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# PPCUG NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

## Things You Might Not Know About

Joel May

Monday, August 13, 2007

Most of the world uses Google as their primary search engine, but did you know that Google is also a phonebook, a dictionary, a weather forecaster, a package tracker and movie guide (among other things)? In this presentation, Joel will expose us to some of the lesser known of Google's talents.

Joel May has spent most of his adult life teaching. First at the Graduate School of Business of the University of Chicago and, subsequently, at the School of Public Health of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey with a stint in between as President of the Health Research and Educational Trust of New Jersey, a subsidiary of the New Jersey Hospital Association. He holds a BS degree in Economics from Albright College and an MBA and PhD in Economics and Statistics from the University of Chicago. He's been using computers since 1961, the Internet since 1974, PCs since 1979, and the World Wide Web since 1994. Since his retirement in 1995, he has volunteered his time teaching computer skills to senior citizens at the Ewing SeniorNet Computer Literacy Center, reading for the blind at the NJ Library for the Blind and Handicapped and singing in Princeton Pro Musica and the Hopewell Valley Community Chorus.

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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### Upcoming Schedule

September 10 ----	Kim Goldenberg — Linux Update
October 15 -----	John LeMasney — Firefox Browser Extensions
November 5 -----	Janie Hermann and Karen Klapperstuck
-----	— Social Software: Hype vs. Reality
December 10 ----	Member's party
January 14, 2008 ----	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 (at) 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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#### *Program Coordinator:*

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### 2007 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



At 7:30 p.m. Clarke started the Meeting.

Tom related his experience setting up a new network in his home. After trying several Ethernet cables he found it only worked correctly when he used the shortest cable he had. Even using a longer but higher quality cable did not work.

Michael Murphy by Judge Landis Michael Murphy from Microsoft talked to us about Office 2007 and Security in ista.

- Submitted by Clarke Walker



## Pictures from the July Meeting

by Judge Landis, [judge@alumni.princeton.edu](mailto:judge@alumni.princeton.edu)

Member of the Princeton PC Users Group





## President's Message

Well this has been a hot summer. To keep track of the current weather I run a program from WeatherBug. I use the free version. You can get it from [www.WeatherBug.com](http://www.WeatherBug.com). Along with the current weather and forecast they also have a photo gallery. I mention this because they have included two pictures I took at the Ewing fireworks display on July 4th into their "Holidays/2007 Holidays/4th of July" gallery (currently numbers 71 and 72).

We are currently looking for presenters for the months of January, February, and March 2008. Yep, we are already planning for 2008! Contact Sol if you would like to make a presentation or know some one you think we be willing to talk about a topic.

This month Joel May will increase our knowledge of the products from Google. Joel is a popular speaker and instructor at Ewing's SeniorNet. See below for a link to their site.

- Clarke Walker



## Link of the Month

Ewing's SeniorNet has an archive of interesting web sites:

<http://www.ewingsnet.com/ArchiveofWebSites.html>

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



## Blurbs from Bass

by Steve Bass, [Stevebass \(at\) earthlink.net](mailto:Stevebass@earthlink.net)  
PC World Columnist and Author, <http://www.the-tug.org>

### Wonderful: Microsoft's free Virtual PC

I've been using it for three weeks. It's perhaps the best way to play with new utilities, for instance, try out a different anti-virus program, or just fiddle with Windows.

I run another copy of Windows XP within Windows XP. Some people load up Vista in the virtual machine while others play around with Linux.

It takes no super skill set to install or use, and provided you have enough RAM (I'll say about 1GB), the VPC will run happily. I was worried that it would slow down my PC. I have just one VM window running, and even at that, it's open only when I was using it. Overall, with 2GB of RAM on my PC (and 512RAM allocated to the VM when it was running), I didn't experience any sluggishness.

If it doesn't suit you, or it slows down your PC, just uninstall VPC like you would any other application.

