PPCUG

NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

Monday January 8, 2001

Microsoft **Windows** *Me*
Millennium Edition

John Stroiney
Microsoft Marketing Representative

**See a presentation on some of the exciting features of Windows ME
and the reasons to upgrade.
Also hear about some exciting new entertainment products.**

At

Lawrence Library

Meetng Rooms 1 & 2
US Route 1 South & Darrah Lane, Lawrenceville, NJ

☆ ☆

*Meetings of an organization at any of the facilities of the Mercer County Library System
in No Way implies endorsement of its programs*

In this issue

apcug

Happy New Year!

Digital Photo by: Ed Weiss

The PPCUG Holiday Party & Elections. The food, the crowd, raffle drawings and a winner selecting his prize at the December General Monthly Meeting.

About PPCUG

General Meetings

Second Monday of the month at the Lawrenceville Library.
Route 1 and Darrah Lane.

7:00-7:45 PM: Social Time / Tech Corner

7:45 PM: Meeting Comes to Order

8 PM: Featured Presentation

For information about upcoing meetings or joining PPCUG call 908-218-0778 to leave a message.

Board Meetings

Second Monday of the Month after the close of the General Meeting.
Board meetings are open to All.

Board Members

President:
    Paul Kurivchack 908-218-0778
Vice-President:
    Tom Carman .... TBD
Secretary:
    Don Arrowsmith .... TBD
Treasurer:
    Tom Canavan 732-422-9055
Members-At-Large:
    Jon Abolins 609-883-8126
    Vic Laurie 609-924-1220
    Kim Goldenberg 609-671-9188
    Sol Libes 609-520-9024

Chairpersons

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Hospitality:
    Bill Hawryluk 609-655-0923
Member Records:
    Paul Kurivchack 908-218-0778
Newsletter Editor:
    Paul Kurivchack 908-218-0778
Program Coordinator:
    Sol Libes 609-520-9024
Web Master:
    Jon Abolins 609-883-8126

Web Site

http://www.ppcug-nj.org

Annual Dues Rates

Normal dues rate is $30 per year.
    New Members Only: after February, the rate is $2.50 per month times the number of months remaining in the year.

Presidents Message
by Paul Kurivchack

It's Y2.001K! Did you ever think we'd get through 2000 after all the worry of last December and be thinking of starting another new year? Well we did make it through without a scratch. Hopefully 2001, the Space Odyssey year will bring us a continued growing economy, a slowing of the DOT.COM deaths, new innovative personal computing products, and a wider distribution of broadband internet connections so we can all surf at light speeds or at least something faster than 56K. Hopefully we will be covering the Broadband issue in March with Comcast@Home and later in the year some more interesting topics. I know Sol is already thinking about future meetings.

Y2.001K is looking brighter for the Princeton PC Users Group. After five lonely years without a Vice President, Tom Carman graciously stepped in to take the VP post. Tom will be a great addition to our board and I look forward to hearing his ideas in helping the group move forward in 2001.

The hunt is still on for a new LCD projector with my continued research of the various models available and that it will be purchased soon.

Dues are due for 2001. Please be sure to fill out a renewal form for Tom Canavan even if you have mailed in your money. This ensures that we have a current e-mail and postal mailing address for each of our members.

The Linux SIG is still looking for meeting space. If you have any ideas or know someone, please take the ball and run with it, Jon will need the space soon if he wants to continue the SIG. In addition, Caldera Systems Inc., was very generous and provided our group a good quantity of Linux OL2.3 and the Linux Technical Preview software. Jon Abolins will be handing out the copies at his next SIG meeting.

Lastly, I hope that everyone enjoyed the food and prizes at the holiday party. Thanks to Microsoft's MindShare user group support organization for the software and shirts. It is always great to go home with a present.

Have a Happy New Year and I look forward to seeing you all on the 8th.

Important

Dues are Due for 2001

The board has approved the increase of the yearly dues to $30.00 for new and renewing members.

Please see Tom Canavan for the new membership / renewal form.

Windows Tips: Scrap That File

By: Vic Laurie - PPCUG

Because they pose one of the most likely, as well as potentially most dangerous, problems that a typical user may encounter when using e-mail, I am going to enlarge the discussion of viruses in e-mail attachments that I began in the April PPCUG newsletter, http://www.ppcug-nj.org/newsltrs/apr2000.pdf. (For convenience, I am going to use the term virus to include worms and Trojan horses although sticklers might insist on a distinction.) In particular, I want to discuss the type of attachments that are exemplified in two recent widespread virus outbreaks, *I Love You* and *Life Stages*. The first makes use of a *vbs* file while the latter uses an obscure type known as a *scrap* or *shs* file. Both of these file types have perfectly legitimate applications and the insidiousness of viruses that use them is the difficulty that both users and anti-virus software have in distinguishing dangerous files of these types from those that are harmless. Further, scrap files can easily masquerade as something entirely different, making detection even more difficult. Because many users are unfamiliar with these file types, let us first briefly review their normal function.

