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PPCUG NEWS

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World Wide Web The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Arnold Rosner, Data Wizard

Monday, March 10, 2008

The World Wide Web is a rich source of information, education and entertainment. It also has a dark side. Navigating the Web can be very rewarding; it can also be frustrating and even risky. Learn about finding the best and avoiding the worst. Find out about some of the sites you should be visiting, the tools you should be using, and some of the dangers that are lurking. Learn how to identify and fight back against the spammers and hackers who want to take your money, or take over your identity. And experience some of the beauty and wonder that are available from wherever you are. Where you stand determines what you see. The World Wide Web lets you stand virtually anywhere, and see so much.

Arnold Rosner is vice president and one of the founders of Strand Management Solutions, Inc. Established in 1979, Strand is a provider of custom software, databases and Web sites. (www.strandmanagement.com or www.strandwebsites.com). Arnold started at his first programming job in 1967. He launched the Access-for-Business division of Strand two years ago. Its goal is to provide small businesses the capabilities to efficiently use the information they already have on hand. See www.a4b.us.

Mercer County's 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

April 14, 2008	tba
April 25, 2008	TCF Professional Seminars
April 26 & 27, 2008	Trenton Computer Festival
May 12, 2008	tba
June 9, 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.

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2008 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 February 2008 Meeting



Doug Dixon by Clarke Walker

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

A member reported that his computer is getting slow during the process. It was suggested that he try the free version of WinPatrol.

Doug gave us an overview of the Consumer Electronics show. He demonstrated several devices including the XO laptop.

Submitted by Clarke Walker



Pictures from the February Meeting

by Clarke Walker, [Clarke Walker \(at\) yahoo.com](mailto:Clarke.Walker@yahoo.com)

Member of the Princeton PC Users Group





President's Message

At the February meeting Doug brought the XO Laptop. This laptop is designed to help the two billion children of developing areas of the world get an education. Learn more at: <http://laptop.org/>.

We are all familiar with the Internet and the World Wide Web. For new members and those visiting us, Arnold Rosner, the club's Program Director, is going to give an overview of this subject. Arnold will also talk about how to be cautious users of the Internet. This will be a good meeting to invite co-workers and friends too.

- Clarke Walker



Link of the Month

Every wonder who you really are? Take the questionnaire at:

<http://www.tk421.net/character/>

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



DVD Insider – DRM

Sometimes the Bad Guys Win for All the Wrong Reasons

by Andy Marken, [andy \(at\) markencom.com](mailto:andy(at)markencom.com)
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"On the one hand information wants to be expensive, because it's valuable. The right information in the right place just changes your life. On the other hand, information wants to be free, because the cost of getting it out is getting lower and lower all the time. So you have these two fighting each other." -- Steward Brand, 1st Hackers' Conference, 1984

Hollywood loves sequels.

They love proving they know what the consumer/viewer wants.

But they really had to reach when they heard some Doom9er yahoos had not only hacked their precious AAC3 DRM (Digital Rights Management) code.

The audacity!

Nothing to do but reach into the archives and take a page from one of the immortals...Mack Sennett.

Yep...nothing to do but call in the Keystone Cops...that'll teach them.

Had they hacked it, passed it around amongst themselves the industry wouldn't consider a change.

But what good is it to hack something that is hack-proof if no one knows about it?

They had to share their bragging rights.

And they did with postings at Diggs, on t-shirts and everywhere they could find the opportunity to expose themselves.



Figure 1 - Calling All Cops – The minute the AACCS lawyers got the word that their DRM had been not only cracked but posted, they sprang into efficient action...they sued everyone! **Source – Keystone Studios Archives**

You know that wasn't going to sit well with Tellywood's guardians !

Take It Down Dude

They sent in their best armed with cease & desist letters to anyone, everyone who posted the elegant 32 digit code.

Great...another riot on the Web !

We need to note that creative people need to be paid for their work...writers, artists, animators, actors, makeup artists, best boys, post production folks, underwriters and yes even studio execs.

No pay...no play !

The problem is the world doesn't want content protection.

