set an expiration date for your password.

Aurora Password Manager has a built-in password generator, which chooses arbitrary combinations of symbols and generates passwords that are impossible to guess. Get the feature list from the Web site. Bob Clyne commented that, "I did not see a privacy statement on their Web site. They do have a bunch of awards listed on their Web site, but none of them were from places I had heard enough about to have confidence in. I did not find anything bad about the company or the product."

Availability: Aurora Password Manager runs under Windows 98/Me/2000/XP/2003. You can download it at <<http://www.animabilis.com/password-manager/download/Password-Manager-Installer.exe>> (2.13 Mb) Product page link: <<http://www.animabilis.com>> E-mail: <egorov@animabilis.com>

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 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>>

Online Librarians Never Say Shhh!

by Gabriel Goldberg

APCUG Advisor; Columnist, AARP Computer & Technology Website, www.aarp.org

Libraries have improved since baby boomers attended grade school. Research assistance once only available in person or by telephone is blossoming into diverse online “ask a librarian” services, handling questions ranging from general curiosity and homework-related to business research.

Friendly Online Librarians Never Say Shhh!

Growing up, I was lucky to live just a few blocks from a great neighborhood library. I fondly remember the children’s librarian encouraging my love of reading and books. The library was rebuilt while I was in elementary school; I was recently shocked that the “new” library was undergoing renovation and improvement. Then I realized that what seems like yesterday was five decades ago!

The good news for us all—near libraries or not—is that libraries have greatly improved in that 50 years. Research assistance once only available in person or by telephone is blossoming into diverse online “ask a librarian” services. These handle all sorts of questions: general curiosity, homework-related, business research, etc. Just don’t expect medical or legal advice.

E-mail assistance has been available for some time. Librarians sometimes like it because they can answer questions as they have time, and it avoids people waiting on line or holding on the phone. But it can be slow if a question must be clarified—that’s important, since people often don’t ask what they really want answered! And online interaction lacks face-to-face intimacy, voice tone, body language, which all help communication.

In addition to accepting e-mail, libraries use Web forms for submitting queries, take questions via instant messaging, and offer interactive Web chats. Highly interactive instant messaging and Web chats allow quick conversations, often providing answers within a few minutes. Newer technologies such as VoIP (voice over IP, Internet telephony) and MS (cell phone text messaging) may soon increase research availability.

Library policies vary regarding answering non-resident questions; some specialized queries (local history, obituaries, newspaper clippings, etc.) must be handled by a library near the area of interest. That brings genealogy questions from far away as people research their ancestors.

Most queries are handled at no cost, though some searches incur charges. A library card usually isn’t needed. Some libraries currently mail printed research results; e-mailing images will provide faster service and reduce costs.

Behind-the-scenes technology helps librarians manage queries, ensuring that all questions are answered and eliminating duplicate responses. Shortcuts fill in frequently used answers.

The same sorts of questions are asked online as are posed by phone or in person, with addition of sensitive areas such as sexual issues. Queries often deal with homework—math, science fair challenges, etc.—and country reports. Librarians enjoy the occasional obscure gem, such as being asked about “modeling the economic infrastructure of railroads in Great Britain.”

The geek expression “24x7” means that something is available all day, every day. Since people expect this full-time access to e-mail, the Web, shopping, banking, and other online services, they’re enthusiastic about being able to ask questions whenever they occur.

But it’s hard for libraries to provide this never-anticipated level of service, especially when off-hours demand may be limited. So they support each other locally/nationally/internationally by sharing round-the-clock assistance chores. Questions are entered locally and routed to on-duty librarians—who sometimes work from home in pajamas, answering off-hours long-distance queries.

Even librarians sometimes need help—so their world-wide Stumpers mailing list lets them share baffling questions.

Librarians and the public are learning together to use electronic tools. New technologies facilitate supporting diverse clienteles by—for example—facilitating non-English services.

Here are a few tips regarding online queries: provide your name/e-mail/phone for answering and clarification; use plain text (not formatted) for easy reading; don’t nag, allow time for an answer—but follow up in a week or so. Finally, contact the correct library. A library in Plymouth, Michigan has received queries about Plymouths in Massachusetts and England!