Script Files

Windows contains a very useful ability to write and use small script files to carry out a multitude of utilitarian tasks. Web pages also make use of them. The software for this is part of Windows Accessories and is called Windows Scripting Host (WSH). It provides for scripts to be written in several simple programming languages including VBScript (files with extension *.vbs*) and JScript (files with extension *.js*.) Composite programs using several types of script can be denoted with the extension *.wsh*. Scripts are easy to write and can be quite powerful. (Old-timers will be reminded of DOS batch files; scripts are much more versatile, however.) For further information go to

http://msdn.microsoft.com/scripting/
http://wsh.glazier.co.nz/default.asp
http://www.zdnet.com/pcmag/stories/solutions/
0,8224,2505166,00.html
http://www.winmag.com/fixes/2000/0901.htm

Scrap Files

A little-known type of file used in a special form of Object Linking and Embedding (OLE) is the *shell scrap object* or, as it is more usually called, *scrap* file. It has the (normally hidden) extension *.shs*. (OLE is probably unfamiliar to many readers but basically it is the ability of certain programs to embed objects from one program into a different program or to interchange data between different programs. For example, part of an Excel spreadsheet can be embedded in a Word document.) Scrap files are an executable format and can be used to wrap or contain executable files. See the Microsoft Knowledge Base article at http://support.microsoft.com/support/kb/articles/Q138/2/75.asp for further information. Also, there is a detailed article at http://www.pc-help.org/security/scrap.htm, which I highly recommend.

How Virus Writers Use These Files

Unfortunately, virus writers have taken advantage of both scripts and scraps to produce harmful files which are attached to e-mail messages. The ease of writing scripts means that many small variations on the same virus theme can be produced. Scrap files can be used to package and disguise an unlimited variety of harmful executables. Because small changes to the same basic virus can be made continually, there is no way for the database of virus definitions used by anti-virus software to keep up. The anti-virus software companies do try with certain heuristic methods against these and other polymorphic viruses but there will always be new variations. Hence, relying on anti-virus software alone is not sufficient and additional security steps should be taken.

Protective Measures

It is essential that users make the change in settings described in the December PPCUG article on file extensions (http://www.ppcug-nj.org/newsltrs/dec00.pdf) so that a *.vbs* file will be recognized. A virus writer might name a file *somefile.txt.vbs,* for example. If extensions are hidden (the Windows default setting) the file will show as *somefile.txt*, possibly leading a user to believe the file is a harmless text file. Even worse is the especially sneaky aspect of scrap files provided by the Windows default setting, which always hides the extension *.shs* <u>even if you do change</u> the Show All Files sSetting. Thus a file whose real name is *somefile.txt.shs* will always appear as *somefile.txt*, laying a trap for the unwary. To see the *.shs* extension, the Registry must be edited. After first backing up, use <u>REGEDIT</u> or other Registry editor to delete the Registry entry **HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\ShellScrap\NeverShowExt.** (Those who regard the Registry as a Twilight Zone never to be entered may wish to disable Scrap files. See below)

Having made sure that extensions are shown, an e-mail recipient should next follow these three rules:

1. Never open or double-click an attachment unless absolutely sure what it is.
2. Never open or double-click an attachment unless absolutely sure what it is.
3. Never open or double-click an attachment unless absolutely sure what it is.

Yes, I know, that sort of repetition is corny, but being careless about opening attachments is the major cause of trouble with e-mail viruses. Countless numbers of people clicked on files from complete strangers saying, "I love you." It may be tedious to check out each and every attachment but doing so will obviate a lot of possible problems.

Also, the security measures for configuring Internet Explorer and Outlook Express discussed in http://www.ppcug-nj.org/newsltrs/apr2000.pdf should be put in place by those who use this software. This will place e-mail scripts into a restricted security zone.