Consumers don't want content protection.

Hell...they aren't too happy people are buying each other off to keep two blue formats alive!

All they want to do is watch the content when they want...where they want...how they want.

AACCS had a better idea.

You want a copy to watch on your TV...buy it.

Want a copy to take to your cabin...buy it.

Want a copy to shut the kids while you drive to visit grandma...buy it.

Want a copy in the family room and bedroom...buy it.

Tellywood knew a gentler, kinder security solution wasn't the answer.

Tried that with CSS (Content Scrambling System).

Sucker was busted before the ink was dry!

Slow Acceptance of New

So what if DVD took off like a rocket!

The technology shot past every PC/CE technology in consumer sales...ever.

Even with multiple formats, people snapped up players and burners.

Discs flew onto the shelves and out the doors like crazy.

And a huge underground pirate industry grew...trust us, these guys know pirates!

Figure 2 - The Fine Art of Pirate Tracking – Hollywood has spared no time or expense in tracking their loss of content. They know precisely how quickly ripped off copies will be in the hands of the buying public. True most of it comes from India and China but still there are those pesky hackers who have to learn a lesson... the hard way! **Source – Walt Disney**
HighDef was their opportunity to get back in control.

The new DRM was impressive...

Ok so maybe industry officials – music, theater – knew it was a bad idea but still...

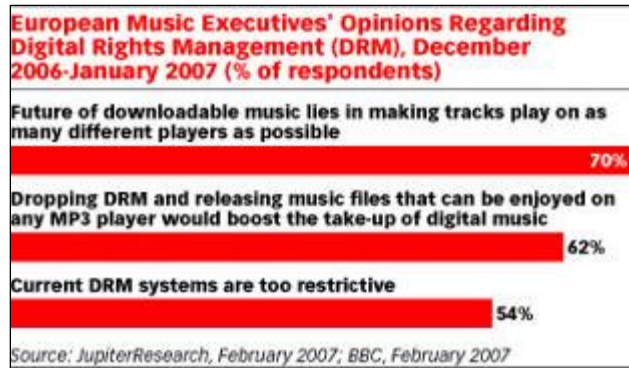
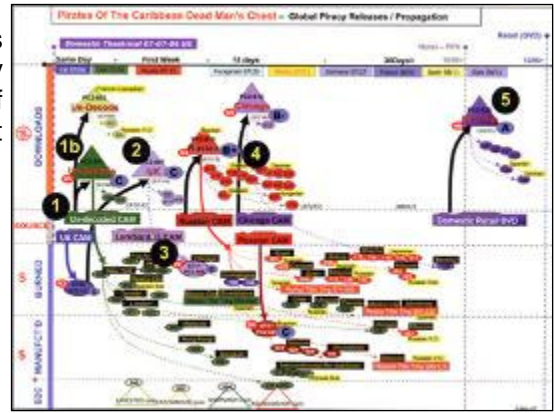


Figure 3 - Yeah But – The music and motion picture industries speak in whispers about the fact that DRM isn't working. Problem is they haven't figured out a way to simplify the process, procedure and still ensure they are properly compensated. That's still a work in progress. **Source – JupiterResearch, BBC**

Ok so the real pirates weren't worried after all they go to the source to get their content...keep their mouths shut...keep a low profile...make money.

Doom 9ers?

They have no lives.

They want bragging rights.

The fact that the 32-character sequence is useless is of no consequence.

After all you need to write a complete program around it to start copying HD movie discs. The key only unlocks movies made before April.

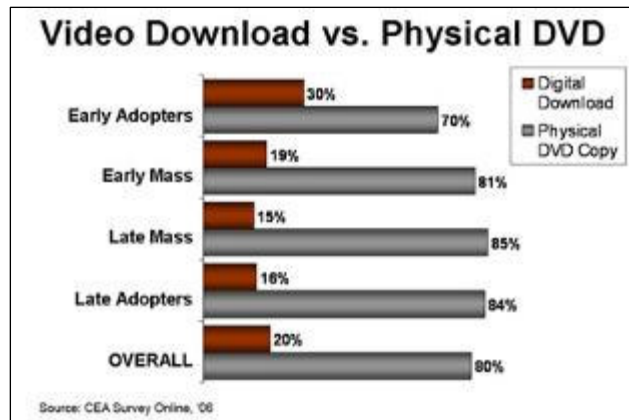
So who benefits?