Using online library services is easy once you have an Internet connection. Some libraries favor PCs with Windows and the Internet Explorer Web browser, but Linux and Macintosh systems are increasingly supported. There’s generally no software download or install. Browser pop-up blockers or

firewalls sometimes get in the way but they're easily customized.

Start by finding your library's Web site. For example, I locate my library by submitting "fairfax county" library to Google [www.google.com]. Or I could click from my county government Web site to the library pages. Or Googling library questions yields many library sites offering answers. Then look for links like Ask-A-Librarian! or "Homework Help!." Links and services will vary; when I click Ask-A-Librarian, I can choose between chatting, e-mailing, or (of course) actually visiting a library.

In researching this article I challenged my library with two questions. I was delighted that they quickly named the obscure British TV show whose name I couldn't remember (*The Duchess of Duke Street*) and found a science fiction book containing a short story I wanted to reread.

No matter how they evolve, whether as buildings or online, libraries' core mission is everlasting: providing timely information in a customer-friendly format.

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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.

"Suddenly..."

or "I didn't do anything!"

Part 1

or a month's log of a Sun City Anthem

Computer Club "house call" Doctor

by Charles W. Davis

Newsletter Editor & Webmaster

Sun City Anthem Computer Club, Henderson, NV

In working to help Club members and others with their computer problems during the Thursday morning Computer Talk sessions, or more often when making "house calls," I often hear strange tales that usually involve acts of some gremlin like creature. However, gremlins are more closely related to mechanical problems in aircraft.

Generally the caller's comments start with "all of a sudden" or "suddenly" and end with "I didn't do anything." I can only surmise that it was probably one of cartoonist Bill Keane's ghostly imps "Not Me."

"Nobody" or even "Ida Know."

Some recent examples:

"Suddenly..."

One morning a couple of weeks ago, I received a call and the person on the other end of the phone connection was obviously very upset. She exclaimed: "Suddenly all of my desktop icons are gone! I didn't do anything! Please help me!"

This situation seemed to be serious. I had never heard of this happening. I didn't have anything on the calendar for another two hours so I hopped in my 1999 "Sapphire Blue Mica" (marketing division color name of course) Miata for the short drive up the hill to her Tall Mesa Village home. She was right, the icons were indeed missing. A simple right click on the blank desktop, hover over Arrange Icons by: and then click on Show Desktop Icons. This was definitely an act by the "little people." As I said, I hadn't heard of this situation before. Therefore, it must have been "Not Me" wishing to get off the hook by whispering in my ear how I might arrive at the solution. Since the club member was in the back room and the house girl had let me in, I quickly left the scene.

The next day the same lady called and said that her "My Computer" Icon was missing from the desktop. Realizing that it wasn't the normal desktop shortcut icon, I was puzzled. Not thinking things through, I again slid onto the seat in the Miata and shortly arrived on the scene. Sure enough most icons were visible, but the "My Computer" icon was not in its normal position. It wasn't immediately visible. I later noticed the top edge of the icon protruding just above the task bar. Once again, I moved the pointer to a blank spot on the desktop, a right click on the mouse and chose Arrange Icons by and chose Name. The My Desktop icon again assumed its prominence at the upper left. She said that she didn't drag and drop it down there. As I picked up a \$20 donation to the Club, I assumed that it must have been "Nobody" and left for home.

"Suddenly..."

Monday morning is usually the time for the phone calls to begin. On a recent Monday, the caller sheepishly states that "suddenly I can't access the Internet." I recognized that the person speaking to me is the same one whose 18 year old granddaughter had placed hundreds of malware programs on his laptop two weeks before. At that time I had suggested a router/firewall so that she could plug her laptop directly to the router with Internet access. He had immediately gone out and purchased and

installed one. Oh yes, the grand-daughter had been there over the weekend and had brought her own laptop computer.

The blue Miata once again headed up the hill (from our home in the Valley View Village all destinations seem to be “up the hill.”) to their home in Arroyo Vista Village. In just a few minutes, I found that the dear child didn’t plug the cable into the router as instructed, but had used grandpa’s computer. Since she was an AOL user, she attempted to change Gramps’ Accounts from Cox Cable to AOL dialup and failed. It would have been so easy for her to have just gone to AOL using Internet Explorer. She left for school Sunday evening and didn’t mention a thing to Gramps. That way, she didn’t have to tell on either “Ida Know” or “Not Me.” I picked up the \$20 donation to the club and was soon on my way.