You can get around the XP licensing issue (and activation) of two versions of XP on one PC easily. Some people (not, uh, me) call Microsoft for an activation and try to explain to the overseas tech person that yes I have this copy running on a PC, but all I'm trying to do it set it up on the same PC using Microsoft's VM product. Chances are good they won't understand a word you're saying, not be able to find "VM Product" on their tree-based help chart, say screw it in their language, and give you the activation code.

Or you could just rely on XP's 30 day activation deadline. As the deadline approaches, delete the XP virtual machine (it's

only a big swap file) and start again with a new installation.

Get Microsoft's Virtual PC <http://snipurl.com/virtualpc1>

Read how to install and use VPC <http://snurl.com/usevpc>

### **Gotcha! Geek Squad Caught Stealing Porn**

In a three-month sting, the Consumerist loaded a PC with porn, set it up with a keylogger, and asked the Geek Squad to install iTunes. The hidden program recorded everything and produced a very revealing video. Watch as the tech pokes around, finds what he wants, and copies files to his flash drive. <http://snurl.com/geekpornsquad>

### **Assorted short blurbs**

Have you ever heard a Mockingbird outside your window? It's the bird that sings mostly at night and mimics other birds. The Superb Lyrebird goes one better by imitating, with eerie accuracy, everyday sounds, such as chain saws, car alarms, and well, just listen and be amazed. <http://snipurl.com/Lyrebird>

Do you have any idea what's holding up your cursor? I think you'll be quite surprised. Click on the link below to find out. Make sure to move your cursor quickly and double click every so often. <http://www.1-click.jp/>

The Real Group is very entertaining. They remind me a little of Manhattan Transfer. Listen to them sing the Five Song Basic Medley and don't miss it when the lead singer imitates an instrument. It's at about 3:17 minutes. Click here for info about the group. [Thanks, Gus.] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=URpLESNydyE>

If you enjoyed the first video, here's another with them working impromptu. Watch the beginning for the setup and skip past Yesterday until they start doing pseudo-opera at 2:40 minutes. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XcRIBQF2AYc>

Hassle-Free PC: Smart Fixes for Gnarly PC Problems [http://snipurl.com/HF\\_0707](http://snipurl.com/HF_0707)

I'll bet your Start Menu is messy because it's jammed with programs. There's probably a good chance you can't even remember where any of the programs are on the menu. Try popping up Launchy (alt-space), type the first few letters of the program you want, hit Enter, and Launchy launches it. <http://www.launchy.net/>

They know damn well they're breaking the law. Yet I get at least three automated calls from them a week. I have a plan -- make an appointment to have my carpeting cleaned and then slap a small claims court notice to appear into the hand of the guy arriving at my door. Read more on my blog: <http://snipurl.com/BestCarpet>

Rate PC World Magazine: Here's the PC World survey page for the current issue. You don't have to be a subscriber; give it a whirl and be eligible for a \$500 Amazon certificate (which accounts why I haven't had a raise in a while). [http://snipurl.com/PCW\\_Survey](http://snipurl.com/PCW_Survey)

### **Time Killing Videos**

Check out "High Power Job," a video about an occupation that makes me grateful I'm a safe and sound writer. <http://www.glumbert.com/media/highpower>

The Slinky Humans video held my attention for the full five minutes. (But what in the world it's doing at a Sea World Amusement Park is beyond me.) But it appears they've taken a cue, so to speak, from Mummenschanz.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAPBaXLJvYI>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QO3B6hESM3I>

You know how I like magic, right? Well here's a brilliant bit of it with just the correct amount of misdirection. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voAntzB7EwE>

### **Two Useful Tools**

FileMenu Tools: The context menu of Windows Explorer gets messy. FileMenu Tools gives you a way to customize it. <http://www.lopesoft.com/en/fmtools/info.html>

ReCase: It's a small issue, but it may bother you: all the filenames in a specific folder are in upper, lower, or mixed case. Here's a tool that will fix it.

<http://bluefive.pair.com/recase.htm>

## Free Directory Assistance

There are two new, free directory assistance services you can use on either your cell phone or home landline.

