



## 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 upcoming meetings or joining PPCUG call 908-218-0778 to leave a message.

### Board Meetings

For Meeting Location, Date and Time, call 908-218-0778

Board meetings are open to All.

### Board Members

President:

Paul Kurivchack ..... 908-218-0778

Vice-President:

Tom Carman ..... 732-828-6055

Secretary:

Don Arrowsmith ..... 609-883-9874

Treasurer:

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Members-At-Large:

Jon Abolins ..... 609-883-8126

Vic Laurie ..... 609-924-1220

Kim Goldenberg ..... 609-671-9188

Sol Libes ..... 609-520-9024

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Member Records:

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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.

Published Monthly by: Princeton PC Users Group  
PO Box 291 Rocky Hill, NJ 08553  
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## Coming Events

### July 8, 2002 - Upgrading to Windows XP

Vic Laurie & Paul Kurivchack will cover the ins and outs of upgrading to this OS.

### August 12, 2002 - Creating Digital Movies on Your PC.

Joel May will demonstrate Pinnacle Studio for creating home movies.

### September 9, 2002 - Doug Dixon on DVD's!

Doug will discuss the technology behind DVD burning.

### October 21, 2002 - Adobe Systems (Third Monday!!)

Kiyo Toma will make a presentation on PhotoShop Elements and Acrobat

### November 18, 2002 - To Be Announced (Third Monday!!)

### December 9, 2002 - Holiday Party & Elections



## Presidents Message

by Paul Kurivchack

Well we made it through another Trenton Computer Festival and our famous Parcel Pick-Up area. The weather was fine. Not too hot or cold. No rain and only a slight breeze. Perfect flea market shopping conditions. I want to thank the members who volunteered again this year to make the weekend such a success: Bud Lewis (for his tent), Tom Carman, Ed Weiss, Marsha Duggins, Don Arrowsmith, Clarke Walker, Laxman Phadke & Son, Bob Willis and Kim Goldenberg. We collected a total of \$428.58 in donations over the two days along with \$124.00 in sales of bottle water and soda (I did learn that most people dislike Diet Pepsi very much and would choose water over diet); see full details on page five of the newsletter. People do love the service we provide.

I also notice that Saturday is the day to be at the festival. Saturday donations this year almost beat our two-day total from last. It is a shame that many flea market vendors disappeared on Sunday, leaving shoppers high and dry with very little product to purchase. This also affects our parcel pick-up area, as without items to purchase, there is nothing to leave for us to watch. TCF should really think about making the festival a long one-day event instead of a painful two days. Also there is the rumor that TCF wants to move the event back to The College of New Jersey. We'll wait and see.

May's general meeting was a real shocker. Peter Oestenwinter and Rudy Harford from Zero Surge, Inc., did an outstanding job of explaining the pitfalls of using those cheap MOV surge protectors on expensive electronic equipment. The real demo was their electric surge generator and what happens only after a couple to electrical hits to the fifty-cent MOV's. It burst into flames. Something that could possibly happen in your our home or office if power disturbances occur. See page six of the newsletter for the special PPCUG pricing for Zero Surge protectors.

I will see you all on the 10<sup>th</sup>.



# Pop Goes the Window

By: Vic Laurie - PPCUG

Anyone who uses the Internet to any extent at all has probably had the annoyance of encountering the new rage in Web advertising: pop-ups, pop-unders, and superstitials. (For more description of these terms, see <http://www.pcworld.com/features/article/0,aid,86929,00.asp> and <http://techupdate.zdnet.com/techupdate/stories/main/0,14179,2841691-1,00.html>). These and several other in-your-face techniques of aggressively shoving ads at visitors to Web pages are part of the new paradigm in Internet advertising that has a certain air of desperation about it. They almost seem to shout, "You WILL read our ad!" There is also a genre of software dubbed "spyware" that is basically a form of Trojan horse. These schemes are all part of the ongoing search to figure out how to make the Internet pay for itself. Many Internet enterprises never had a clear business model or well thought out idea about how they would make money and one after the other has folded in recent times. Internet ad revenues have plummeted and there is now a frantic search for sources of income. Even outfits like the New York Times are resorting to these methods of hucksterism by using pop-ups on their Web site.