If you never use *.vbs* or other script files (I find them very useful but they are not for everybody) and are prepared for error

messages from some Web pages, remove the Windows Scripting Host. A discussion of the pros and cons of doing this is at http://www.zdnet.com/zdhelp/stories/main/0,5594,2573079,00.html. Then the system will not be able to run .vbs files (or .js or .whs or some others). Windows 9X users (but apparently not Windows Me users who can use the alternate procedure given below) can go to **Control Panel | Add/Remove Programs | Windows Setup**. Select Accessories (Fig. 1). Click *Details* and scroll to *Windows Scripting Host* and remove the checkmark. (Fig. 2) Click OK.
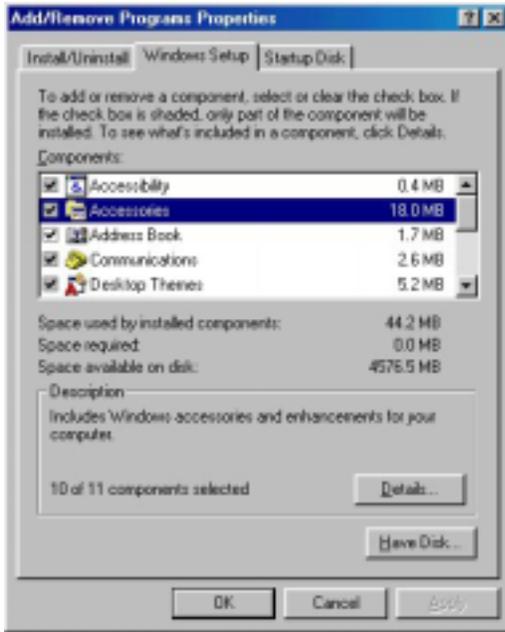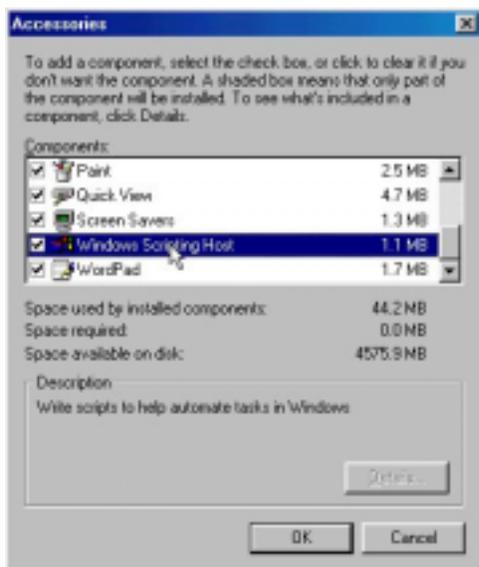
Figure 1

Figure 2

A cruder but faster way to disable scripting is to go to the Windows folder and simply rename or delete the file *wscript.exe* and in \Windows\Command\ rename or delete the file *cscript.exe*. This still leaves references to scripting in the Registry; they do no harm but tidy people may want to use the uninstallation procedure.

If you wish to retain Windows Scripting Host and the capacity to use scripts, one safety measure is to change the default action from Open to Edit. An inadvertent double-click will then merely open the file in Notepad rather than running it. Windows 9X users can go to **Control Panel**, open the **View** menu, **Folder Options | File Types**, scroll to **VBScript Script File** (there will be two entries, one for *vbs* and one for *vbe*), (Figure 3) (Windows Me users will find an icon for **Folder Options** in Control Panel.) Click the **Edit** button and change the default action from *Open* to *Edit*, (Figure 4). Do the same for other script types (*js, jse, wsf, wsh*). Incidentally, since script files are in text, those with even a small amount of familiarity with script language can tell what kinds of things the script might be doing.
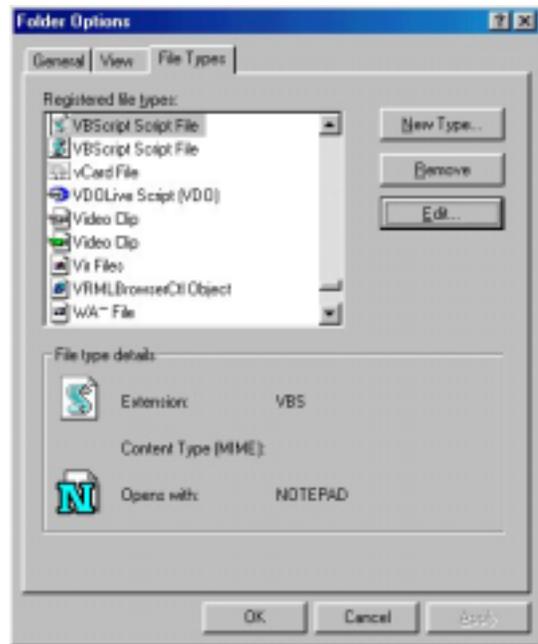
Figure 3

Figure 4

Yet, another measure is to install the free utility "Watchdog" from Winmag that is available at http://www.winmag.com/fix-es/watchdog/default.htm. Trying to open a script file will then bring up a window warning you of possible dangerous actions. This can get tiresome if you use many legitimate scripts but for those who only occasionally use scripts it provides a useful layer of safety. Another useful freeware program aimed specifically at Outlook users can be found at http://www.zdnet.com/zdhelp/sto-ries/main/0,5594,2595248,00.html.

