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PPCUG NEWS

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Firefox Browser Extensions

John LeMasney

Monday, October 15, 2007

Firefox, is a free web browser released under an open source license. Among the reasons for its increasing popularity are hundreds of free add-ons, that are quickly changing the way people think about and use the World Wide Web. The speaker will discuss and demonstrate his favorite Firefox extensions.

John LeMasney is the Manager of Instructional Technology and the technology consultant for the Teaching and Learning Center for Innovative Instruction at Rider University.

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

November 5 ----- Janie Hermann and Karen Klapperstuck
----- — Social Software: Hype vs. Reality
December 10 ---- -Member's party
January 14, 2008 ----- tba
February 11, 2008 --- tba
March 10, 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@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

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Kim Goldenberg 609-631-9140

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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 September Meeting



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

Board member Kim Goldenberg gave us an overview of Linux desktop releases.

- Submitted by Clarke Walker

Kim Goldenberg by Judge Landis



Pictures from the September Meeting

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

Member of the Princeton PC Users Group





President's Message

We are currently looking for presenters for the months of January, February, and March 2008. If you would like to make a presentation or know some one you think would be willing to talk about a topic please let a board member know. Sol is planning to take a few months off so we need some one to step up and be the Program Coordinator for those months. Please see Sol so he can give you some suggestions and the media information.

At the October meeting we will be requesting nominees for Officers and Board Members. Please consider volunteering.

This month John LeMasney will show us ways to increase the value of Firefox with useful add-ons.

- Clarke Walker



Link of the Month

A past Presenter, Gene Barlow, has made arrangements for discounts on software for PC Club Members. You can check out his offers at:

www.ugr.com

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



Portable Data

by Corinne Goetze, [Cmgoetze \(at\) yahoo.com](mailto:Cmgoetze@yahoo.com)

Member of the Computer Club of Green Valley, Arizona, <http://gvcc.apcug.org/>

Which of the following is an item for storing computer data?

- A) Thumb Drive
- B) Jump Drive
- C) Flash Drive
- D) Key Drive
- D) Memory Stick
- E) USB Stick
- F) UFD
- G) All of the above

If you guessed "G," good for you. All of the above names refer to UFDs or "USB Flash Drives." USB, of course, refers to those little rectangular ports you can find (although there never seems to be enough of them) on the back and front of most computers.

So what is a UFD? You see them connected to people's key chains, hanging around necks on a cord and stuck in pockets and purses! Simply put, a UFD is a really convenient data storage device. Think of a one-gigabyte UFD as being 694 floppy disks all packed into a two-inch long by 1/2-inch wide package.

UFDs are data storage devices that have replaced CDs, floppies and other methods of carrying data from computer to computer. Plug one into a USB port on any computer, and you can read and write files on it. It is now the method of choice for transporting data that you need often.

In fact, there is a special class of UFDs called U3 that can also store applications. Plug one of these UFDs into a computer, and you can run Mozilla Firefox, Open Office, or even utilize an operating system such Linux.

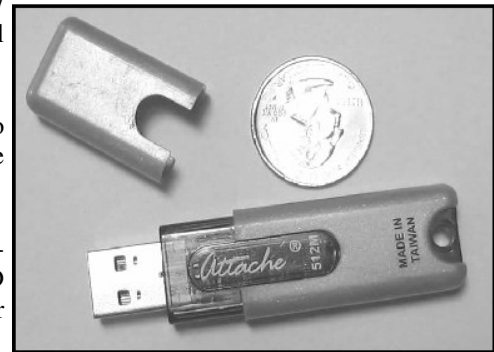
The cost of a UFD depends upon the number of bytes it can hold. A 64 megabyte UFD used to be considered more than enough storage. But as the size of data files has increased, so has the size of UFDs. Fortunately, the prices for large storage has dropped considerably. You can pick up a 1 Gigabyte UFD for around \$15. A large UFD currently available is a 16 Gigabyte that sells for \$133 at www.newegg.com.



Finally, your choice of UFD can reflect your individuality. You don't have to settle for the standard gray plastic housing. You can buy UFDs that look like twigs <http://inhabitat.com/2006/02/08/ooms-twigg-usb-drive/> or even animal characters <http://lab.mimoco.com/>.

So, if you find you need to transport data files from computer to computer, a UFD is an easy solution. They are available anywhere you can buy electronics.

A word of caution. To avoid losing data, be sure to eject a UFD before removing it from the USB port. You can go to MyComputer, right click on the UFD device and select eject. Or you can use the Safely Remove Icon on the lower right corner of your desktop.