Aaahhh... AACS lawyers.

Oh yeah and the bragging rights folks.

Download Practicality

They could also post the movies on the Web instead of making us rip our own copies but...



A 2-hour HD DVD download over DSL takes about 3 days.

Cable 18-19 hours.

Fiber about 2.5 hours.

Maybe that's why video downloads are still "a work in progress"

Figure 4 - Consumer Preference – While digital downloads of movies gets a lot of attention as the solution for entertainment of tomorrow, consumers just haven't bought into the idea yet...even early adopters. It will proba-

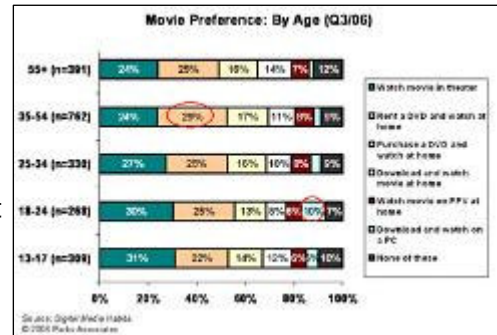
bly be one of the viable options in a couple of years but until then people still want their discs. **Source – CEA**

Will it happen?

Sure.

But most consumers don't want the hassle.

Figure 5 - Entertain Me – The entertainment options are out there but regardless of age more than 50% of consumers will either go to the theater or pick up a disc to watch at home. Downloads? All in due time. **Source – Parks Associates**



All folks want to do is watch their real world escape movies...or their educational shows...or their documentaries.

They don't want to jump around these beautiful new discs to watch all the outtakes...director's comments... interactive games...online updates!

They want to ... watch the movie !!!

People don't really want to be technology troubleshooters on top of their regular job...even if their regular job is IT.

So what was so great about the Doom9ers efforts and the AACS Keystone Cops response?

The kids showed the industry – content creators, hardware/software folks – that the money-making AACS DRM was little better than CSS.

Fortunately the blue technology hasn't taken off like the proverbial rocket ship so the industry can make a course correction without ticking off millions of folks who laid out big bucks for their players and movie libraries.

Won't as long as there are super-cheap DVD players and a gazillion of decent quality movies on DVD to buy... rent...rip !

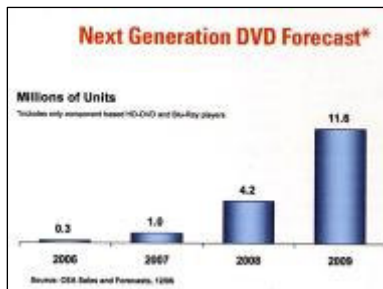


Figure 6 - Thanks Doom9ers – While hackers show their prowess by cracking the new AACS DRM, consumers are still content to watch their movies on current DVDs. Despite the hype and noise, it will take years for HD DVD and BD to become the viewing solution of choice. **Source – CEA**

Better Solutions

One of the best – and most expensive – solutions is watermarking (see Wikipedia).

When you buy or rent the content it is coded to you.

If it finds it's way "into the channels"...busted!

There are a lot of technical and cost issues involved so it will probably never emerge from the lab.

Shades of Valenti

Since the DVD CCA (Copy Control Assn) lost in court they figured what the H*** they'll do what governments' do...legislate !

Cute little amendment for "their" license would say your stuff – movie or game – wouldn't work unless there was a disc in the system...sheess !!!

We were so certain Jack Valenti had been put to rest. We now believe in unholy spirits...exorcism anyone?

The best solution and the one Sennett and his people should ultimately agree is good is Mandatory Managed

Copy.

Don't get your undies in a bunch...it only sounds restrictive.

With Managed Copy you buy the disc and watch it.

