PPCUG*NEWS*

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Viruses, Spyware and Spam ... Oh, My!
Joel May

The biggest dangers to our computers come from outside: viruses and other intruders concealed in our e-mail and in the web pages we download. We will discuss just what these dangers are, what they can do to harm us, and how we can combat them.

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Lawrence Library
Meeting Rooms 1 & 2
US Alternate 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 imply endorsement of its programs.

In this issue

Coming Events

September 13, 2004 - PC Magazine columnist - Bill Machrone
October 18, 2004 - Safe Shopping on the Internet - Vic Laurie
November 8, 2004 - TBA
December 13, 2004 - Holiday Party and Elections

Web Link of the Month
Sol Libes

Nancy Blachman has put together a great web site (www.googleguide.com) that helps you get more out of using Google. You can learn how to better ask for a search and understand the results as well as find out how to use the special tools such as the phone book, maps, calculator, quotes, etc. A printable version in PDF format is for sale at $1.99. She'll be speaking at four events at Barnes & Noble in MarketFair, the Princeton Public Library and Sarnoff Corp. during August. All the details are at http://www.googleguide.com/talks.html.

WXP SP2

If you're using Windows XP, make sure that you obtain the second service pack (SP2) which is being released in early August. In addition to the usual vast number of bug fixes (many of them are very obscure) there are extensive changes to improve security. Numerous web sites have a lot of coverage of the changes and new features from the beta versions of SP2 (e.g., http://www.winsupersite.com/faq/xpsp2.asp). Some applications and some web sites that you visit may have problems caused by the changes.

Excel Compare

A press release received by the club describes Excel Compare 2.0 as being able to compare two Excel files and reporting any differences in contents and formulas between them. Anyone who has had to do this manually knows what a difficult and lengthy process this can be. Details on the program are at http://www.formulasoft.com/. The producers are offering a 30% discount off the regular price to PPCUG members by using a discount coupon code of 45GT-88RR-UZ67.

Office 2003

Service Pack 1 has been released for all versions of Office 2003. The lengthy list of changes is available at http://support.microsoft.com/?kbid=842532. SP1 is available through Office Update or by direct download at http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=9C51D3A6-7CB1-4F61-837E-5F938254FC47&displaylang=en.

If you've hesitated in upgrading to Office 2003, you should review the qualifications for the Student and Teacher version. This version includes the core Office products: Excel, Word, Outlook, and PowerPoint. List price is $149 but is frequently discounted to $120 or less. Each purchase includes licenses for installation on three computers in your home!

To qualify for this edition see http://www.microsoft.com/office/editions/prodinfo/students/doyouqualify.mspx. This page list the following five categories of people who are eligible: A full-time or part-time student currently enrolled at an accredited K-12 education institution organized and operated exclusively for the purpose of teaching its students. A K-12 student under the age of 18 attending a legally recognized home-schooling program. A full-time or part-time student who has completed K-12 educational requirements and is enrolled and taking at least six credit hours in an accredited institution of higher education. A full-time or part-time faculty or staff member of an accredited educational institution, working at least 20 hours a week and who has duties related primarily to the education of the institution's students. A household member of a person who qualifies.

Recycling Old Electronics Items

Now through Labor Day, bring your unwanted PC, laptop, printer, handheld, cell phone – or any other qualifying product – to your nearest Office Depot. They'll send them to HP's recycling plants where they'll be processed into material that will be used to make new products. Bring in products made by any vendor – not just HP. Best of all, this service is provided absolutely FREE of charge.

Qualifying Products: PCs, Mice, Keyboards, Handhelds/PDAs, Monitors, Flat Panel Displays, Laser & Inkjet Printers, Scanners, All-in-Ones, Digital Cameras, Fax

Machines, Desktop Copiers, Cell Phones, TVs (27" and smaller only, no consoles), TV/VCR combos (27" and smaller).

Offer is limited to **one product** solution, such as a PC, monitor, mouse and keyboard or one individual product, such as a PDA, **per customer per day**. No TV consoles, furniture, laptop batteries, rechargeable batteries or electric appliances, please. Program available in the Continental U.S. only.

