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PPCUG NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

Creative Labs Personal Computer Products

Tom Kirk

Monday, December 11, 2006, 7:30 p.m.

Tom will demonstrate products from Creative Labs (<http://www.creative.com>), a worldwide leader in Digital Entertainment products for Personal Computers and mobile devices. Creative Labs is the manufacturer of a well-known wide range of products for both home users and professionals. These include well known products such as the Sound Blaster audio products, Zen audio/video mobile devices, Creative Webcams, E-MU professional audio products, Cambridge SoundWorks sound systems, etc.

Tom Kirk is, and for 10 years has been, a Creative Labs Senior Marketing Associate. He provides technical training and support to the distribution and retail outlets in NJ/PA. Prior to that, he was with Logitech, another well-known manufacturer of Personal Computer products.

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 Schedule

January 8, 2007 ----- Joel May - Using Removable Storage:
Cassette Tapes to UTDs
February 5 ----- Douglas Dixon—Portable Travel devices:
GPS Mapping
March 12 ----- Joe Perignat—Computer Security
April 10 ----- Vic Laurie—Windows Vista Now or Later?
April 27, 28, 29, 2007 ---Trenton Computer Festival at TCNJ

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

President:

Clarke Walker 609-883-5262

Vice-President:

Tom Carman 732-828-6055

Secretary:

vacant

Treasurer:

Judge Landis 609-737-2997

Members-At-Large:

Al Axelrod 609-737-2827

Kim Goldenberg 609-631-9140

Paul Kurivchack 908-218-0778

Vic Laurie 609-924-1220

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Paul Kurivchack 908-218-0778

Newsletter Editor:

Clarke Walker 609-883-5262

Program Coordinator:

Sol Libes 609-520-9024

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Joe Budelis 609-921-3867

2006 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 November Meeting

The meeting started at 7:30 p.m. by President Clarke Walker.



The feature presenter was Hank Kee. Hank taught us how to access computers from a remote location over the Internet. He did a live demonstration by access a computer in his wife's kitchen.

Hank's notes on his presentation can be found at [Remote Computing](#).

Hank Kee by Judge Landis



Pictures from the November Meeting

by Judge Landis, judge@alumni.princeton.edu

Member of the Princeton PC Users Group





President's Message



I want to thank all the Officers, Board Members and Members for another year with the Club. And a special tahnks to our Presenters.

It has been a quiet year but with Windows Vista coming out next year we will have a lot to look forward to or to avoid.

Enjoy the Holidays and I hope you and your computer get some great presents.

- Clarke Walker



Link of the Month

Clarke—I have been comparing photo sharing sites on the web. In the process I have discovered software that does an excellent job of printing photos. Kodak makes its Easyshare software available to anyone for free. It is meant to be used to upload photos from a digital camera to you computer and then to their Kodak Gallery site. If you have a Kodak camera and/or Kodak printer it will fine tune itself when you use the One Touch option and print your photos at home.

<http://www.kodak.com/>

http://www.kodak.com/global/en/service/downloads/dln_ekn026079.jhtml?pq-path=4509

In October they offered an add-on that allows One Touch to be optimized with printers from other manufacturers. I have a Kodak Z650 and an Epson R320 printer.

<http://www.kodak.com/global/en/digital/inkjet/oneTouch/oneTouchIntro.jhtml>

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



IE7

by Sandy Berger, sandy@compukiss.com
Compu-KISS, www.compukiss.com

If you are using Windows XP, in the next few weeks when the Microsoft automatic Windows update appears on your computer, you will be asked if you want to upgrade your browser to the newly released Internet Explorer 7. It's great that Microsoft is giving us a choice rather than installing the new browser automatically. However, questions like these are always difficult for the average user.

Yet with this question, you don't have to hesitate to answer "yes" because the new Internet Explorer (version 7) is a great improvement over previous versions. I have been using it as part of beta testing for the last six months with no issues. I love its many new features.

While the toolbar has been simplified and some buttons have moved to new locations, you will find that the move to the new version is pretty intuitive. So you can continue to browse the Internet with minimal additional effort.

In fact, any effort you need to exert to learn how to use this new browser is more than worthwhile because it has some extremely useful features that make Internet surfing easier and more fun.

First and foremost is the fact that Microsoft has added tabbed browsing. While other browsers like Firefox and Opera have had these for years, this is a new addition for Internet Explorer. Tabbed browsing allows you to open a new webpage in a tab rather than a new window. So you can have several web pages open at once and you can switch from one to another easily. You will see all of the tabs across the top of the browser with the webpage name or part of it on the tab.

