

August 2005 Volume 21 Number 8

PPCUG NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

Vic Laurie

Monday, August 8, 2005

Make Your Computer Run Faster and Better

Ways to make a PC start and run more quickly, tips on using Windows more efficiently, and ways to speed up Internet connections will be discussed.

Victor Laurie received a Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry from Harvard University. He then joined the Chemistry Faculty, first at Stanford University, and subsequently at Princeton University. He began using computers as a research tool in 1956 and has been using them for a variety of purposes ever since. Now retired, he lectures frequently on computer topics and is especially interested in encouraging Senior Citizens to use computers.

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.*

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Coming Events:

August 8 —Vic Laurie on Make Your Computer Run
Faster and Better
September 12—Chris Jarocha-Ernst on Creating Web
Pages with Netscape Composer
September 13 —Ira Fuchs on Open Source Software
October 17—TBA
November 14—TBA

About PPCUG

General Meetings

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

7:00 PM: Social Time / Tech Corner

7:30 PM: Meeting comes to Order

7:45 PM: Featured presentation

For information about upcoming meetings or joining PPCUG, see:

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

or email us at:

ppcug.nj@gmail.com

(Please include "OK" in the subject line.)

Board Meetings

Board meetings are open to all members. Notice of an upcoming meeting will be posted on the web site.

Board Members

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2005 Annual Dues

Dues are \$40 per calendar year with a mailed newsletter or \$20 per year with online access to the newsletter. New members pay \$3.25 or \$1.75 per month times the number of months remaining in the current year.



Minutes of the July Meeting

Clarke started the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

There was a question from the audience about a kid's dorm room that had an Ethernet connection into the school network. Can one plug in a wireless router and then connect wirelessly from a PC? Paul says yes, today's routers are smart and will configure themselves.

Since Jen Clausen's plane was delayed, Sol gave his "Creating an Animated Slide Show" presentation that was originally scheduled for August. Sol started at quarter to 8 and first played some videos that he recorded from TV using Hauppauge which costs about \$70.

Microsoft includes Movie Maker with XP. It is designed for creating movies but it does a great job at creating slide shows. For example, it allows you to have transitions between slides. One can also download Photo Story 3 (PS3) from the Microsoft site for creating slide shows.

PS3 utilizes a wizard format facilitating creation of an animated slide show with zooming (Ken Burns effect). It has good built-in help. However, PS3's photo editor is limited. It is best to edit pictures with a photo editor before bringing them into PS3. PS3 can work with a wide variety of image file formats including JPEG. You can add text to slides but not create title slides. Movie Maker has better title slide options. You can include a narration for each slide. You can also add background music MP3

files or use music included with PS3. You can send the slide show as an E-Mail attachment - it reduces the file size and the resolution. Once you save your work in viewable format, it's not editable. You can save it as a project file for re-editing.



Sol Libes by Tom Carmen

Microsoft has a free download called "Microsoft Producer". It utilizes wizards for creating slide shows using the latest version of Power Point. To see movies that Sol has created, go to <http://www.libes.com/sol/movies/>

Jen Clausen, the scheduled speaker for the evening, arrived from Lincoln, Nebraska at 9:05 PM; a significant number of meeting attendees had left by that time. Jen was accompanied by Sonya, one of the magazine's designers. Jen gave a condensed version of her presentation. Some of the points that she made are given here. Smart Magazine now



Jen Clausen by Tom Carmen

offers free Technical Support to subscribers. Their toll free number, 800-368-8304, goes to English speaking staff in Lincoln, NE. They also publish 1) PC Today which is geared to Mobile Technology and the business traveler, 2) Computer Power User for the power user, and 3) CE Lifestyles which is geared towards women. All these are available on the sandhills.com site to subscribers. There is also a great search engine on the site and they give subscribers a personal library in which you can save as many articles as you please. If you wish to subscribe, go through their User Group section to get credit for PPCUG. Jen had some door prizes and offered subscriptions at a reduced price during the meeting. After great technical difficulty, I did obtain a copy of Jen's presentation. Let me know if you are interested in seeing it. However, it's about 80 MB even zipped.