An admonition: Set up a Guest Account without Administrative rights. Place a User name and password on the Administrative (your) account.

“All of a Sudden. . .”

“All of a sudden” turns up many times a month and in some unusual situations. Last week, I received a call from a member that was using Microsoft Office Outlook. It seems that she had been entering information into a new contact when “all of a sudden” she couldn’t enter information. She explained that she had been using Outlook and contacts for years and had never had this problem. Since this didn’t seem (to me) that this required immediate attention, I arranged an appointment for the next morning. My Miata and I arrived at her Golf Mesa Village home just as the Grandfather clock guarding the entry was announcing that it was 10. Grandfather clocks that I am aware of don’t announce “am” or “pm.”

She met me at the door and we proceeded to the office and she took her place in front of her computer to show me what was happening. She began keying in the house number, using the numeric key pad and just as she had said, nothing worked as expected. I immediately saw why this had happened so “suddenly.” Apparently “Nobody” had pressed the Num Lock key thereby turning it off. So as she would enter a house number, things went wild as the 2,4, 6, and 8 keys acted as direction keys, 7 & 9 were Home and Page Up respectively and 1 & 3 were End and Page down. I asked her to press the Num Lock key and “all of a sudden” the problem was resolved. I collected the \$20 donation check to the club and was homeward bound—downhill of course.

“Suddenly. . .”

On another Monday, I received a call from a member stating that she had recently upgraded to MS Office 2003 and a short time later, suddenly she could no longer access MS Publisher files. This was the result of someone else messing with functions that they should have stayed away from. Support teams at Norton will vow “Not me.” But when the lady was directed to an article titled “How to use Office programs with the Norton Anti-Virus Office plug-in” she was able to resolve the problem as I watched. This article can help you extricate yourself and may be found at: <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/329820/en-us>

It is maddening to think that one, nay thousands upon thousands, must jump through hoops because a bunch of programmers at Symantec (Norton) can’t get it right.

I have never understood their automatic plug-in installation. At least they should tell the user, including a list of possible problems and their resolution, and let them make a decision as to whether to install the plug in. Who needs viruses when “reputable” software manufacturers can do things like this to you?

A long time ago, in computer time, but actually just over a year ago, I stopped paying the extortion money for antivirus software and have used the free AVG antivirus, which is available from <http://free.grisoft.com/doc/1>

“Suddenly. . .”

“Suddenly” you can’t open Word or most other Microsoft Office products. This happened because you owned a Hewlett Packard multi-function printer with a flash memory card reader. It seems that a security update messed with the logic for these systems and caused much havoc around the world. A follow-on update was released to affected computers during the fourth week in April. If you are still having the problem, go to Start then Windows Update, download and install all Critical updates. It seems that “Ida Know” visited Microsoft’s Redmond campus...

“Suddenly. . .”

Last week, one of your neighbors in the Valley View Village went to his neighbors stating that his phone went “dead.” On investigation, it was learned that he had ordered and installed a new Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone system. Some of the equipment had arrived, but due to a transposition of digits when entering the credit card number, the important “Silver” box did not get shipped. “Ida

Know” didn’t know how the mix up occurred. “Who Knows” stated that the customer probably discarded the silver box with the packaging. However, the land line telephone provider had been notified to discontinue the service. “Dead line!”

An admonition: Always check the contents of packages to make certain that all components are included before installing anything!

The Federal Communications Commission has a web site that explains most aspects of VoIP: <http://www.fcc.gov/voip/>

Not so “Suddenly...” This particular call arrived on a Tuesday, so I was surprised to hear: “Suddenly I can send e-mail but I can’t receive any messages. Everything times out. I’ve called Cox Communications and since I use Office Outlook 2003, they weren’t much help.” This phone call came in at a time that Vickie was out and wouldn’t return for a while, so I slid behind the wheel of the Miata and headed for Ridgecrest Village to see what had happened so “suddenly.”

It took several minutes of attempting to send messages to the owner’s e-mail address. Sure enough the message would be sent, but no incoming messages. After some time it would all time out. The first inbound message would never arrive. I found that there was no Internet access using Internet Explorer. I installed Firefox from my USB Flash memory and was then able to access the internet. At this time clues began to appear one-by-one.