With tabbed browsing you can have your favorite newspaper (www.thepilot.com) open right next to the weather, your favorite financial website, and your favorite computer help website (www.compukiss.com). Click on the small icon to the left of the tabs and you can see each open web page as a thumbnail. Click on the arrow next to the icon and you get a text list of the open web pages. You can close any open web page by clicking on the red x on its tab.

The ability to view and to print web pages has also been improved in Internet Explorer 7. In Internet Explorer 6 you are able to change the size of the text, but often that change made the whole web page look askew because the size of the graphics is not increased. Not so with IE7. Just look in the lower right hand corner of the IE screen for the magnifying glass. You can click on the magnifying glass to make the entire web page, including the graphics, larger. This lets you adjust the size while keeping everything in proportion.....a boon to aging eyes and those with vision problems.

Printing functionality in IE 7 has also been greatly improved. Remember how when you tried to print a webpage the right side was cut off or you wasted paper as a second page would print out with only a line or two on it. Well, IE 7 has solved those problems with a feature that automatically shrinks the webpage content to fit the printed page. This does not necessarily work with web pages that have been poorly formatted, but it does work well for most web pages. Also there are many other printing options including adjustable margins, customizable page layouts, and removable headers and footers.

IE7 also has a search box that can be customized to use your favorite search engine. So you can perform a Google, MSN, Ask, or Yahoo! search without having to navigate to the search engine's home page first.

Just to the left side of the magnifying glass on the bottom bar of the screen, Microsoft has also added a security bar. This lets you change your security settings without sifting through menus. Also included is an icon that you can use to check whether the website you are visiting is a bogus site known for phishing. Microsoft has also added other security enhancements and it is worth upgrading just to get a more secure browser.

The only time you may not want to upgrade is if you are using a specialized Web software program. This caution will apply most to corporations and Web developers who need to make sure that the customized or specialized software they are using will work with this new version.

For the rest of you, take the jump. Internet Explorer 7 is stable. It is chock full of new features. And it's FREE.



Great Games for the Holidays Are Here: Changes in Industry & Technology Overcome

*by Timothy Everingham, teveringham@acm.org
Member of TUGNET, California, <http://www.tugnet.org>*

We are now in the time when most of the computer & console games get released, right before the holiday season. This year it even gets more complicated because of Windows Vista coming out in January and we are in the early stages of a transition to the next generation of game consoles. What makes it even worse is the collapse of the computer game industry's major trade show, E3. Game developers have had to revamp their marketing strategies for the future, yet at the same time prepare for this holiday season. This should add to consumer confusion on what to buy and when and hopefully this article will reduce that confusion.

“increases questions”

Microsoft's new operating system, Windows Vista, increases questions for those uses of 3D oriented applications, especially games. A great part of this is DirectX 10, which is a major rewrite of DirectX and has much higher capability than current and past versions. DirectX 10 will only be available for Windows Vista and can only be used if you have a video card that supports it. (Those cards that do not have DirectX 10 support will be running DirectX 9.0L under Windows Vista). DirectX 10 cards based on Nvidia chips will start to come out in November and those based on ATI chips will start to come out in February. There will be few games with additional enhancements if you are running Vista with a DirectX 10 card when Vista launches, such as Microsoft Flight Simulator X and Crysis. It will probably be at least until mid-2007 when significant numbers of DirectX 10 enhanced or DirectX 10 only titles will arrive. So for giving gifts to 3D gamers who are going to be first adopters of Windows Vista you might want to consider giving gift certificates.

Microsoft's next generation console, the Xbox 360, has been out for about a year. It has been well accepted by the marketplace and has a good number of quality game titles. Sony's Playstation 3 is more powerful and will be able to play high definition Blue-Ray disk movies, but it has been delayed by technical problems until November 17 and even then will have limited supply in the US. With the decision to allow Blue Ray Disk movies to the higher level 1080p High Definition TV instead of the former 720p only should help sales. It will also have some very good games available at launch. There will be 2 versions, the standard costing \$499 and the deluxe costing \$599. Nintendo's Wii next generation console will launch on November 19. It is not as powerful as its two rivals, especially in the graphics area (Maximum Video Resolution: Wii-480p, Xbox 360-720P, PS3-1080p). However it has a very unique gyroscopic controller that is shaped like a TV remote control, which could make some very innovative gameplay (actions are evoked by your physical movement of the entire controller). The Wii's retail price will be \$249. The safe bet for buying a console now is the Xbox 360, but I would advise waiting on your decisions until the initial opinions on the PS3 and Wii consoles come out. (These will probably be found online on the video game review websites before the end of November). Remember when buying a console it is like buying a computer. First you determine what games/applications you want to run, and then you see which console has the games/applications you want to run now or in the future.