I like Google a little better because it'll dial the number for me. Details:

<http://blogs.pcworld.com/tipsandtweaks/archives/004120.html>

In the other hand, TellMe is faster and easier to use, and definitely has a better voice presence. Unfortunately, what spoils it is that it won't connect me. Details:

<http://www.tellme.com/products/TellmeByVoice>

<http://betafeedback.tellme.com/forum/b-gb/m-1171475327/>

Either way, their both free and useful.



# Improve Computing Pleasure with Free Widgets for Windows and Mac

by *Ira Wilsker*, [lwilsker \(at\) apcug.net](mailto:lwilsker@apcug.net)

**APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, Texas**

Websites:

<http://widgets.yahoo.com>

<http://widgets.yahoo.com/gallery>

Many of us are extremely busy, and often lack the time to search the internet for items of frequent interest. Many of us have dull and boring desktops displayed on our monitors, often using the default images of our computer or software maker. Fortunately for us, there is a free service offered by Yahoo!, called "widgets".

Widgets, also known as "gadgets" by some web services, are small programs that display a wide variety of information on the otherwise wasted space on our desktops. This information is automatically updated on a frequent basis, providing the user with current data without loading another program or browsing to a website, as widgets are displayed on the desktop on a full time basis.

Widgets is the name for the products distributed by Yahoo!, and gadgets are distributed by other web service providers. While similar in appearance and function, widgets and gadgets are generally not interchangeable, and in order to conserve system resources, users should choose gadgets or widgets, but not both.

Yahoo!'s widgets can be found at [widgets.yahoo.com](http://widgets.yahoo.com). Upon opening that page, the user is greeted with a button to download the widget engine, which includes about a dozen popular widgets, including a picture frame (displays digital photos on desktop), weather display, notepad, daily planner, maps, stock ticker, and others. The opacity of widgets can be controlled to make them nearly opaque, hiding the desktop behind the widget, to almost totally transparent, fully displaying the desktop. Widgets can be dragged and dropped anywhere on the screen. I have a lot of icons on my desktop, and my widgets cover several of the icons, but this is not a problem as I drag the widget out of the way whenever I want to access those previously covered icons.

The widget engine works on Windows XP with service pack 2, Windows 2000 with service pack 4, Vista, or Macs with OS X 10.3.9 or higher. An internet connection is necessary in order to update the widgets, and 512 megabytes (minimum) ram is recommended for improved performance.

Among the default widgets included with the widget engine, I personally have the stock ticker and weather widgets loaded and running, and also have a TV widget which displays the shows for the next few hours on the channels of my choice.

The stock ticker widget is very easy to use, and is automatically updated every few minutes. The default listings are for popular quotes, such as the Dow Jones Industrial Averages, NASDAQ, Yahoo!, and similar issues. It is very simple to modify the listing to show any desired quotes and indices, and the number of issues displayed is only limited by the space available on the desktop.

The weather widget is customizable for any city or zip code, and graphically displays the weather for five days, current conditions, temperature, and moon phases. By moving the cursor over the weather widget (sometimes it also requires a mouse click), a balloon opens which displays the humidity, barometric pressure, wind chill or heat index, wind direction and speed, and the time of most recent update.

The widget I seem to refer to the most is the TV widget called "TV Tracker", which can be downloaded from the Widget Gallery. Once downloaded and installed, a city and zip code is selected, which displays the on-air, cable, and satellite options and carriers locally available. Selecting the appropriate carrier displays a two hour grid of what is on television. Different genres, such as sports and movies are highlighted in different colors for easy viewing. Clicking on a highlighted title will "fetch" the description and details of the movie or sports event, displaying it in a sub-widget adjacent to the primary widget. I will be honest and say that there are several cable channels available to me that I simply never watch, and TV Tracker easily allows for the display of only selected channels, making the display that much easier to follow.

The widget gallery, [widgets.yahoo.com/gallery](http://widgets.yahoo.com/gallery), currently lists 4242 Windows widgets available for download, and 3977 widgets for Mac, in a variety of categories. As I type this, Yahoo! is featuring Motor Trend Magazine's "Gas Alert Savings" widget which displays a localized list of the lowest priced gas stations in the area, and is available for both Windows and Mac. Widgets can be searched by name, type, or date. The widget categories listed in the gallery are latest (4242 widgets), updates (2158 widgets), fun & games (575 widgets), date & time (470), news feeds (952), system utilities (354), sight and sound (554), geek stuff (120), cam viewers (273), widget tools (63), app (application) enhancers (109), search tools (352), and various (miscellaneous, 416). Each category may contain hundreds of different widgets, all of which are available for free download.