Norton Internet Security was warning of Firefox accessing the Internet - twice! ZoneAlarm was warning of Firefox accessing the Internet!

Oops! Only one program firewall at a time is allowed. Since the member’s Norton subscription was about to expire, I downloaded AVG antivirus to his desktop (free at <http://free.grisoft.com>), shut off the cable modem, went to uninstall Norton System-Works and discovered two versions. I uninstalled both. When I attempted to install AVG antivirus, the program indicated that the version of the Roxio CD creator contained code that was incompatible with AVG, and it provided a link for an update. I installed the update and then successfully installed the AVG antivirus. Then I turned on the cable modem and downloaded updates. I was grateful to the AVG programmers to make that test and inform the user. Suddenly, I decided that I like the AVG antivirus program and its creators even more than in the past.

Now I felt that I could address the original problem. I opened Office Outlook, and it proceeded to

download a monstrous movie clip–9.87MB! It was able to complete the download due to the fact that Norton wasn’t scanning inbound e-mail messages.

“Suddenly” wasn’t really all that sudden. The second and third firewall programs were installed over a period of time, but the problem didn’t manifest itself until the arrival of the large file. As an aside, it was a clip from a newscast relating the story of an autistic youth that had been the go-fer for a high school basketball team. On the last game of his senior year, the coach (dad) suited him up put him in to play. I believe that I saw through the tears that welled up in my eyes over 21 points racked up - all three pointers. I’m not a sports fan, but am a fan of the underdog! \$20 more for the Club’s treasury.

This article was originally published in Bits, PCs & Macs, the newsletter of the Sun City Anthem Computer Club. All copies are available online at: [http:// www.myscacc.org/newsletters.htm](http://www.myscacc.org/newsletters.htm)

Society News

A Show of Interest

Camera Rochester will have a show of their work at Barnes & Noble Booksellers, 3349 Monroe Avenue, Pittsford, in the Community Room through June 30.

The show is free, and there will be information for those wishing to find out more about Camera Rochester.

Many of the people in the Digital Camera and Scanning SIG will have work in this show, and I would like to encourage Rochester Computer Society members to attend and see what they and others are doing.

–Bev Cronkite

Help’s Half Hour

Tuesday, June 13, 2006

Led by: Ron Matteson

Recorded by Jan Rothfuss

Total present: 31

Q: One member said she has a program called K-Lite Pro on it. Does anyone know what it is?

A: Check on Google. It might be Spyware.

Q: One member’s computer seems to have gone off. No mouse, etc.

A: You may have to let it cool down and then reboot.

Q: One member was trying to copy off the pages of our Monitor. He wants to go from that PDF file using the select text function and then paste it. Since October’s 2004 issue, he can no longer get a readable copy.

A: It may be the type of PDF generation that is

Meeting Notes

June 2006

by John McMillan, Secretary

being used. Or perhaps our website may have been changed. It was suggested that the 'paste special' option be tried so that the gibberish will go away. Our WebMaster suggested that there might be a new converter program being used by our newsletter editor. He will check.

Q: Another member received an email that was all gibberish.

A: It was suggested that he try selecting the text and then changing the font. Perhaps it will then be readable.

Q: One member is looking for a new 256mg memory stick. Does anyone have any that they want to sell? He has a Win2000 and wants to upgrade.

A: Maven sells used memory. eBay may have some, too, but it can be risky.

Q: *PC World Magazine* this month has an article on Building Your Own Computer. It does not have very many details, however.

A: *Smart Computing* had an item on Linux building, too.

Q: One member got an email from PayPal, confirming your Starbucks purchase.

A: This is a good example of 'phishing.' Don't give them any information. Ron noted that even snail-mail is starting to send along 'offers' that looked like a real invoice. Be careful! Electronic messages should not be opened and should then be marked as 'blocked' so that they do not keep coming. I can't block my email due to my business. I check the properties of the email and look to see what the content is without opening it. MailWasher will do a similar thing for viewing. This program checks the email on the server before you open it on your PC.

Q: I got my first jumpdrive. Should I check it for viruses now that I will begin to use it?

A: Yes, check it after you have plugged it in to any unknown PC such as a library.

Q: One member is trying the 'portable' software versions. He has added Firefox to his 1 gig flash drive and it works! Thunderbird and OpenOffice may be available as well.