President's Message

July's meeting was a double header. Late in the morning I received a call from Jen Clausen informing me that her flight to Newark had been cancelled. She was in the process of rebooking but did not think she would be able to get to or meeting site by 7:30 p.m.

Fortunately I was able to reach Sol Libes who was ready to give his presentation originally scheduled for August. If you missed Sol's presentation he has provide the bulk of it in his article for this newsletter.

This meant we needed a presenter for August. Again we are fortunate to have many talented members ready to share their knowledge. Vic Laurie offer to give a talk on Speeding Up Your Computer for August.

Late July and August turned out to be hectic times for me so I apologize for this issue being late.

- Clarke Walker



Book Review

Reviewed by Kim Goldenberg
Member of the Princeton PC User Group

Linux Desktop Garage

Author: Susan Matteson
Publisher: Prentice-Hall Professional Technical Reference; (2005)
ISBN: 0-13-149419-8
352 Pages; \$29.99 US
www.phptr.com
www.snerf.com/linuxdesktopgarage
Part of the Garage Series; Eben Hewett, Series Editor.

Prentice-Hall has started a new technical book series called the Garage Series. This is the garage where you set up your workshop and tinker with things your own way. This particular garage is the Linux Desktop Garage, where you find information and hints on how to work with the Linux and its desktop and make it do what you want it to do. The book is well laid out and while she does not go into a lot of detail on any one subject, the author does give you enough information to go off and experiment on your own, with pointers to web sites that give you more information on a given subject. There is even a Live CD of Gnoppix included with the book, so you can start tinkering right away.

The thirteen chapters in this book to cover everything from what is Linux and how does you get it, to how to set up and use it. The first chapter acquaints you with Linux and various distributions. Susan Matteson selected to focus on the Mandrake (KDE) and Fedora (Gnome) distributions; all of the suc-

ceeding chapters cover each. After going over some installation steps, the second chapter takes you into an overview of the Linux desktop, pointing out the differences and similarities between Gnome and KDE, as well as login managers, files managers, virtual desktops, and terminal sessions. The next two cover system tools, utilities, and preferences. The remainder cover Internet access, e-mail and newsgroups, instant messages, chat, time scheduling, office suites, photos and graphics, multimedia, games and lastly running Windows applications with Wine or virtual system managers like Win4Lin or VMWare.

This book is designed for someone who has some computer experience and wants to figure out what this Linux thing is. It's easy to read and has plenty of notes on important things to watch for and how-to lists for more complex procedures. She even gives her opinions on some of the subjects in each chapter at the end. Links to the web sites are included at the end of each chapter as well as on the included CD-ROM, and the book web site (above).

While, in this age of consolidation and change, it is hard to have a book such as this not go stale relatively quickly, basic concepts do not change as fast. Also, the author does keep the book web site up to date; she posted comments about the change of Mandrake to Mandriva, as well as the recent release of Fedora Core 4. She also has an assortment of pointers to other items of interest including her own blog.

I found the book very well thought out and well written. I enjoyed it and I would recommend the book whole heartedly. Current Windows or beginning Linux users might get the most out of it, but more experienced Linux users might get something out of it, and the price makes it an attractive buy. The best part is that, other than the first couple of chapters, nothing is ordered in such a way that you have to have read an earlier section to understand the later ones. So, take your tools out to your Linux garage and have some fun tinkering with it.!



Link of the Month

Have you discovered a useful link? Then share it with the members of the P PC UG.



Program Review

Reviewed by Sol Libes
Member of the Princeton PC User Group

Windows Media Encoder 9

Another free download from Microsoft

Microsoft has made available another free application for creating media. In the December newsletter I wrote about two other free media applications from Microsoft: Movie Maker 2 and Photo Story 3.

The application is “Windows Media Encoder 9.” It requires Windows XP and Windows Media Player 9. It is intended for content producers who want to capture streaming video. One can capture computer screens, portions of screens, and streaming content from the computer screen or from a digital camcor-

der. It can be downloaded from <http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/9series/encoder/default.aspx>

If you have ever used the Print Screen key to capture a screen, or paid applications such as Snagit to capture a portion of a screen then try WME9. Even better, if you capture screen activity using a paid program such as Camtasia, you should definitely try WME9.