Want to play it on your TV top player...done.

Send it around the house to watch everywhere...done.

Need a copy to take with you in the car to shut the kids up or to take with you on your business flight...done.

There is even a formula for secure copy electronic distribution when the pipes beef up or you become a lot more patient.

Gee...it works for the consumer...and the content folks !

Consumers Aren't Evil

Of course the AACCS will say that all of those devious consumers are going to knock-off copies and give them to their friends...neighbors...family members...

Some might.

But my gawd most folks never made a copy of their VHS tapes or DVDs.

You may like them but take the time, trouble, expense to rip 2-3 copies?

Nope!

Oh sure Doom9ers and a few acne-infected kids might to make a few bucks.

But have you looked at the cost of the burners?

The media?

Expensive at least for another year!

Doom9ers will still say it's restrictive. Remember...consumer content wants to be free!

But they don't care a monkey's armpit about the consumer.

Or the content owner.

All they want to do is brag about something...anything!

Consumers?

All they want to do is buy, rent their movies and watch them where they want...how they want...when they want.

Doom9 Benefit

By muddying the waters with their hacking expertise before a gazillion HighDef players and discs were in the market, Doom9ers made Tellywood and the PC/CE industry rethink their solution.

Managed Copy suddenly looks very appealing.

A helluva lot more appealing than having to carry your **one** disc with you everywhere!

If and when the gentler, kinder solution is implemented, will the AACCS lawyers still have a job?

They can turn on the pirates who quietly follow content producers who make the big bucks selling bootleg discs on the sidewalks, street corners and thru the mail.

They can tighten up their internal security and make it more difficult to get to the content.

Figure 7 - Protecting The Flight – By developing an efficient, effective and consumer-friendly DRM solution, Hollywood will be able to turn their attention to more important things like keeping pirates from boarding early.



Recording Audio

by Bart Koslow, [review \(at\) topcc.org](mailto:review@topcc.org)

Software Review Coordinator, Thousand Oaks Personal Computer Club, CA, <http://topcc.org/>

Nowadays it is no problem to record video from a TV broadcast, VCR or other source using a Digital Video Recorder. When I began to look into recording music broadcasts off the air, I found that there were external Audio recorders, but they were expensive, beginning in the \$250 range and up. This is twice as much as a similar Video Recorder.

Since I wanted to create CDs from the broadcast music and I had DVD/CD burners on my computer I decided that using my computer was a better and cheaper alternative. One possibility was a TV/FM card for my computer which may be purchased for \$30 to \$40 and up. However, I found a cheaper method. My stereo system was only a few feet from my computer, so I connected an audio output from my audio receiver to the line in on my computer sound card. I happened to have a cable with two RCA connectors on one end going to a single stereo connector on the other end. Just what I needed, I connected the RCA connectors to audio out on my receiver and the stereo connector to the line in on my sound card on the computer.

Now all I needed was a program that could access the sound card and record the input. I hit the jackpot. Roxio Easy Media Creator has just the program. Not only that, but, once you complete your recording, Roxio has a basic sound editor that enables editing the sound files, and programs to burn the files to a CD or DVD. The Roxio program will access a number of inputs besides the line in. You may access your phone line, CD player, microphone input, and other inputs including Internet Radio broadcasts received on your computer. You may also decide which type of file format to record, WAV, MP3, or WMA, what fidelity to record, and where to save the recorded file. In addition, there is a recording level meter and control.

Once I turned on my stereo receiver and accessed the Roxio recording program, everything went well. I recorded a long broadcast for a few hours and then my computer told me I had a problem and had to close the Roxio program. I lost my whole recording, but now I knew it worked and tried again.

This time I closed all the programs I did not need and disconnected from the Internet to get less interference when I recorded. After editing the recorded audio file, I successfully burned it to two CDs.

If you have music cassettes or even VCRs with music, you may use this technique to transfer music to CDs. If you have cable or satellite TV service with accompanying radio, you may use the above procedure to record from your set top box to your computer. I have satellite service with SIRIUS radio, and am now recording live and historical music broadcasts that interest me.