I have downloaded several other widgets, and selectively load them when I want, and stop them when no longer wanted. In Windows, widgets as a group can be controlled by clicking on the widget icon in the system tray, near the clock. The widget icon is a black background, with two diagonal and interlocked gears. Right clicking on the widget icon displays a comprehensive menu of options which allows the user to control the appearance and function of widgets, load and unload widgets, and otherwise control their behavior.

Some widgets that I selectively use are news feeds which display real time news headlines from hundreds of sources, live weather radar, streaming audio from dozens of radio stations from all over the globe, and many others. Although I have never used it, there is even a pregnancy calculator widget!

Widgets can be a fun adjunct to improve the satisfaction and use of our computers.



## Zoo Tycoon 2: Zookeeper's Collection

by Rhonda and James Winterhalter, [rjbizster \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:rjbizster@gmail.com)  
Members of ICON Computer Users Group, Missouri, [www.icon.org](http://www.icon.org)

### SOFTWARE REVIEW

This game could easily capture the interest of all age levels. Grandparents looking for a great item to have around for the grandchildren should read on! Children of all ages, including the child in all of us, might get a lot of joy (and learning) by giving Zoo Tycoon 2 a try. After that, you may be hooked. James, (my eleven-year-old son) and I have been given this wonderful opportunity to test drive this game. We will share with the rest of you what we have discovered, enjoyed, learned, and we will even mention a few areas that we see could be improved upon.

Zoo Tycoon 2 is packed full of options, both within the software and on the Internet. When you first open the game, a screen is opened that allows you to see "Zoo News" and the "Community." Upon clicking one of these selections, you can be connected to the Web page that will allow you to join the Web forums and to get additional downloads. You can get tips, bonus

downloads for free, and you can purchase additional expansion packs that can be added on to your game. For example, right now they are offering the Dinosaur pack. Or you can just click in the lower right-hand corner of this opening screen which gives you the option to Play.

Running a zoo with this game is incredible. The player gets to start from the beginning. There are a lot of choices. From the layout of each animal home size to the various animals you bring in, the variety is amazing. If there is something you don't know about the animal you are selecting, there is a symbol of a book that you can click on. It will bring up a window with the information that you would need to know. You also get to lay out the food and gift shops. James says, "Don't forget to give your visitors maps in various locations." You can set up viewing binoculars and recreation areas that include inflatables to jump on and various activities for everyone. Donation boxes can be set up through the zoo, along with water fountains and other facilities. You also get to turn on your camera and go take snapshots of your animals to compile a photo album. When the animals are happy, they will have wonderful bright green grins hovering above their heads. You make them happy by giving them enough room, the right habitat, coming in and cleaning them, feeding them the right food, and finding just the right toys they like to play with. They are really happy when you remember to do all of this and give them a mate. If your zoo is lucky, they will have babies. Sometimes twins are even born.

Your zoo can become the most sought out tourist attraction yet! You can create a wonderful Jeep vehicle tour that the visitors will line up and wait their turn for. This takes them among the animals and really allows for some close-up photography. You can even put in a sky tram that will allow your guests to get a bird's-eye view of the animals in their natural habitats. You can choose the Zoo Guest Mode, which allows you to go in among your animals and be a participant with the various activities taking place with your animals. You can even choose to swim with the penguins!