The closest Office Depot to Princeton is on Route One in New Brunswick. (Note that the former Lawrenceville store is closed.) More details and directions to this and other store locations are available at http://www.officedepot.com/. Look for a green square link on the bottom left of the home page.

Printer Tips
Vic Laurie

Perhaps the computer peripheral that is used most often is the printer. Many people use the printer with whatever default settings they happen to have without ever thinking about changing anything. These standard settings are generally good enough for many purposes but sometimes there is an advantage to tweaking the printer configuration. The major brands come with software specific to a particular model but there are a number of generic Windows printer settings also. In this article, I will discuss some of these and some printer tips.

Spooling and Advanced Settings

To decide what printer settings you might be interested in changing, it helps to understand the actual process that occurs when you hit the "Print" button. Printing is a slow process, and generally it is not desirable for the whole computer (or the application controlling the printing) to be tied up while a print job is being executed. So that the computer can continue to go about its business while printing is in process, something called "spooling" is used. What this means is that a temporary place on the hard drive, the "spool", is set aside to hold the information that is to be printed. The term dates back to the days of yore when tapes were used. Files are first sent to the spool and from there can be sent to the printer without interfering with other processes on the computer. Another advantage of spooling is that print jobs do not have to run immediately. Maybe you forgot to turn the printer on or you want to do the printing later when you are at lunch. The desired print job (or jobs) can sit in the spool until it's time for the actual physical printing.

To see the spool settings (Windows XP) go to **Start-Control Panel-Printers and Other Hardware-Printers and Faxes** or (Windows 98) **Start-Settings-Printers and Faxes**. A panel with an icon for each installed printer will open. Most home systems will have only one installed printer. Right-click on the computer icon and choose "Properties" from the context menu. Figure 1 shows an example of the properties sheet that opens.
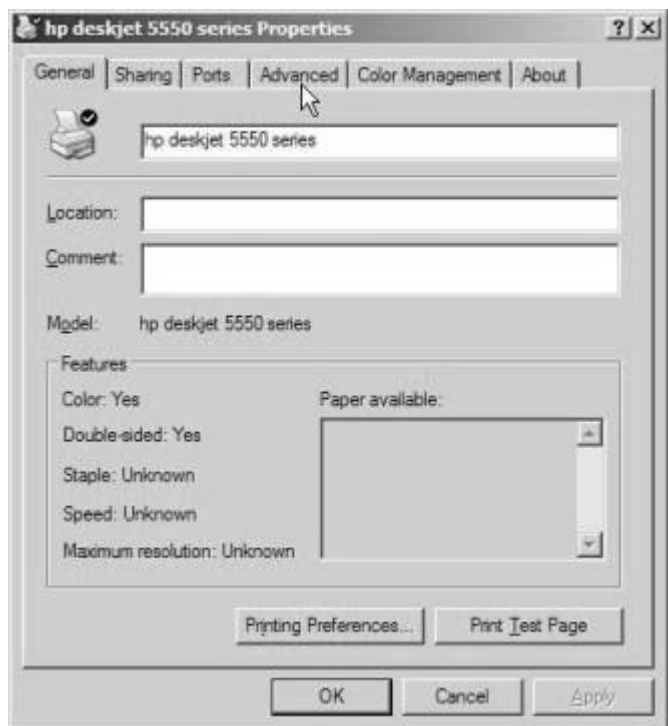