Those who do not mind the possibility of losing certain types of functionality in Microsoft Office or other applications may wish to disable Scrap files altogether. Go to **Control Panel**, open the **View** menu, **Folder Options|File Types**, scroll to *Scrap Object*, highlight it and click "Remove." (Windows Me users will find an icon for **Folder Options** in Control Panel.) Or go to the folder \Windows\System\ and delete or rename the file *shscrap.dll*. Keep in mind that the potential danger from Scrap files is from the executables that can be wrapped in them, not from the Scrap file *per se*. For example, The *Life Stages* worm uses a scrap file to wrap a *vbs* program. The article mentioned above at http://www.pc-help.org/security/scrap.htm has many details.

Netscape 4.7 users can go to the **Edit** menu and open **Preferences|Navigator|Applications**. Scroll down the list "Description" to *Scrap Object*. Click "Remove". This removes Scrap file support from the Internet functions. Also you can go to **Preferences|Advanced** and remove the check by "Enable JavaScript for Mail and News". Note that JavaScript and Jscript are similar but not identical, being part of the Netscape-Microsoft dichotomy. Also, as far as I know, Netscape 4.7 does not support *vbs* files although it does support *vbe*. The list of supported applications given in **Preferences|Navigator|Applications** can be edited to remove any of the Netscape supported scripting functions that the user may choose. Note that lack of Netscape support does not preclude dangers from opening downloaded files whose file type is supported by Windows. It only means that Netscape cannot automatically open such files.

Other Potentially Dangerous Files

There are, of course, many other file types that virus writers can use for malicious purposes as e-mail attachments. It is impossible to mention them all in our limited space but a list of potentially unsafe file types can be found at
http://www.winmag.com/columns/powertools/filetypes.htm. Common sense is the best general defense; making sure you can read extensions and following rules 1-3 mentioned above will keep you out of a lot of potential trouble.

Keep Updated

Be sure to do frequent updates of your anti-virus definitions. Also, there has been a steady (some would say never-ending) stream of security patches. Be sure to apply any that seem relevant to your system. See http://www.ppcug-nj.org/articles/vic_laurie/lookback.html for how to keep up. Microsoft has been trying to patch up Outlook, for example, to deal with some of these e-mail problems. See http://www.microsoft.com/technet/security/virus.asp for the latest security bulletins. Netscape users can go to http://home.netscape.com/security/notes/index.html.

Acknowledgement

My thanks go to Joel May for comments on the use of scripts in Web pages and to Sol Libes for filling me in on aspects of Windows Me.

Minutes for the General Meeting
December 11, 2000
By: Ed Weiss

At 08:07 PM, Paul opened the meeting, the first item on the agenda was the election of the new officers. Unlike the situation in Florida, we did NOT have any recounts, nor any law suits over the final numbers. And the winners are:

Paul Kurivchack - President,
Tom Carman - Vice President,
Don Arrowsmith - Secretary,
Tom Canavan - Treasurer,
John Abolins, Kim Goldenberg and Sol Libes - Members At Large

Congratulations to the new members, and those continuing to serve. Thanks to those leaving their board positions.

The next item was a listing of the schedule of programs. In January, Microsoft will be giving a presentation. In February, our own Paul and Tom will due a presentation on building your PC. (NOTE: the February meeting will be on the first Monday of the month.) And in March, we have Comcast lined up to present to the group.

Also of note, is that there will be NO board meeting this month.

The Linux SIG is still looking for a meeting place, and anyone with any ideas on places where the SIG could meet should contact John Abolins or Paul Kurivchack.

With all the business activities out of the way, the Christmas party began, and as the members sampled all the food and drink, there were many topics being discussed in different areas of the room. About 9:15 PM, Paul gathered in the badges from the remaining attendees, and the drawings for the door prizes began. Congratulations to all the winners of the door prizes. At 9:25 PM the meeting and party were closed. Thanks to all the members who stayed to help clean up the room, and put away the chairs. Happy Holidays to all..

Final minutes by Ed Weiss

Sites to Fight Scams
By: J.D. Abolins - PPCUG

Con jobs have be with us from time immemorial. Con artist move to whever opportunities present themselves. They are fast to explore ways to scam people using new technologies, such as the telephone or the Internet. Here are some helps to prevent being defrauded.