I am aware that all of the many very useful and helpful services that one finds on the Internet have to be paid for by somebody. I accept that this means the presence of fairly heavy doses of some form of advertising. However, I am not willing to have my computer and bandwidth hijacked by some advertising gimmick. I understand that things like the banner ads that clutter up many pages are part of the price we pay for the Web. But, personally, I am drawing the line at pop-ups and their ilk. Judging from the abundance of software that has been designed for fighting these intrusive advertising methods, I am not alone. In this article, I will list some of the ways that you can use to keep the more invasive of these devices at bay.

## The Blunderbuss Defense

First, let me mention a method that some people recommend in their all-out opposition to these advertising methods. By disabling JavaScript and ActiveX in your browser settings, you can stop pop-ups and many other annoyances. However, some pop-ups serve a legitimate and useful purpose and you will interfere with the use of quite a few helpful sites. For example, Microsoft and many other sites use pop-ups to provide second windows with user-requested information. Furthermore, many other desirable or helpful functions use JavaScript or ActiveX. Completely disabling them is like the proverbial scenario of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. There is the possibility of using something such as a VBS file to turn scripting on and off, but I tried that route and found it cumbersome. A more discriminating technique is called for and there are some useful freeware programs as well as commercial ones..

## Pop-up Stoppers

If you go to a search engine such as Google and enter "pop up stopper" you get many thousands of possible references. Thus there is no difficulty in finding software designed for this pur-

pose. Trade publications have been carrying numerous articles on the subject. A few references are:

<http://www.pcworld.com/howto/article/0,aid,57988,00.asp>  
<http://msdn.microsoft.com/msdnmag/issues/02/04/ednote/ednote0204.asp>  
<http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/collection/0,collid,1064,00.asp>

If you mostly want to block pop-ups at a relatively few sites that you visit regularly, a very basic freeware program called Pow! from AnalogX (<http://www.analogx.com/contents/download/network.htm>) does the job. This program only blocks sites that you indicate after you encounter them. When you get a pop-up that you want to suppress in the future, you designate it to be blocked and it is added to a list. If you change your mind it can be removed.

If you want to block pop-ups generally, one well-regarded program is Pop-Up Stopper from PanicWare (<http://www.popupstopper.net/>) There is a free version as well as two shareware versions with more features. Another of the numerous freeware possibilities is from Free Surfer (<http://www.free.surfer.tc/mail>). A list of others is available at <http://www.webattack.com/Freeware/misctools/fwpopblock.shtml>.

Those who are willing to lay out some money can try one of the heavy-duty commercial programs like AdSubtract Pro (<http://www.adsubtract.com/>). Typically, these programs have additional functions and include defenses against some of the problems mentioned in the next sections.

## Adware and Spyware

There are many software downloads available on the Internet that call themselves freeware. Quite a few of these are, in fact, free and come without strings. In the end, however, the cost of any software has to be paid for by somebody, somehow. A burgeoning trend is to support the cost of software through advertising that is downloaded and displayed on the user's computer. Many useful and reputable programs are now distributed this way. Often they come both in a version that is "free" (but with ads) and in a version that has no ads but has to be paid for. As long as the user is told up-front about the ads and about any tracking that might be going on, this form of "adware" has a perfectly legitimate role. For example, I use the adware version of the Opera browser. I do not use the browser that often and I wouldn't pay for it but I am willing to have small ads running when I do use it. Actually, they are unobtrusive and I pay them no attention.

Problems arise, however, if the user is not warned before the installation about the ads and about any tracking or if the warning is buried in a legalese encrusted EULA (End user license agreement) or TOS (Terms of service) that nobody reads. The worst offenders are called "spyware" and contain a second component that may be running all the time in the background, not

Pop Goes the Windows continued on page 5

# Writing Inside and Out

By: Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group

I have a comfy spot on both sides of the fence. I get the pleasure of writing for a magazine that's big enough for me not to worry that I'll say something dumb. PC World provide tons of background support—first, second, and technical editors, copy editors, fact checkers, and even attorneys.

At the other end of the spectrum are user group newsletters. Writing in PIBMUG is more freewheeling. I can write about any topic, something that strikes me on the spur of the moment. (PCW wants a four-month stack of story topics.) And unlike PC World, I don't have anyone watching my language, fretting over (and often removing) my voice, and roping me into a set amount of space. PC World's Home Office column is roughly 650 words, less the "Where to Buy," the spot where I supply details so the reader can get in touch with the companies I write about.