Figure 1. Printer properties sheet

Click on the "Advanced" tab (for Windows 98/Me "Details-Spool settings"). This brings up the box shown in Figure 2.
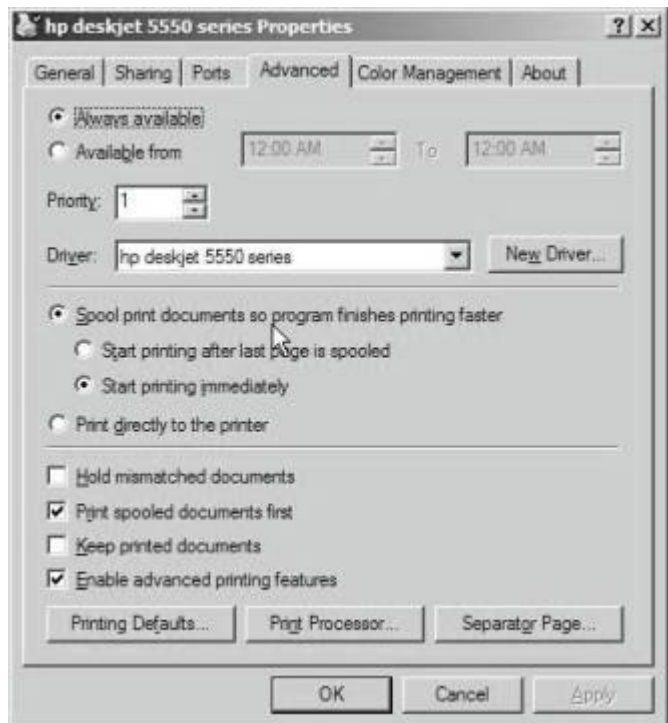

Figure 2. Spool and advanced settings

The default setting is to use the spool but there is also a setting "Print directly to the printer." You might choose this setting if you have a lot of jobs waiting in the spool and

want to print something else in a hurry. Unless you are short on disk space, you can use "Start printing after last page is spooled". Figure 2 has selected the other setting "Start printing immediately." Most people can stick with their default settings. If you have a substantial printing job and want to do it at some later time, Windows XP allows for scheduling of printing. Select the radio button "Available from" and pick a time. Figure 3 shows a setting for 12- 2 PM. To return the printer to print on demand, select the radio button "Always available."
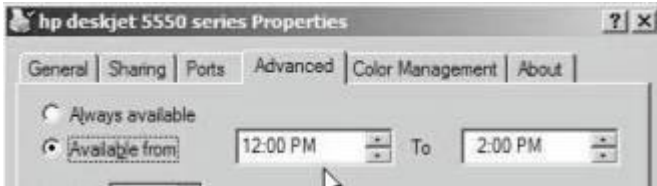
Figure 3. Scheduling printing

Depending on your usage patterns and the type of printer that you have, you may wish to explore the other advanced settings.

Print to file
There is a special kind of printer that can be useful for obtaining a record of certain kinds of text-based data. Actually, it is not a physical printer at all, although it is installed in the same way as a regular printer. It uses the driver for a generic text-only printer to create a file of some collection of data that you wish to copy. I find this facility useful for making a file containing the output of certain types of Windows applications where the ability to create a text file directly is missing. I also use it to capture Web page output that is not available except through a print command. This capability is especially useful when there would be a large number of pages to actually print. Instead of a paper print-out a file with extension PRN is created. This file can be read with Word or Notepad. Some of the formatting of the original may be missing but the information is all there.

To install go to **Control Panel-Printers and Other Hardware** (or to **Start-Printers and Faxes**) and click on "Add a printer." You will get the Add Printer Wizard. Click "Next", then "Local Printer Attached to This Computer." Uncheck the box that says "Automatically Detect and Install my Plug and Play Printer". Click "Next." Select the drop-down menu "Use the Following Port" and scroll to "FILE: (Print To File)". Click Next. In the left box named "Manufacturer", choose "Generic." In the right box named "Printers", choose "Generic / Text Only." Click Next. Give the printer a name and make sure NOT to make this the default printer.

Quick tips
To conclude, here are several short tips.

A printer troubleshooter is installed in more recent versions of Windows. Go to the Help function and search "Printing Troubleshooter" in WinXP or "Print Troubleshooter" in Win98SE.

Inkjet printers have their own shut-down procedure and should not be turned off by a power strip switch. They should always be turned off by using the power switch that is on the printer. Otherwise the ink cartridge may not be capped and parked properly.

It is not necessary to open your word processor or other software application in order to print a document. Right-click on the desired file and choose "Print" from the context menu. The application that is appropriate for the document (as determined by the file extension) will automatically be used to print. Multiple file selections (of the same type) also work.

Web pages may contain information that you want to print out. Often, however, the whole Web page with all its graphics, ads, and banners is not what you want. To print only the part that is of interest, select it so that it is highlighted and go to the browser menu **File-Print**. In the dialog that comes up, find "Page range" and click "Selection." You can then print the selected part of the Web page without all those ads.