“for the holiday season”

Here are some of my game picks for the holiday season:

If you are looking a simulation, Microsoft Flight Simulator X (Windows XP or Vista) is a great visual experience. It is greatly improved from the last version, 2004, with great scenery and other graphics plus good missions. Be aware that to get good frame rates on this you will need a mid to high performance PC by current standards. This is the first game that can take advantage of Windows Vista only features, including DirectX 10 capabilities if you have a Direct X 10 graphics card. Comes in both standard and deluxe versions.

“spyware”

If you are looking for a first person shooter, Call of Duty 3 (Activision; PS3, PS2, Xbox 360, Xbox, Wii) is third installment of the extremely successful World War 2 team-based first-person shooter series. This time it centers on the campaign from Normandy to Paris. Additionally the number of concurrent online/network players has been raised to 24. Battlefield 2142 (Electronic Arts, PC) is Battlefield 2 set in the future in the middle of a new ice age. Since Battlefield 2 is such a great multiplayer combat title, this is a good thing. Like the previous members of the Battlefield series, it is usually played team vs. team online or at a LAN Party. Be aware that this game has in-game advertisements and spyware is installed when you install the game that analyses data on your PC to determine which adds to display in the game. So if you don't like such things on your computer you may want to pass on this game.

If you have dreamed of firefights using automatic weapons in the glamorous Las Vegas Casinos this is for you. Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Vegas (Ubisoft; PC, PS3, PSP, Xbox 360) is another in the successful Rainbow Six series about the adventures of a US antiterrorist commando team. This time a large group of terrorists are attacking the Las Vegas Casinos and plan to burn them to the ground and your object is to stop them. Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent (Ubisoft; PC, Xbox 360, Xbox, PS2, Gamecube) is another in the great Splinter Cell series where you work as a spy/ mercenary for the National Security Agency. However, this time you act as a double agent within a terrorist cell, so things get more complicated. This also has a multiplayer mode. This series is great for those who like to sneak up on the bad guys, take them out and steal or blow up their stuff.

“adventure”

As for adventure games, The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion (2K games; PC, Xbox 360) has extremely beautiful and high-level graphics. It is considered an outstanding title and one with which all other adventure games are compared, but you need a high performance PC to play it. Gothic 3 (JoWood, PC) is a single player adventure game in a land where humans have been enslaved by orcs. There is an evil mode where you side with the orcs, but most of the gameplay you are on the human's side. The game is much more open ended than most games, so if you get lost in non-structured game play this title is not for you. For those who enjoyed the fantasy role playing game Neverwinter Nights, there is Never Winter Nights 2 (Atari, PC). Half-Life 2 (Electronic Arts) has moved to an episodic model, and so now has Sam & Max (Lucas Arts). Sam & Max Episode 1: Culture shock is the first of seven episodes to come out on a monthly basis with an estimated 4-6 hours of game play each. Each episode will cost \$8.85, but you can subscribe to the entire set for \$34.95. This is an off the wall humor-ridden adventure game with a dog and rabbit team of freelance police as its heroes.

“sport games”

As for sport games, try Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07 (Electronic Arts; PC, PS3, PS, Xbox, Xbox 360, Wii). It is extremely similar to the previous two versions, but is still a great game. For those who love golf games this is probably your best bet. Need For Speed Carbon (Electronic Arts; PC, PS3, PS2, PSP, Xbox 360, Xbox, Wii, Gamecube, Gameboy, DS), is the next in the successful Need For Speed street racing series. Its graphics are excellent and smooth, and there is a lot of game play and various options/paths to explore in the way you play the game.

In the good, but not expensive category look at GTR 2 (10tacle Studios, PC). This is a GT car racing game that has gotten good reviews and has a lot to offer and you can find it for less than \$20. It was released on Sept 26; it is a new game too. For sports games, Electronic Arts has most of the best ones. You should look there first.

If you are into building rather than destroying I would recommend Sid Meir's Railroads (2K Games, PC). In this empire – building game you have 15 historical and fictional scenarios to chose from. Up to four players can even compete online or over a network. The detailed graphic animation of the environment/world is impressive, but because of this it is recommended that you have a significantly better computer than listed in the minimum requirements.