Typical UFD next to a quarter



Open Source Software – Mostly Free to Use and Modify

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

APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, Texas

Websites:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open-source_software

<http://mashable.com/2007/09/23/open-source>

<http://openoffice.org>

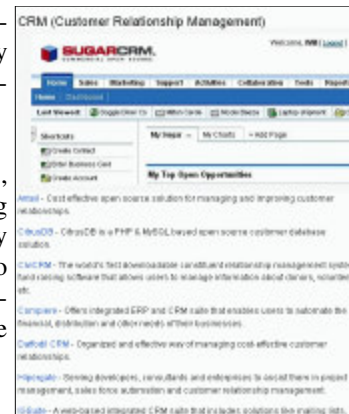
<http://www.mozilla.com/en-US/thunderbird>

Wikipedia defines Open Source Software as, "... computer software which source code is available under a license (or arrangement such as the public domain) that meets the Open source definition. This permits users to use, change, and improve the software, and to redistribute it in modified or unmodified form. It is often developed in a public, collaborative manner." Open Source software has been around in its current context since 1998, and hundreds of titles are available for almost any computing need. As a general rule, Open Source software is free to use, modify, and redistribute as the user sees fit. For this reason it has evolved from products that only a geek could love to software that it widely used in corporate, academic, and home environments. Some Open Source software, such as the comprehensive and free office suite, Open Office, has in some places taken a substantial market share from its pricey commercial competitors with hundreds of millions of users. Much of the Open Source software is now in the mainstream, and is no longer in the exclusive realm of nerds.

Open Source software should be seriously considered as an alternative to commercial software. One website that lists almost 500 categorized Open Source products is online at mashable.com/2007/09/23/open-source. This website contains a wealth of resources that are mostly free for the taking. All businesses, and many households, need some type of accounting software, and Open Source is a viable choice. Some of the accounting programs listed provide budgeting help, personal finance assistance, point of sale (POS) applications that work with barcode readers, inventory control, and other fiscal functions.

Many businesses are now dependant on "Customer Relationship Management" software, known in the industry as CRM. About 20 CRM titles are listed on the mashable.com site listed above. Generally, these titles allow for the recording and utilizing of customer data. One product intended for charitable or religious use, is listed as "CiviCRM - The world's first

downloadable constituent relationship management system; fund raising software that allows users to manage information about donors, volunteers, etc.” CRM software generally allows for the creation and maintenance of mailing lists, client tracking, project management, and other customer related information.



Many of us would like the opportunity to customize what we see on our Windows desktops, and not be forced to utilize what Bill Gates provides us. Open Source obliges by providing about a dozen “Desktop Environments and Shell Replacements”. Some of the functionality added to Windows by these programs includes enhancements like minimizing windows to floating icons, freeing the taskbar, controlling wallpaper and icons, real-time wallpaper effects, and other customizable functions. For those who like to tinker with Windows, these desktop environments and shell replacements can be a lot of fun to play with.

One computing function that almost all of us deal with on a daily basis is email. While the industry leader, Microsoft’s Outlook Express is free (bundled with Internet Explorer), and its commercial big brother Outlook is commonly bundled with Microsoft Office, there are some excellent alternatives in Open Source software. One of the most popular Open Source email clients is Mozilla’s Thunderbird, which is a very full featured email client with millions of users. Thunderbird can be downloaded (free) from www.mozilla.com/en-US/thunderbird. Thunderbird has much of the look and feel of Outlook, but provides many advanced features not available in Outlook. Thunderbird is compatible with almost all email services, and is easy and quick to configure. Thunderbird generally provides better security than Outlook, and includes some protection from phishing (identity theft) scams. Spam email is the bane of email, and Thunderbird offers active spam filtering which routes suspicious email to a junk mail folder for quick review and deletion, if desired. It is also a universal email client in that it can run on Windows, Mac OS-X, and Linux, and is currently available in over 30 languages. Thunderbird would be a great alternative for those who want to get away from Microsoft products. Thunderbird, as popular as it is, is not the only Open Source email client listed; there are about a dozen email clients listed. The selection is good, and the price can not be beat.

Another computing function that many of us partake in is ripping music, and converting it to formats that can be utilized by our portable music players. Some of us edit videos, such as the ones we take with our camcorders. The Open Source website at mashable.com/2007/09/23/open-source lists over three dozen ripping, music editing, and video editing utilities. Formats supported by some of these Open Source utilities include MP3, MPEG, MPEG1, MPEG2, DivX, WAV and several other formats. Some of the software will edit and repair damaged audio and video files, while others allow for the conversion of DVDs to other video formats. There is an impressive selection of audio and video utilities available as Open Source, and they are worthy of consideration. Once media is available in digital formats, some means of playing it may be necessary, and this website lists several dozen media players.