The Best Shareware
If you're looking for some good quality shareware, the Shareware Industry Awards Foundation (www.siaf.org) has recently announced the winners of the thirteenth annual Shareware Industry Awards. These awards are voted on by the public at Internet download sites like CNET, Simtel, Tucows, and the Web sites of hundreds of software developers. Awards were given in eighteen categories:
- Best Overall Utility - WinZip by WinZip Computing, Inc. (www.winzip.com)
- Best Application - askSam by askSam Systems (www.asksam.com)
- Best Graphics Program or Utility - Paint Shop Pro by Jasc Software, Inc. (www.jasc.com)
- Best Desktop Enhancement - Microangelo Creation by Eclipsit Corporation (http://microangelo.us/tour)
- Best Photo Program or Utility - ThumbBuddy by Lincoln Beach Software (www.lincolnbeach.com)
- Best Application Using .NET - SourceGear Vault by SourceGear, LLC. (www.sourcegear.com)
- Best Utility Using .Net - FILEhand Search by Filehand, LLC. (www.filehand.com)
- Best Sound Program or Utility - Blaze Media Pro by Mystik Media (www.mystikmedia.com)
- Best Vertical Market Program or Utility - Help and Manual by EC Software (www.ec-software.com)
- Best Business Application or Utility - InnoSetup by Jordan Russell (www.jrsoftware.com)
- Best Educational Program or Game - Cherokee Trails by Pharos Games (www.pharosgames.com)
- Best Hobby or Personal Interest Program - Word Search Construction Kit by Insight Software Solutions, Inc. (www.wordsearchkit.com)
- Best Internet Enhancement or Utility - FeedDemon by

Bradbury Software (www.bradsoft.com)
- Best Internet Communication - Trillian by Cerulean Studios (www.ceruleanstudios.com)
- Best Web Enhancement or Utility - The Bat! by RITLABS (www.ritlabs.com)
- Best Non-Action Game - Jig Jag! Gold by JigJag Ltd. UK (www.jigjag.com)
- Best Action/Arcade Game - Snood by Word of Mouse Games (www.snood.com)
- Best Program or Utility for PDAs - TealDoc by Teal Point Software (www.tealpoint.com)

How Does One Track
The Origin of Spam?**
John Brewer,
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Spammers are ingenuous people. They hide the origin of the spam and are masters of obfuscation. Recently, litigation has been filed under federal law. It is interesting to investigate how the spammers were identified. A recent article in the New York Times turns on the light regarding this method of tracking.

"The government's first criminal case under a new law outlawing some types of spam e-mails was based on low-tech investigative methods: Authorities followed the money. Investigators said Thursday they tracked defendants by purchasing a weight-loss product for $59.95 and waited to see who collected the money."

"The cyber scam artists who exploit the Internet for commercial gain should take notice," said Jeffrey G. Collins, the U.S. attorney in Detroit. Federal law now makes it a felony to use falsehood and deception to hide the origin of the spam messages hawking your fraudulent wares."

Court papers described a nearly inscrutable puzzle of corporate identities, bank accounts and electronic storefronts used to send hundreds of thousands of e-mail sales pitches for fraudulent weight-loss products. The FTC said angry consumers forwarded more than 490,000 e-mails from the operation from January until April -- more than from any other spam outfit worldwide during the same period. Beales called it a dubious distinction."

CNet News reported that "according to court documents, the four men are accused of generating hundreds of thousands of different e-mails that hid their identities and advertised a weight loss patch. The e-mails were sent out under a variety of company names, including AIT Herbal, Avatar Nutrition and Phoenix Avatar, identified collectively as the Avatar Companies. The e-mails were allegedly sent to millions of e-mail accounts over the course of several years."

However, the CNet article also reported that the federal law has not eliminated spam and that the volume of spam has actually increased since the implementation of the law.