The 650 limit is a killer. If you do any writing, you know it's more difficult to write short, especially if you have to cram in humor, content, product justification and examples, one or two links, and the essential takeaway. The rule—and you'll see this in practically all computing magazines—is giving the reader something to do after finishing the column. I got lucky when they asked me to do the Home Office online version.

All the leftover material from the print edition—and there's always plenty— found a new home.

One other thing you might take for granted in a user group newsletter is the size of the article. When I put the Prompt together, I choose from countless articles, worrying about content but not size. For instance, you'll find "The Plain Truth about Casual Software Piracy" on page six. It's long but compelling reading, and something you'd never see in a commercial magazine.

Many of you don't enjoy writing, yet need to do it for work. So I thought I'd supply a few tips, things that will help make you sound better in letters, e-mail, and reports. (BTW, you're right—this is the takeaway...)

\*\* Talk into print: When I write, I try to take what I imagine I'd say to you and put it into words. I do it by quickly typing what I think, trying not to filter anything. (Filtering—or editing—comes later when I look over what I wrote.)

\*\* Write like you talk: You've probably noticed that I use lots of contractions—for instance, you'll, we've, let's. It's pretty casual and the way I speak. My guess is many of you do the same. I can visualize Joe Bohannon saying, "well, sure, but I'm not going to do that." And that's the point—that's exactly how he sounds and it'd sound ideal in print. Get the idea?

\*\* Write short sentences. I think readers have an easier time digesting short chunks of info. They'll also be more inclined to read—and understand—what you say. If you can't do it, write

longer sentences and later, when you review your work, divide the long sentences into two or three short ones.

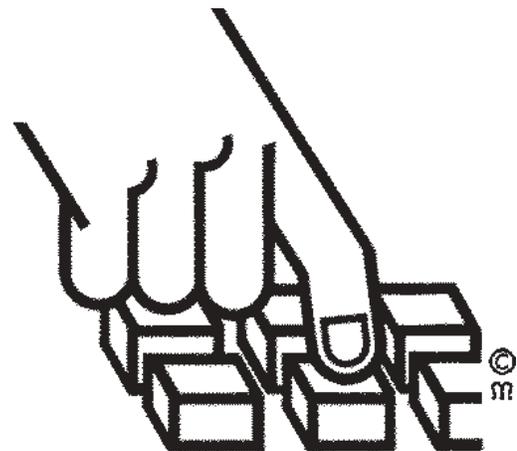
\*\* Write short paragraphs: They're the toughest thing for me to plow through. One trick is to stop every five, six, or seven sentences, take a breath, and start another paragraph.

\*\* Be active: For the longest time I couldn't figure out passive from active voice. Once I had it, writing became easier. If no one's taking responsibility, it's passive. "Mistakes were made" is passive. "We all made a few mistakes," is an active voice. It's almost impossible to write in the passive voice if you follow the next bullet.

\*\* Stay first: I write from the first person. It's always my viewpoint (yeah, I know, it's always about me). And that's the tone you oughta consider using. The reason is I can visualize you when I write and you can see me while you're reading. §

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He's also a founding member of APCUG. Check PCW's current edition at [www.pcworld.com/resource/toc/index.asp](http://www.pcworld.com/resource/toc/index.asp) and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at [www.pcworld.com/bass\\_letter](http://www.pcworld.com/bass_letter).

Editor's Note: I have included this article to give our members some tips in writing articles for PPCUG News. We need to hear about your trials and tribulations in using a PC.



just when you are running the useful application that enticed you to install the program in the first place. The purpose of the second component is to track your viewing habits on the Internet (and possibly other things). Your preferences are relayed to advertisers so that ads may be targeted specifically to what is perceived to be your interests. For example, if you visit a lot of sports sites on the Web, you may find ads for athletic equipment showing up on your computer. Many popular downloads use tracking methods and if you want to check if a program is "spyware" go to <http://www.spychecker.com>. This site also has good information about the subject in general. Other sites for information are

- <http://www.cexx.org/adware.htm>
- <http://www.pcworld.com/news/article/0,aid,63345,tk,sbx,00.asp>
- <http://grc.com/oo/news.htm>

If you have adware or spyware on your computer and want to remove it, a good freeware program is Ad-Aware from Lavasoft (<http://www.lavasoft.nu/>). Also note that these programs behave like a Trojan horse and a good firewall like ZoneAlarm will detect and block them if they try to phone out.