Another popular computing task is file sharing and “FTP” (File Transfer Protocol), and there are about three dozen free utilities listed. While some are for traditional file swapping, others allow for the remote access and synchronization of computers.

Many of us are artistic and graphically inclined, but the major commercial graphics design programs are often expensive. Open Source can come to the rescue with about 40 titles to choose from, allowing for an excellent selection. Some Open Source graphics utilities are simple photo editors, while others include 2D and 3D animation. Other Open Source utilities provide sophisticated webpage authoring tools where a novice can produce a professional appearing webpage.



Adobe’s PDF (Portable Document Format) has become the de-facto standard for saving and distributing documents in “What you see is what you get” (WYSIWYG) format. While Adobe Acrobat (writer) is an expensive utility, there are about a dozen Open Source programs that can perform a similar task for free.

A lot of busy individuals need a “PIM” (Personal Information Manager) to keep track of their personal information, appointments, calendars, address books, to-do lists, and other daily mundane tasks. About a dozen “Personal Information and Task Managers” are available as Open Source, which may provide some help in controlling our often hectic lives.

There are several other categories of Open Source software listed, including project managers, reporting tools, RSS (news) feeds, system utilities, office suites, office programs, and web browsers such as Firefox. Open Source is here to stay and may be a key player



in the future of software. It is definitely worthy of a serious look and consideration.



10 Steps to Safe Computing

by *Sandy Berger*, [sberger \(at\) compukiss.com](mailto:sberger@compukiss.com)
[compukISS.com](http://compukiss.com), www.compukiss.com

Unfortunately you must be proactive to protect yourself from today's bad guys. Here is my down and dirty list for PC users.

1. Install a good anti-virus program and make sure that it is updated regularly. While most of today's programs update automatically, you should check occasionally to make sure they are working properly.
2. Don't open email attachments even if they are from someone you know. Open only if you are expecting them, you know the person sending them, and you know what the attachments contain.
3. Don't fall for phishing schemes or other email where they try to get you to confirm or retype your personal information.
4. Update your operating system regularly. In Windows and Mac OS X you can turn on automatic updates, but you also need to download and install the updates as soon as possible. Often the bad guys take advantage of new operating system holes as soon as they are discovered. Companies like Microsoft, Apple, and others find a way to plug the whole and issue an update. If you wait a week or two to install the updates, you are giving the hackers and spammers time to attack your computer.
5. Be careful about the websites you visit. Don't visit porn sites or other suspicious websites. Don't download software from any website unless you are sure it is safe.
6. Use a firewall. As I stated in a previous column, a hardware router is a very good unobtrusive firewall. If you don't have a router, turn on the firewall that comes with Windows. The Vista firewall is pretty good, and the XP firewall is better than nothing. If you are an expert user, you can use a software firewall like Zone Alarm, but for the uninitiated user, these complex software firewalls can be difficult to use.
7. If you are using Vista or Mac OSX, or even Linux you should create an account for daily use that does not have administrative rights. That way, if a piece of malware gets into your system during an average computing session, it will have restricted rights. Using an account with administrative rights, gives the malware administrative rights as well. While this is also a good practice with Windows XP, most users, including myself, find that because of the way XP is engineered, it is almost impossible to perform average tasks unless you are logged on as an administrator. Fortunately, with the Vista operating system, you can easily perform day-to-day operations when logged in as a non-Administrator.
8. Even with good habits, it can be useful to occasionally run a good anti-spyware program to scan and remove spyware from your computer.
9. Shop at Secure Sites. If you shop on the Internet, enter your personal information and credit card number only on a secure Web page. If you use Internet Explorer, a secure site will show a yellow padlock in a closed position on the toolbar at the bottom left-hand side of the screen. Netscape will show a closed darker colored padlock somewhere on the bottom toolbar. In both browsers, a secure site will have https: rather than http: in the Web site address at the top of the page.
10. Don't give your Social Security number out on the Internet. Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes because computers and the Internet make stealing an identity from an unsuspecting victim easy. So don't be an unsuspecting victim! Your social security number is the golden key to your identity. Never keep your social security number anywhere in your computer. Never give it out over the Internet, even in a secure site. Some sites, like online banking, may require you to use your social security number as a password. Take a pass on any such site or service that makes you send your social secu-

riety number over the Internet. Keep your identity secure by keeping your social security number as private as possible.

One more thing— don't buy anything from spam or unsolicited email. While this won't keep your computer any safer, it might help to lessen or eliminate spam. If no one bought anything from spam, it would take away the financial incentive to send spam and it would probably disappear.