"Despite the existence of Can-Spam, companies that monitor the volume of junk e-mail believe that the legislation has done little to discourage the distribution of spam. E-mail service company MessageLabs reported that more than 67 percent of all e-mail sent in April 2004 was considered spam, up from 59.9 percent in February and 52.8 percent in March, when volume temporarily dipped. The Feds bringing the heat against these spammers and their clients is a great victory for everyone who's been victimized by spam," said Mark Sunner, chief technology officer for New York-based MessageLabs. "At the same time, with spam volumes increasing 30 percent since the Can-Spam law went into effect, there is a whole new contingent of spammers in operation. These contemporary spammers are now dressing up their messages so they appear to be legitimate. In spite of effective lawsuits, complaints and arrests, spammers are still finding ways to beat the system."

The Federal Trade Commission announced in an April 29 news release that "that the deceptive claims violate the FTC Act and that the spoofing and failure to provide an opt-out capability violate provisions of the recently enacted CAN-SPAM Act. At the FTC's request, U.S. District Court Judge James F. Holderman entered a Temporary Restraining Order requiring an end to illegal spamming and deceptive product claims and freezing the defendants' assets.

In addition, the FTC announced a second action against an Australian company, Global Web Promotions Pty Ltd., an Australian company that the FTC alleges is responsible for massive amounts of spam in the United States." Global Web not only advertised a diet patch similar to the one in Phoenix Avatar, it also claimed its human growth hormone products "HGH" and "Natural HGH" could "maintain [a user's] appearance and current biological age for the next 10 to 20 years." Experts cited by the FTC dispute the claims, and the FTC alleged the claims are false. The products do not contain growth hormone of any sort, according to papers filed with the court. The products are shipped to consumers from within the United States. The diet patch was sold for $80.90 and the HGH products cost $74.95.

"In both cases, the FTC introduced as evidence thousands of examples of the defendants spoofing a wide array of victims, including AOL, Microsoft Network, and other companies and individuals. Spoofing involves forging headers on e-mail to make it appear that they came from an innocent third party. Undeliverable e-mail is returned to the innocent victim, often flooding their servers and interfering with normal operations. This process not only is prohibited by the CAN-SPAM Act, it also has worked real hardship on innocent businesses."

"The FTC charged Global Web Promotions Pty Ltd., Michael John Anthony Van Essen, and Lance Thomas Atkinson with violations of the FTC Act and the CAN-SPAM Act. The FTC has filed a motion requesting that the Court issue a Temporary Restraining Order barring further illegal spam and stopping illegal sales and shipment of products.

The Global Web Promotions Pty case was brought with the assistance of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the New Zealand Commerce Commission."

Finally, it looks like some spammers may be headed for the slammer. No one will be disappointed and maybe prosecution of slammers will give future spammers pause to think about their activity … or will they just become more clever in their pursuit of the dark side?

John Brewer practices law in Oklahoma City, is a member of the Governor's and Legislative Task Force for E-Commerce, and enjoys issues relating to eBusiness and cyberspace.

*** There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.*

Airline Flight Status

If you have to pick up someone at an airport, you want to make sure that you're there at the right time. Airlines seem to have over-estimated their flight times so as to not appear to be arriving late. That means that you can either be too early or too late in getting to the airport. Most airlines include flight status pages that are accessible from their home web pages. If you'd like to expand beyond that here are some places to look:

Flight Tracker gives a Java-based graphical display of any flight's location along with it's model, flight path, take off and arrival times, airspeed, direction, and altitude. http://www.cheaptickets.com/trs/cheaptickets/flighttracker/flight_tracker_graphic.xsl.

FlightArrivals.com provides departure and arrival times for flights by any airline. This site also provides a list of delayed and rescheduled flights for a given airport. An airport status page will show conditions at a given or all airports.

AirportMonitor (www.passur.com/sites.htm) presents a map centered on an airport with a variable range, similar to a radar display. On the map are color-coded plane icons representing flights arriving or departing. In this area, Newark and JFK are available. If you click on a "plane", then it's altitude and equipment type are listed. Note: This isn't really useful to monitor a specific flight but it's very interesting to watch!

If you have a really bad experience on a flight and would like to file a complaint with the DOT, see http://airconsumer.ost.dot.gov/problems.htm.

All unattributed articles are solely the fault of the editor.