“Total War”

If you are looking for a real-time strategy game, look at Company of Heroes (THQ, PC). The detail in both the game play and the graphics makes this World War II game set in France in 1944 superior to other similar titles. You play either as the allies or the axis and control small units on a battlefield to accomplish objectives. You can play against another player or players online. Because of the graphics, low-end PCs are insufficient for this game. Also you need to look at Medieval 2: Total War (Sega, PC), the fourth in the Total War historical combat real-time strategy series. The graphics and animation is so good that the game's engine is used to create animated visualizations of large-scale actual battles for documentaries shown on the History and Discovery channels. The graphics have been updated, making the even more real than in any of the previous versions and what you even saw in the TV documentary visualizations. The game takes place in Medieval Europe and you command one of the historical factions/countries that vie for power. Look at Warhammer: Mark of Chaos (Namco Bandai, PC) too; a real-time strategy game with fantasy creatures and units, part of the excellent Warhammer series.

“something usual”

If you want something usual you may want to look at Bully (Rockstar Games, PS2). This is a boarding school simulator where you work your way up in this kid-dom. Last year's best unusual was Destroy All Humans, a spoof on the 1950's alien invasion movies. Now Destroy All Humans 2: Make War Not Love (THQ; PS2, Xbox) has arrived and is set in the 1960's. It is not quite as good as the original; but with the original being so good, especially in the rolling on the floor laughing department, it still makes for a very good game. There are new consoles and a lot of new games for this holiday season, too much to cover here. For additional information go to www.gamespot.com (part of CNET), www.ign.com, www.gamepro.com, www.gamespy.com, or www.gamezone.com.

May your games be happy and bright (we don't have to worry much about screen burn-in anymore).



Free Up Megabytes of Disk Space

by Vinny La Bash, vlabash@comcast.net

Member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida, <http://www.spcug.org>

Pull Quote – these folders could be the culprits that are chewing up valuable storage area.

Look in your Windows folder and count how many folders you have that start with "\$NtUninstall". They are all related to various patches, updates and service packs for XP. Those \$NtUninstall folders are created when you install a Microsoft Service Pack, a hot fix, or certain security updates. Some of these folders could date back almost to the day you first installed your computer.

Their names are in blue, and they are all marked as hidden and read only. If you don't see them in the Windows folder, open the Tools menu, and select Folder Options from the drop down menu. After the Folder Options dialog box appears, activate the View tab, then left-click the Show hidden files and folders radio button. Click OK to close the dialog box and the hidden folders should appear. If nothing happens close down Windows Explorer and restart it. You don't need to restart your computer; simply open Windows Explorer again.

Why should you do this? If you're getting low on disk space and the usual remedies haven't freed up enough space, these folders could be the culprits that are chewing up valuable storage area. If you have had Windows installed for more than a year and you are conscientious about keeping your system up-to-date, these useless folders are probably tying up gigabytes of data. Enough of them can have the unfortunate side effect of noticeably slowing down virus and spyware scans. It also takes longer to defrag your disk drive. An accumulation of unnecessary or extraneous data on your system will eventually affect system performance and in extreme cases cause drive errors.

The files within the \$NtUninstall folder provide instructions on how your computer uninstalls a Windows update. Each folder has a specific name ending in the name of a particular Windows modification. If you were to go to add/remove programs and select a Windows update to uninstall, the information on how to run this process would come from the corresponding \$Ntuninstall folder.

You can safely delete all these folders if you have no plans to uninstall any of the related patches. As updates and patches accumulate, these types of folders will continue to grow and take more disk space.

One solution is to delete only those folders older than three months. Chances are, if you haven't uninstalled a Windows update after three months, you won't ever do it.

Alternatively, once you've made a backup or disk image of any "\$NTUninstall" files, you can delete the files from the hard drive immediately, because you can always restore them from backups, if you need them.

One thing Microsoft should have done is tuck these folders away in a sub-folder someplace so you don't have to scroll through them every time you want to locate something in the Windows folder. I've seen machines with over one hundred of these folders. Then again, you could always mark them as hidden.

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.



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All unattributed articles are solely the fault of the editor.

Nominees for 2007 Officers

- *****
* **President** **Clarke Walker** *
- * **Vice President**..... **Tom Carman** *
- * **Secretary** **vacant** *
- * **Treasurer** **Judge Houston Landis** *
- * **Board Members-At-Large** *
- * **Al Axelrod** *
- * **Kim Goldenberg** *
- * **Paul Kurivchack** *
- * **Vic Laurie** *
- * **Sol Libes** *
- *****

Help Wanted

Secretary

* The group is in need of a Secretary to take minutes of the *
* meetings. Also to read and respond to club email. Please see *
* a Board Member for more information. *

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