PPCUG *NEWS*

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Weird and Wonderful Web Sites

Joel May

Monday, August 13, 2009, at 7:30 p.m.

According to Microsoft's new search engine called "Bing," there are more than 124 billion web sites on the Internet. Many of these are informative, entertaining, and/or engaging. But some are just plain weird and others outshine the rest as really wonderful. Joel May probably wastes more time than most of us in searching out the weird and wonderful ones. In this presentation he'll introduce us to about a dozen of each and show us how to seek them out on our own.

Joel 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. He holds a BS degree in Economics from Albright College and an MBA and PhD in Economics 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.

Mercer County's Lawrence Library
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in no way imply endorsement of its programs.*

In this issue:

Upcoming Schedule

September 14, 2009 - Peter Laudati—Microsoft Windows 7
October 19, 2009 ----- David Soll—Should you upgrade to
 -------------------------- Windows 7
November 9, 2009 --- tba

About PPCUG

Summary of the July 2009 Meeting

At 7:30 p.m. Program Coordinator Sol Libes started the meeting. Sol announced upcoming meetings for other computer focused organizations in the area.

Gene Barlow via a live web broadcast discussed backup plans and demonstrated Acronis True Image.

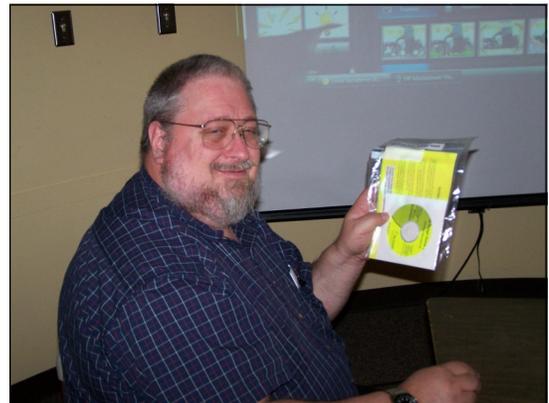*Submitted by Clarke Walker*

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Link of the Month

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

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Pictures from the July Meeting

by Clarke Walker, Clarke_Walker@yahoo.com
Member of the Princeton PC Users Group

Kim was the winner of the raffle for Acronis True Image.

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Clean Up Your Room/Desktop - Part II

by Ron Hirsch, ronhirsch1439 (at) comcast.com

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INTRODUCTION

Last month we started on managing your icons. In this issue, we'll be continuing the saga of the icons. When you have completed the exercises below and learned the various activities involved, you will be on the road to becoming an "expert" to your friends. You can then play the role of teacher rather than student.

Currently, there are many different Windows versions in use so the material which follows may bring up a slightly different listing of choices on your machine, when one right-clicks on the desktop. With all these varying situations, it is very difficult to present the many fine points exactly.

In general, the differences will be obvious by simple inspection. When they are not, the most direct approach is just to experiment to see what is produced when a choice is made. Generally, all such choices are reversible. In the process, you will get to better understand what is happening. To me, the aspect of experimenting is usually the best approach to understanding and learning.

Remember what I have been preaching for years in my articles. As you become more conversant with using your computer, you will gain more confidence in expanding your horizons with the most amazing machine that mankind has produced. But, it is only a "machine," and you should be in charge of it, even though Microsoft tends to try and make it in charge of you. You are the boss, and the sooner you let your computer know that, the sooner you will stop feeling intimidated by it.

DESKTOP

In the latest Window's XP and Vista, MS has made a lot of changes, including the default desktop displayed.

I personally don't like it, but that's a matter of my taste. However, MS did leave the door open to go back to the older style of desktop, which you may prefer. If you right click on the desktop, there should be a choice to have a classic Windows desktop. Try selecting this and see which you'd rather have. You can always revert back to the new style if you choose.

ARRANGE THE ICONS

Right click on an empty space on the desktop and a menu will come up. The first item on the XP listing is "Arrange Icons by." Put the focus on "Arrange Icons by," and you will get a list with lots of choices on how you want them arranged.

If you have carefully positioned all your desktop icons in the various areas where you want them and you use the "Arrange" feature, they will all line up like soldiers, starting at the upper left part of your screen. Then you will have to manually reposition them to where they were before you started. Again, this is a good area in which to experiment.