WME9 is very powerful. It can create high-quality multi-channel sound and high-definition video. You can add voice and music content. If capturing from a camcorder you can control the camcorder from within WME. Detailed information on how to do this is on the website listed above.

The program creates a WMV file which can then be sent as an email attachment or burned to a CD or DVD. It can also be uploaded to a web server or a streaming media server. It can also create a file on a Pocket PC PDA. Video quality can be optimized for means of distribution.

Take a look at it.



Windows: Better Safe (Mode) Than Sorry

by Gabe Goldberg

APCUG Advisor and Columnist, AARP Computers and Technology Website

Though the Windows operating system isn't usually dangerous, it includes a special "Safe Mode". This is a handy way to boot a PC to investigate and fix problems. You may have read advice about when to use this, and even how to run it. But scarce and fragmented Safe Mode information can make it sound more exotic than it is.

Windows XP books' indexes provided surprisingly few entries for "Safe Mode". I found the best coverage in two O'Reilly books [www.oreilly.com], "Windows XP Pro: The Missing Manual" and "Windows XP Home Edition: The Missing Manual". Naturally, Google found a gazillion hits. But they're mostly "just the facts" write ups targeting people who already know "what" and "why" and just need "how" information. So this article provides background for this built-in Windows facility.

Over the years, as it became more powerful and reliable, Windows grew significantly from its slender 1992-era Version 3.1 self. There's no free lunch; learning new tricks required more software. But that complexity gets in the way when problems occur. Just as doctors rarely diagnose patients through heavy winter coats, Windows needs to shed layers to expose problems' causes.

Safe Mode slims Windows down, only loading and running specific pieces needed for basic operation. So your video display looks strange in Safe Mode because Windows doesn't load the monitor's specific driver program. This lets you recover from problems caused by buggy drivers you may have just installed. There are other restrictions: you likely can't get online and may not be able to print. But Safe Mode lets you perform tests, fix problems, and install/uninstall programs.

If you think your PC may have a virus or spyware, it's worth installing the antidote in Safe Mode, since some malware prevents installing anti-virus software. If installed anti-virus software can't remove a virus, Safe Mode may let it succeed. (Some experts recommend always running virus/spyware scans un-

der Windows in Safe Mode.) If defragmenting your hard drive [www.aarp.org/learntech/computers/howto/Articles/a2004-06-16-defrag.html] never finishes, Safe Mode may remove programs that keep interrupting it. And it lets you erase files that Windows normally says are in use (though only do this when you're sure what you're doing).

Windows XP defines two kinds of user accounts: "administrator" and "limited". An administrator can install/remove software, change settings, etc., while a limited user can only run programs and use facilities. Even if only one account is defined, a secret companion called Administrator is available. Booting in Safe Mode lets you access this account, handy when normal accounts won't work -- for example, uninstalling software that doesn't want to leave.

Enter Safe Mode by repeatedly pressing F8 as your PC boots, just after BIOS information displays; then select Safe Mode from the options list. Leaving Safe Mode is simple -- just reboot via the Start button and your usual procedure; Windows will return looking normal again, not holding a grudge for being run in diagnostic Mode.

Here's an important point: It's worth practicing booting into Safe Mode when you're relaxed and your PC is working properly. Consider running a PC in Safe Mode to be like starting your car's engine with the hood up at a service station. It's routine; there's nothing alarming about it. But just as you wouldn't want to open the hood for the first time (Where *is* that latch release?) when something is wrong with your car, you shouldn't first use Safe Mode when you're already worried about a PC problem.

And a PS: It's sometimes hard picking between a dozen competing books on a topic. A helpful technique for evaluating choices is searching for a few topics -- like Safe Mode -- in the books' indexes and judging them on coverage.

This article appeared originally on AARP's Computers and Technology Web site, [www.aarp.org/computers]. (c) AARP 2004/2005.



Dual-Core Processors Are Coming!

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Both Intel and Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) are screaming, "Dual-Core Processors are Coming." They say they are the future of microprocessors for computers. With both companies planning to introduce these processors in the next few months it is important to understand the significance of this development.