I next discovered that in many cases I could bypass an external stereo receiver, set top box, or recorder by using Internet Radio which may be played using Windows Media Player, iTunes Player, Real Player or other free media players. All you have to do is

find the radio station that is broadcasting the music you wish and then enter the URL for its streaming audio broadcasts in the Player software. I did a search using Google and found there are numerous Internet radio station locators, found the station I wanted and entered the URL. Now I had the music coming in directly to my computer from the Internet with no intermediary device. In order to save the music I again resorted to Roxio's "Capture Audio from Sound Card" program and changed the input from "Line In" to "Stereo Mix," and recorded the broadcast to a file. Edit the audio file and burn it to a CD and I was finished. It all worked like a charm.

Now, I do not need a Stereo Receiver, external recorder or even have to add a TV/ FM card to my computer.

The simple solutions are always the best ones.



Look Ma No Hands

by *Bruce Jacobs*, [editor \(at\) pcug.org](mailto:editor@pcug.org)
Phoenix PCUG Newsletter Editor, www.phoenixpcug.org

This article was not typed. I dictated it using the speech recognition feature in Windows Vista Ultimate.

I have been using this feature on and off for certain applications for a while and it has its good points and its bad points.

The intent of the software is to allow the user to speak words into the computer and for the computer to recognize those words, understand that some of them are commands, and also understand that some of them are input to programs. In other words, when I say the words "please save me", the computer must decide whether to add the words to the document I am editing as if I had typed them, or add the word "please" to the document, and then bring up the save dialog box to save the document with the name "me".

The program that is attempting to do this has two major hurdles to conquer. It has to recognize the spoken words correctly. This is helped by the training exercises. But it has its limitations.

It must also understand "in context" which of those words are commands and which of those words are to be part of my document. As time goes on, you learn to pause before speaking a command. So in the above example of "please save me", I would say the words altogether relatively quickly in order to enter them in my document. If I wanted to add the word "please" to my document then save the document, I would speak the word "please", then pause for a few seconds, then save the word " save." This would bring up the save dialog box and I could continue as if it was a command.

As far as the good points are concerned: If I'm working off printed list or when I know for sure what I want to say clearly, it can be a much faster way of inputting text than for me to type it. Some of that is due to my typing speed being somewhat slow. I am a faster typist than most hunt and peck folks, but I would never be able to keep a job as a secretary. It is also much better at spelling than I am.

If I don't know what I'm going to say in advance the program does not facilitate me speaking what I want to say and then re-composing it later. Some of this may be my fault. I find that I can type up an article by hand and maintain enough control so that in the end I have something coherent. When I just speak out what I want it does not always make sense. I spend way too much time revising it.

One of the disadvantages is that you need to spend a little bit of time training the voice recognition system. The system works best when you are running a very simple application such as WordPad or Notepad. It can even be used to some extent in Microsoft Word. However when using an application such as PowerPoint, the program spends so much time trying to figure out what possible commands you might be wanting to perform and not enough time actually realizing that you are trying to enter words.

Another problem is homonyms. These are words that sound the same but they have different meanings in English except for the possibility of some contextual clues. There is no way for the speech recognition software to know whether I want "2", "two", "to", or "too." During setup the program asks you if they can look at the contents of documents on your hard drive to help you determine what word you used most often and in what context. This does help it guess which homonym you want.

The final problem I wish to discuss is the editing features. Whenever I create a text document I will want to fix mistakes. There

are some commands in the software that will help fix mistakes, but they are limited and clumsy. Some of them will even (in theory) help prevent mistakes by the voice recognition software in future. All that being said, I find that editing documents using the voice recognition software is very frustrating. I always resort to using the arrow keys and the mouse to navigate through the document.

Vista speech recognition is a helpful tool when transcribing printed text or when words have been spoken into a tape recorder. However for initial composition of documents or editing I do not find it useful. I do not believe that I could ever learn to use it as a complete 100% substitute for the keyboard and mouse. I would not consider it a replacement if I was disabled.



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