A: Get the full details by checking out Sunday's newspaper. Check out Portable Apps.com.

Q: When running Thunderbird, can you store your email on the thumbdrive, too?

A: Yes, it is a setting to configure.

Q: I have been getting some 64 bit emails. This comes through a gibberish.

A: Gibberish is caused by the code that originates it. The system should translate from any level of bits. Maybe he was getting encrypted items.

Arpad opened the business meeting with the following announcements. Members whose dues are in arrears should see Steve Staub. The Planning Meeting will be Sally's house at 7 pm on the first Tuesday in July. Help's Half Hour needs a leader for the July 11th Society meeting at the Gates Library where Arpad will discuss selling on eBay. A map will be included in the *Monitor*.

Mike Lavelle has volunteered to be the Program Chair so if you have any suggestions or contacts, pass them along to him. There will not be any meetings of the Digital Photograph SIG in July or August.

Seven people have signed up to build their own computer. This will occur in August or September, at a location yet to be determined, if five more participants sign up. Arpad indicated that a price list of alternatives would be available but that the cost would range between \$500 and \$1,000 depending upon individual selection of components and software.

The Society has already reserved the new pavilion at the Brighton Town Park for the August 8th picnic. This is located on the south side of Westfall Road between Winton Road and South Clinton Avenue. A map will be provided for those unfamiliar with the park. Only 5 people have signed up with the August first deadline looming. Five dollars per person covers the site cost, beverages, rolls, and choice of red or white hots, hamburgers, cheeseburgers or Italian sausage. Your request, recorded at sign up, will govern the quantities purchased. Participants are asked to provide a dish to pass based upon the first letter of their last name: A-I, snacks; J-R, salads; S-Z, desserts. Steve closed the business meeting by requesting help with room cleanup.

Following the a social break Arpad began his presentation of buying on eBay with some history. "According to urban myth, eBay was started by Pierre Omygar who wanted to help his girl friend sell Pez dispensers on line." It went live in 1995 as AuctionWeb.com. By 1997 it was up to about one million hits a day, severely straining its servers that often crashed hourly, and its name was changed to eBay.com. In 1999 eBay crashed for 22 hours and 400 employees were required to phone all active users and apologize for the break in service, a masterful piece of public relations work. By the year 2000 the staff had grown to about 2000 and by the

end of the year there were 22 million registered users. In 2004 they grossed 3.3 billion dollars in revenue that grew to almost 5 billion in 2005.

Arpad used slides to display changing web pages and partial lists categories of things sold on eBay. He went on to say you could buy almost anything citing a grilled cheese sandwich, with the image of the Holy Mother burned into it, that sold for \$20,000.00. This was so successful that copies were offered, and eventually the burning unit itself. Another weird item was advertising space on a man's forehead which sold for \$37,000.00. Arpads personal favorite was an ICBM missile silo that the buyer turned into a tank for scuba diving instruction. He also showed a list of things not sold on eBay, for example fully automatic firearms, ethnically or racially inappropriate items, illegal services, and counterfeit items such as copied CDs or DVDs.

He described things which were necessary to start using eBay: a valid e-mail address, (generally one from an internet service provider); eBay registration including a credit or debit card number or a PayPal account; and of course money to buy stuff. PayPal is a service that handles online payments for a fee and requires a registration, separate from eBay though they can be linked.

There are two types of eBay accounts: unverified, (linked to a credit or debit card); and verified, (directly linked to a checking account for automatic deposit or withdrawal). Most users prefer to deal with verified accounts.

Users offer Items for sale in an auction listing for a set time, usually 7 days, though larger items may run longer. Other users search for an item and, if found, check the sellers description. They may ask the seller questions via e-mail or eBay; check the source feedback history (sellers customer satisfaction record), and then submit a bid if so inclined. When the auction period expires, the high bidder is notified by e-mail that includes an invoice for the price plus any shipping and handling costs. Then the buyer pays for the item via PayPal, money order, check or credit card. When the seller receives payment, the item is shipped to the buyer. When the buyer receives the item in good condition and is satisfied, he notifies the seller with positive feedback. The seller returns feedback to the buyer and these become part of the feedback history mentioned previously. This is crucial for eBay quality control and was the method used to purchase the Societies new \$1000 printer for \$200.