So what is a dual-core processor? Basically it is two microprocessors on the same integrated circuit or chip. Having more than one processor in a computer has been around for a long time. It is normal for servers to have them. Multiprocessor workstations (high end desktops) are used mostly for scientific, engineering and digital content creation for TV and movies. Dual-core is not Intel's hyperthreading that

is on its Pentium 4s, which lets the operating system think it has two processors rather than one. In a dual-core processor there are two actual processors, each one having its own L1 & L2 caches.

Why are we going to dual-core processors? One of the main reasons is heat. The higher a processor's clock speed, the more heat it produces. The 3.6 GHz Pentium 4 did have heat problems. Of course what we have been doing is just put more than one processor on a motherboard to increase performance beyond what you can get with a single processor (The general rule has been that adding a second processor improves computer speed by 60% over a single processor of the same speed). However, to make this more cost effective, similar, use less space, and reduce power requirements putting two processors together on one chip is better. This is especially true in the desktop and notebook markets. As we move to high-definition TV resolution video on computers the need for the average computer to have very high processing speed will appear, leading to dual-core processor computers being dominant a few years from now. But can you upgrade your current system to a dual-core processor? If you have an AMD socket 939 motherboard you can upgrade to an AMD Athlon 64 dual-core processor with only a BIOS upgrade. The same is true for AMD Opteron socket 940 motherboards for Opteron dual-core processors. Intel said last fall that some Intel LGA 775 motherboards would be able to use their dual-core processors, called "Pentium D", but they now say the first generation of them will have to use a modified LGA 775 socket. This of course means getting a new motherboard.

For an application program to take advantage of multiprocessor systems both the operating system and the particular application you are running have to have the ability to use more than one processor (multi-threaded program). If the operating system is able to take advantage of more than one processor, but the applications you are running are not; you may get different applications running on different processors, but each will only use one processor. Windows 98 & ME are designed for only one processor, so they can only use one processor even though there are two processors on one chip, real or virtual. Windows XP Home can use only one processor chip, but up to two processors on that chip. Windows XP Professional is designed to use up to 2 processor chips and up to 2 processors on each chip. Novell's SUSE Linux is already ready for dual core processors, and Red Hat Linux soon will be. Both are multithreaded and multiprocessor chip operating systems.

Most current multithreaded application programs are mid-high end scientific, engineering, CAD/CAM and digital content creation programs. This includes video editing and 2D and 3D animation and image creation/editing programs. However there are some home applications that already have this multithreading capability, such as the Adobe Premiere Elements video-editing program. The first programs for the home user to go multithreading should be content creation/editing, multimedia, and games. There seems to be an expectation by Intel that the transition over to most programs being multithreaded will be three years from now. However, some software companies base the licensing fees of some or all of their programs by the number of processors using the program. The question then becomes will software companies start charging licensing fees per processor core on the current per processor chip? Right now it looks like the trend says no. Microsoft has already said for its programs that are licensed on a per processor basis it will continue doing so and not go to a per processor core basis. Also to consider in upgrading both Intel and AMD systems you may have software you have to activate that logs the system components. Upgrading processors and motherboards can cause these programs to say that this is now a new computer you are running the program on, which you are not authorized to do, and refuse to run. This could include your operating system. Check with your program's publisher/manufacturer to see what their policy on this is. Home and office use policies effectively have been known to be different.

So when will these marvelous dual-core processors appear? For Intel it will be the second quarter of

2005. For AMD it will be mid-2005 for the high level Opterons and second half of 2005 for the desktop Athlon 64s. As normal the price should originally be high, but then drop significantly over time.

We are moving this year to dual core processors. They will improve the speed of computers, and reduce the related heat and power requirement issues. They will be originally for those high-end power users, but over the next few years they could easily become the norm. They will be in a computer store near you later this year.

Timothy Everingham is CEO of Timothy Everingham Consulting in Azusa, California. He is also Chair of the Los Angeles Chapter of ACM SIGGRAPH. He is also part-time press in the areas of high technology, computers, video, audio, and entertainment/media and has had articles published throughout the United States and Canada plus Australia, England, & Japan. Further information can be found at <http://home.earthlink.net/~teveringham>



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