The question of when adware or spyware is invading your privacy or gleaning information it shouldn't is beyond the scope of this article. To some extent, it is the nature of an individual's personal psychology that decides what is private. Some people are unconcerned while others react violently to the notion of being tracked. Unfortunately, some companies have not been up-front about their tracking methods. More on privacy can be found at <http://www.nytimes.com/library/magazine/home/20000430mag-internetprivacy.html>

- <http://www.pcworld.com/resource/article.asp?aid=16444>
- <http://www.cexx.org/problem.htm>

However you may feel about the privacy issues, the practical matter is that spyware uses your computer resources and bandwidth and often causes sluggish behavior or even crashes. Some spyware like the very popular file-sharing program Kazaa will even use your idle CPU time for whatever computational purposes they see fit. Kazaa does this by means of a program by Brilliant Digital (See the story at <http://zdnet.com.com/2100-1105-873416.html>).

### Drive-by Downloads or Foistware

Not content to entice you into using their spyware by providing some useful function, some firms are now downloading stuff to your computer whether you want it or not. A popular adware (spyware?) program called "Gator" manages passwords and user IDs (but also contains a spyware module). Simply by visiting a Web site with one of Gator's ad banners you may get a pop-up that appears as a security warning with the message: "Do you accept this download?" If you click "Yes," Gator is installed. Depending on your browser security settings you may not even be asked but will receive the software automatically. Gator also does more than track your Web surfing habits. According to information at <http://www.cexx.org/gator.htm>, "... its main purpose is to load an advertising spyware module called OfferCom-

panion, which displays pop-up ads when visiting some Web sites. Gator boasts that since it's software is always running, it can spam users with "Special Offers" and other ads anywhere they go—even competitors' sites—with remarkable targeting capabilities, since it can spy on what sites the user is visiting." More on Gator and unwanted downloads is at <http://zdnet.com.com/2100-1106-877592.html>

### Toptext

Some adware is now hijacking the advertising from other sites. Even Microsoft was going to get into this game with something called "smart tags" in Windows XP until public outcry (and maybe that court case) convinced them to back off. Smart tags would turn certain words on any Web page into a link of Microsoft's choice. Something similar named "Toptext" is being loaded into many spyware programs, including Kazaa, by a company called EZula. Note that Toptext is running for all Web sites whether Kazaa is being used or not. The details can be read here

- <http://scumware.com/>
- <http://news.com.com/2100-1023-271196.html?legacy=cnet>
- <http://www.cexx.org/toptext.htm>

### Mousetrapping

Some sites just won't let you go once you are there. They disable your browser's Back and Exit functions. Either they will not let you leave or they redirect you to where they want you to go. You may be able to escape from one of these traps by using the History function. In Internet Explorer you can right-click the Back button to bring up a History dialogue or use the keyboard Ctrl + H (or just open History). See <http://www.law.gwu.edu/facweb/claw/Mousetrap1.htm> for a very persistent but harmless example and some discussion. Even History doesn't work on this one.

### TCF 2002 / 2001 Parcel Pick-Up Area

	Saturday	Sunday	Total
Donations 2002	\$331.37	\$97.21	\$428.58
Water Sales @ \$1ea	\$24.00	\$24.00	\$48.00
Soda Sales @ \$1ea	\$46.00	\$30.00	\$76.00
KGP Donation			
		Water & Soda Total	\$124.00
<b>2002 Total:</b>	<b>\$401.37</b>	<b>\$151.21</b>	<b>\$552.58</b>
	Saturday	Sunday	Total
Donations 2001	\$191.00	\$165.42	\$356.42
Water Sales @ \$1ea	\$36.00	\$18.00	\$54.00
Soda Sales @ \$1ea	\$36.00	\$18.00	\$54.00
KGP Donation			\$250.00
		Water & Soda Total	\$108.00
<b>2001 Total:</b>	<b>\$263.00</b>	<b>\$201.42</b>	<b>\$714.42</b>

## Subject: Zero Surge PPCUG Special Offer

This is a special reminder to those who attended the May 13<sup>th</sup> general meeting presentation by Zero Surge, Inc., on the benefits of MODE 1 Surge Protection vs.the MOV style surge strips. For the members who were unable to attend the meeting and would be interested in learning more about Zero Surge, Inc. and their protection products, please visit <http://www.zerosurge.com> for full details.