U.S. Federal Trade Commission

- "Dot Con" - Top 10 Online Scams:
http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/edcams/dotcon/index.html

- International Telephone Number Scams:
http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/conline/pubs/tmarkg/intlphon.htm

National Fraud Information Center

- http://www.fraud.com/

New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs

- http://www.state.nj.us/lps/ca/home.htm

ScamBusters.org

- http://www.scambusters.com/

General Monthly Meeting Schedule for 2001

January 8, 2001 – Monday

February 5, 2001 – Monday* - First Monday

March 12, 2001 – Monday

April 9, 2001 – Monday

May 14, 2001 – Monday

June 11, 2001 – Monday

July 9, 2001 – Monday

August 13, 2001 – Monday

September 10, 2001 – Monday

October 15, 2001 – Monday* - Third Monday

November 12, 2001 – Monday

December 10, 2001 – Monday

Note: All dates are for the second Monday of the Month except for February (Library Closed) and October (Columbus Day) falling on the second Mondays.

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Send Updates to kurivchack_p@compuserve.com for inclusion in this listing.

Consultants Corner

Meyda Online
"Meyda means Information"
J.D. Abolins
"Pro Bono" Educational Services
Specialties: Information Security, Privacy
Issues, and Web Publishing
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Consultants Corner

You can advertise your consulting business for $25 per year in addition to your normal membership fee. The text space is your or your company's name plus five lines.
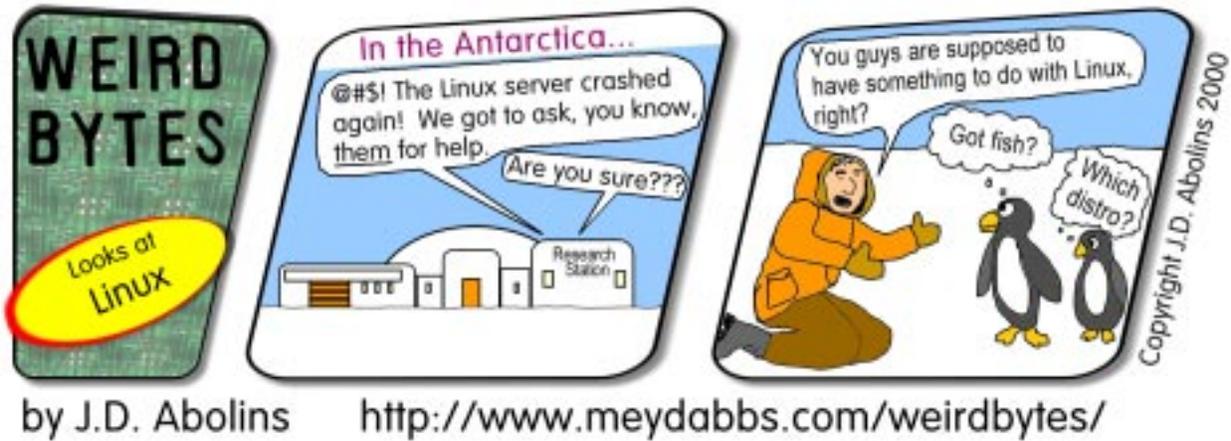

WEIRD BYTES

Looks at Linux

In the Antarctica...

@#$! The Linux server crashed again! We got to ask, you know, them for help.

Are you sure???

You guys are supposed to have something to do with Linux, right?

Got fish?

Which distro?

Copyright J.D. Abolins 2000

by J.D. Abolins   http://www.meydabbs.com/weirdbytes/

Directions To Our Meeting:

The Lawrence Library is at the corner of Business Route 1 South and Darrah Lane.

From Princeton and North: Take US Route 1 South, past the Quaker Bridge / Mercer Shopping Centers. Continue on approximately 1 3/4 mile past I295 to the Route 1 split, stay to the right to Business Route 1(Brunswick Pike). First traffic light is Darrah Lane. Library is on right side. Park in lot towards Route 1 and to the rear. Enter Library at main enterance in front. Meeting rooms A & B are located through glass door on Route 1 side of building.

From Trenton and South: Take I295 North to US Route 1 South. Library is approximately 1 3/4 miles south of I295. Continue south to Business Route 1(Brunswick Pike). First traffic light is Darrah Lane. Library is on right side. Park in lot towards Route 1 and to the rear. Enter Library at main enterance in front. Meeting rooms A & B are located through glass door on Route 1 side of building.

For additional information visit http://www.ppcug-nj.org

MICROSOFT WINDOWS ME
JANUARY 8, 2001
LAWRENCE LIBRARY

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