Some sales descriptions may include a minimum

bid or have a fixed price tag for immediate purchase of the item. A reserve price may be used as a minimum but if there are no higher bids, the seller may negotiate a lower price. Many include conditions such as credit cards only or ground shipping. Cash is rarely used unless the seller is local for face to face dealing.

Shipping costs may be fixed, or variable based on carrier and zones. eBay has a built in calculator that will show shipping cost estimates for UPS or the Post Office based on ZIP code. UPS and Post Office web sites are also sources of shipping estimates. When shipping and handling costs are combined, deduct the shipping cost to verify that handling is not excessive. He mentioned that eBay does have some tools for preventing shilling. Continued contacts between a buyer and a seller are checked for collusion but that is not foolproof.

Arpad described several tricks for successful bidding and after much difficulty connecting to the internet, demonstrated an actual search. He ended by stating that the presentation would be included on the Societies web page. Join us for next months exciting episode about Selling on eBay.

A sleek program that reads .pdf files without the endless wait for Adobe to open can be found at: http://www.foxitsoftware.com/pdf/rd_intro.php. If the url doesn't work, which just happened to me, type foxit into Google. -Ed

Treasurer's Report

by Steve Staub, Treasurer

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Balance as of 05/09/2006 | \$666.48 |
| Income | |
| Dues | \$170.00 |
| Picnic | 40.00 |
| Add | 15.00 |
| Donations | 17.00 |
| Food | 6.68 |
| Total Income | \$248.68 |
| Expenses | |
| Postmaster (bulk mail permit) | \$160.00 |
| Postmaster | 50.00 |
| St. Stephens | 60.00 |
| Staples (paper & toner) | <u>210.55</u> |
| Total Expense | \$480.55 |
| Balance as of 06/16/2006 | \$434.61 |
| Members renewing: | |
| Charlotte Baker, Dr. Clifford Jacobson, Arpad Kovacs, Dudley Pease, Ralph Squire. | |

Planning Meeting Minutes

We started our meeting at 7 pm. Our first topic was comments on May general meeting. We believe everyone enjoyed the extended helps half hour. We also agreed to try not to have too many of these fillers. The next topic was what topics do we have for upcoming meetings. June is Buying on the internet, July will be selling on the internet, August will be our picnic and we do have a speaker for Sept. the topic is still in the works. Any suggestions on what you would like to see us try to get as a presentation, let an officer know.

The Lighter Side

Customer: "I want to send an email. How do I do it from WordPerfect?"

Tech Support: "Do you have an email program?"

Customer: "No."

Tech Support: "Are you on a network?"

Customer: "No."

Tech Support: "Do you have a modem?"

Customer: "No."

Tech Support: "Then you can't send email."

Customer: "This program is useless! How am I going to send an email!?"

Tech Support: "Well, if you push the send button a small door will open at the back of your monitor, and a pigeon will fly out with your message."

I had the phone on mute when I said this last line, but my supervisor didn't know it. The look on his face was great.

Customer: "I think I broke the Internet!"

Tech Support: "So it was you!"

Customer: (click)

"Upper case? Lower case? You can't use these technical terms with me, I don't know anything about computers."

I frequently get calls that begin: "Transfer me to Tech support."

"I am tech support."

"I mean *computer* tech support."

"I *am* computer tech support."

"But, you're female..."

"...and a tech. Now, how may I help you?" Of course what I'd really like to say is "Aren't you perceptive, now how can I help you?"

Actual quotes from managers:

- As of tomorrow, employees will only be able to access the building using individual security cards. Pictures will be taken next Wednesday and employees will receive their cards in two weeks. –Sun Microsystems
- How long is this Beta guy going to keep testing our stuff?
- E-mail is not to be used to pass on information or data. It should be used only to be used for company business.
- Doing it right is no excuse for not meeting the schedule.

–From the Dilbert File

How your computer really works.

Many of you have wondered how your computer works (on the inside). I have located a schematic diagram that includes motion of information (it includes sounds so you can listen in) moving through your computer. This should explain it all.

<http://blueballfixed.ytmnd.com/>

Learn what OS you are.

http://bbspot.com/News/2003/01/os_quiz.php

Also available, you as a Nigerian scammer and your extension.