For those in the market for superior surge suppression, Zero Surge has made a special 10% pricing offer to the PPCUG (Also I am showing the Group quantity discount for a total of 6 or more units purchased). See the following breakdown:

Model 2R5 - 5 Amp 2 outlet unit*	\$99.00 (1 to 5)	\$89.10 (6 to 11)
Model 2R7.5 - 7.5 Amp 2 outlet unit	\$125.00 (1 to 5)	\$112.50 (6 to 11)
Model 8R7.5 - 7.5 Amp 6 outlet unit*	\$149.00 (1 to 5)	\$134.10 (6 to 11)
Model 8R15 - 15 Amp 6 outlet unit	\$199.00 (1 to 5)	\$179.12 (6 to 11)

Note: The prices above do not include the 10% discount or included 6% NJ Sales Tax.

I have asterisked two models that should be of interest to our members and our goal is to put together an order for at least six units if possible.

If you are interested in purchasing we have 60 days from May 13<sup>th</sup> to place our order. Please e-mail me at: [kurivchp@optonline.net](mailto:kurivchp@optonline.net) with your order. The PPCUG will try to place the order by the week after the June meeting. I am not collecting any money until after we place the order and are delivered.



## PARCEL PICK UP AREA PHOTOS





# PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

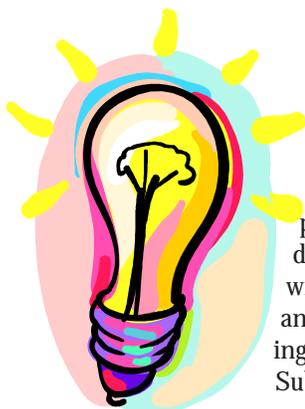
<http://www.ppcug-nj.org>

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(Last Update: June 1, 2002)

Send Updates to [kurivchp@optonline.net](mailto:kurivchp@optonline.net) for inclusion in this listing.



### IDEAS???

PPCUG News is looking for articles and software reviews. If you have a favorite software application, new CR-RW or DVD drive, digital camera or printer, write 500 to 800 words about it and we will publish it in an upcoming newsletter. Submit to: [kurivchp@optonline.net](mailto:kurivchp@optonline.net)

### Consultants Corner

#### Meyda Online

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E-mail: [jda-ir@njcc.com](mailto:jda-ir@njcc.com)

#### Consultants Corner

You can advertise your consulting business for \$25 per year in addition to your normal membership fee.

# Minutes for the General Meeting

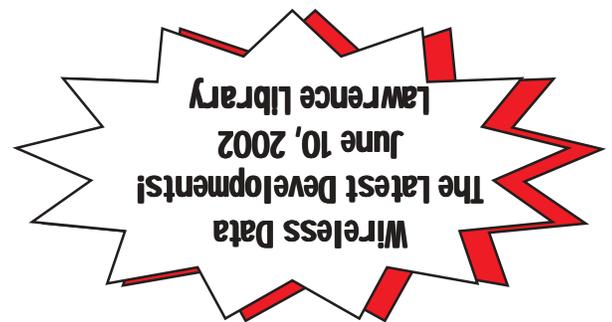
May 13, 2002

By: Don Arrowsmith

The meeting came to order at 7:52 with Paul reviewing the success of the package pickup area at TCF. Questions from the floor concerned QuickBooks Pro and GPS.

The formal program started at 8:00 with Rudy Harford and Peter Oestenwinter of Zero Surge Inc. They first showed a seven-minute clip of a broadcast news report on the safety hazards of using inexpensive power strips with surge protection. Most surge protectors use MOV (Metal Oxide Varistor) devices as the protection component(s). These devices fail destructively and can cause a fire if not part of a properly designed strip. Good units have a metal, not plastic, case and include both a fuse and a thermal cutout. As surges are a not uncommon occurrence, you are encouraged to check your strips for discoloration and melted areas of plastic casings. More information is available on their web site at <http://www.zerosurge.com>.

The Zero Surge units use a low pass filter with a large inductor instead of an MOV and claim superior performance in addition to the absence of safety issues. An elaborate surge generator was used to demonstrate the inadequacies of MOV protection versus a Zero Surge unit. It was quite a light show! Rudy and Peter brought literature (also available at the above web site) and disassembled units for inspection. They also announced both a single unit and group discount. Contact Paul if you are interested in purchasing a Zero Surge unit.



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