Upon being asked to give a review of this software, we were also asked to include any complaints and suggestions that might make it better. We pondered this and came up with a few. In James' opinion, he would like to see the Zoo Guest Mode expanded. He loves that he can be active in his own zoo by swimming with the animals and walking through the zoo. It would be nice to include the ability to be able to do other various activities such as eat in the restaurants, buy food from the booths, play in the children's play areas, and to be able to look through the binoculars. While building and creating your zoo and running it, there is always the same music playing in the background. It would be nice to have a variety of music to select from. Another item that we would like to see but never discovered was a bilevel viewing area for some of the animals. For instance, the Hippopotamus loves to swim, but the only view we could arrange was for the guest to be looking down on him in the pool. It would be nice to set up an area that would include a looking glass area similar to an aquarium. That would enable the different angles. James says a petting zoo would be nice! Last, we never could find the proper food for the koala. Therefore, we could never keep him in our zoo.

As a mother and a home educator, I was continuously amazed at what educational value this game has. Any adult should try these types of games at least once before being too quick to ridicule games. There is always so much going on. The player must continuously keep up with it all. They are multitasking tenfold! They must constantly go in and clean and feed the animals. If the guests seem unhappy, they must find out why and fix the issue. They must research the animals to know what the proper habitat will be. They learn that taking care of anything or anyone is not easy. They also get the joy and reward of being successful. I was so impressed by my son's progression in his created zoos. He also loves to open his zoo from the beginning and give a formal presentation. It is very impressive. We will definitely be adding this one to our own personal collection.

Are you interested? Here is a little bit of detailed information that you may want to know. We hope this gives you an idea of what to expect as you get started. The ease of use is excellent. On loading the game for each user, you are asked, "Would you like to learn how to play Zoo Tycoon 2?" (This makes it very easy to jump right in.) If you click on the green check mark, then it will take you through various tutorials teaching you the particulars of the game. You can also choose to do a Campaign, a Challenge, or a Freeform game from the main menu. One thing to remember is that while you are in your level working, you must use your keyboard keys to get back to the main menu. Maybe they will add an Exit button. Until then, use the Escape key to bring up the option to save, exit or return to main menu.

If you choose a campaign, then you are given a list of objectives that you are to complete. The first three titles to choose from are tutorials of the various game themes that are included with this installation. One is Zoo Tycoon 2, the original, while the other two are the tutorials for the Endangered Species and the African Adventure expansions that are included in the Zookeepers Collection. The tutorials are highly useful for someone who is not familiar with the particulars of playing Microsoft Games. Other titles include Zoos in Trouble, The Globe, and Conservation Programs. When you select one, the details are listed in the right column of the screen telling you the various information of that specific selection. Items such as the location your zoo will be in, the difficulty level, the map size of your zoo, and the amount of money you get to start with to create your zoo.

The Challenge selection is set up with a little bit more choice to accept or decline the challenges being offered. They present you with specific criteria that you can say yes or no to. When you accept, you can be rewarded, but if you fail the challenge, there can be negative consequences. With the challenges, you have a little more freedom. You can even increase the amount of money you have to start your zoo with. When playing this level, you can decline until you feel you have had enough time to get your zoo started and are ready to focus on tasks.

The Freeform game is exactly as it implies. You have unlimited cash and you are not given any objectives or goals. You can just feel free to play and build your zoo up to a success. This level seemed more enjoyable to my son at first. It allowed him time to discover the game and its methods.

With all of the above choices, you are always given the same screen while playing. When the game begins, you see three main and very important items along the top of the screen. In the left you see five stars that are hollowed out that fill in as your zoo gains popularity. In the center you have a message queue that keeps you informed of various situations throughout the game. For example, you may get a note saying that your Pygmy Hippopotamus is pregnant. Or you may be notified that one of your animals needs more room. In the top right corner you see your operating funds. You can increase your revenue through admissions, donations, and profits from your concessions, restaurants, and the gift shop.

Zoo Tycoon 2 is rated "E" for Everyone to Everyone 10+. As an ICON member who saw a lot of grandparents looking at various game systems at our March of Technology event, I would suggest some turn straight to their PCs. This is good clean fun, and most will enjoy it and never even suspect there could be any benefit other than fun. It is recommended to have Windows XP or Vista, 512 MB RAM, 1GHz Processor, 1 GB hard drive, Video Card of 32 MB hardware, T & L Direct X 9.0 or later.



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*All unattributed articles are solely the fault of the editor.*



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