The New, the Best, and the Worst September 2007

by *Pim Borman*, [Swipcug \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:Swipcug(at)gmail.com)
Webmaster, SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc, <http://swipcug.apcug.org/>

E-mail Reliability Woes

Banks, mutual funds, credit card companies, utilities, they all want to send me my monthly statements in electronic form over the Internet, “for my convenience,” and incidentally to save on the cost of mailing them out the traditional way. Do I go along with that? No way, José! Just think of all the things that can go wrong.

Security. I already receive regular emails, mostly delegated to spam folders, from fake financial organizations such as PayPal, E-Bay, and banks all over the world. How am I going to distinguish the fishes from the phishes? I do have online access to some of my financial accounts, but I use them strictly one-way: I access them directly by typing in the URL. Some financial institutions have expanded security beyond the usual user name and password check, to let me verify that I'm dealing with the genuine institution. Before I present my user name and password, I am shown a prearranged word and an image to make sure that I am dealing with the genuine Web site, not some phisher in Nigeria. Such two-way passwords are a good idea, and using an image instead of a word adds additional security.

More security. I still have to worry about key grabber viruses that record what I type. An up-to-date reliable anti-virus program may prevent that, or not. Making payments online can also be hazardous, especially if I can't be absolutely certain I'm not addressing a phisher. I have a Citibank credit card account that will provide me online with a one-time credit card number to be used for a single transaction. That minimizes the risk of fraud. But how am I going to archive online statements securely for years to come unless I print them out first? If necessary, does my own printout provide the same level of proof as an original bank statement?

Reliability. Because spam now makes up the largest part of email crossing the Internet, Internet Service Providers increasingly install spam filters to remove the chaff from the wheat. The problem arises when the spam filter removes legitimate messages without notifying the sender, or even worse, the recipient. It seems to happen all the time and not only because it is easy to misspell an address. Recently I used my local provider, Sigecom.net, to respond to an email from a niece who uses myway.com. Fortunately I was notified by “blackhole.myway.com,” that the response bounced, with an error message indicating that there was a mismatch between sender addresses somewhere along the way. Since Sigecom forwards email via another email provider (Mira-something-or-other), that could have been the problem. I sent the response again, using Google email that time, and all was well.*

A week later I sent a SWIPCUG e-mail message to 49 addressees using my Google e-mail account. Two of the mailings, both addressed to members @att.com, were blocked because “it was sent by a system that we have reason to think has sent high levels of spam to our customers in the past.” Maybe other members did not receive the message either but I wasn't notified. Again using Google Mail, I resent the message without trouble to just the two blocked recipients. Maybe att.com balked at the fairly long list (49) of addressees?

One of our members, associate director at the local Public Library that hosts our meetings, was unwittingly deprived of messages sent to him and about 10 other members who informally constitute our planning committee. The Library has its own email system, guarded by a properly-named “barracuda” to swallow anything smelling of spam. The system administrator managed to retrieve the messages, belatedly, once he was aware of the problem, and loosened the rules to get our member back in the loop.

It goes to show that even if you are not personally plagued by spam woes, your email communications are still affected. Its security and reliability must be paramount if we are to trust it to replace snail mail in delivering important notices. At the

least the sender should be notified, and blocked email should be made available to the recipient in a special folder to allow quick verification of its status. Yahoo and Google mail deposit at least some suspected spam in a separate folder. It takes only seconds to check that folder and remove all the spam while being able to save a genuine message.

More Reliability Issues. When an email address is changed, it is difficult to let all the correspondents know, and chances are that some of them will forget to change all their email address folders. Contrary to good old snail mail, there is no friendly post office that forwards email. Also, the slightest typo will make email undeliverable. Add to that the times that the Internet is inaccessible because of hardware, software or network problems and it is clear that email can not be counted on for the timely and secure delivery of financial and billing statements.

Once Upon A Time...

in a far away land, when I was still a young lad, clocks sat on mantel pieces and had to be wound every so often. They didn't keep very accurate time, and we kept them running at least five minutes fast so we wouldn't miss the train. You see, trains left the station on the exact second in the schedule and the best place in town to find the accurate time was from the big clock at the railroad station.

Now we have clocks and watches that listen at night to the shortwave radio and adjust their time to the nearest second by synchronizing with an atomic clock in Colorado. As a good nerd, I regularly compare the time shown by the atomic clock on the wall with my atomic watch to make sure they agree to the second. And now we travel by planes that sometimes manage to leave the gate within an hour of the scheduled departure time. Or not at all, as the case may be. Progress...

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