AUTO ARRANGE

In the window that pops up when you click on "Arrange Icons by", you will see an entry named "Auto Arrange." If you check this, your icons will always stay arranged, but not in any groups that you have established.

They will all line up like soldiers and stay that way even if you move them. They will jump right back into line. I personally don't like using this. But, you can try it to see if you'd like it. "Auto arrange" is the equivalent of constantly invoking the "Arrange" command.

ALIGN TO GRID

I personally use the "Align to Grid," which auto aligns all icons so that rows and columns are straight. With this checked, sometimes when you move an icon, it snaps to a different point on the grid.

It will always snap to the nearest point. When this happens, just click and drag it to where you want.

In the early days of XP when one had temporarily booted into safe mode, and then returned to normal mode, the desktop layout was totally garbled up. Microsoft apparently improved things in recent times, the original desktop layout does return now.

ICON ARRANGING UTILITIES
There are also a variety of simple programs available free on the Internet to save and then restore your desktop layout. This can come in handy when something/someone has messed up your desktop layout. The one I used is called "iconlayout.zip" but the page for this appears to be gone now. This link appears to have a similar free program at ZDNET.

http://downloads.zdnet.com/abstract.aspx?kw=Save+desktop+icon+layout&docid=185169

What these utilities generally do is add two items into the dropdown list when you right-click on your desktop - "Save desktop icon layout" and "Restore desktop icon Layout." Browse around for something similar, if you'd like to have this handy utility, or try this ZDNET link.

CHANGING ICONS
Except for a few Icons, of which Windows is very possessive, the icon images that display for the shortcuts on your desktop can be changed to suit your desires. When you right click on an icon, and select properties from the window which shows, a small window will come up; near the bottom right of that window is a button marked "Change Icon." If you click on it, anther window will open, with other Windows-supplied icons which are available. The selection is somewhat limited, but there is a "Browse" button.

If you have any icon library files on your computer, click on the "browse", and navigate around to find these libraries. When you find one, double click on it, and a whole bunch of icons will appear, find one you like, then double click on it, click OK, then when you close the window, you'll have a new icon for that shortcut.

ICON LIBRARIES
If you'd like to get some icon libraries, one of the best places to go is www.zdnet.com. Once you get there, just navigate around to their download area, and then do a search for "icons." You should get lots of results. These are generally free files and there are lots available, so have fun.

Google is also a good hunting ground for icons. Do a search for "icons for Windows XP." You'll get lots of hits, most of which are free downloads.

The spacing of icons, color, and many other properties of the desktop layout can also be changed. But, that's outside of this area for now.

In a future article, we'll go over the ways to change your desktop colors, the sizes of things, the display resolution, and many other elements that can make your display "better", and easier to use.

STARTING PROGRAMS
Left click on the START button on the lower left of your desktop. On the menu which comes up, left click on "All Programs." This should bring up a large window that lists all the programs installed on your computer. This is probably where you have been to run a specific program. You would move the cursor over the desired program and click; the program would then run.

Some of these items are links to start the program, and others are folders, which you must click to display the links that are within the folder. How about making copies of the startup links for the programs you use often. Doing this is simple. Put your cursor on a program shortcut, and then right click.

There should be a listed item "Create Shortcut." Clicking on this will create another shortcut, with a (2) showing that it is the a duplicate of the original shortcut. Then, drag this onto the desktop. You can now edit the name to remove the (2), or make it any name you would like.

CONCLUSION
At this point, take a break, and make sure that you are now well versed in the icon activities presented above. It would also be a good idea to play with the capabilities you have just learned, in preparation for the next venture. This will be a major step for many of you, as we'll be making new folders, adding icons to the desktop, and storing all the icons we don't need in a folder which we'll call "Icons in Storage."

Next month, we'll pick up where we left off, and go through a variety of procedures that you should understand relative to controlling and manipulating windows. We'll also "play" with icons, setting up a storage folder for the excess icons that are presently on display. And, we'll go through the process of getting some new icons on the desktop to save searching for them when we want to use them.

Remember, if you learn a little bit each day, your new skills will make using your computer much easier.

If you find this material useful, you may want to download this article in PDF format, from our web site www.brcs.org. This allows readers to keep the material either as a PDF file, and/or Ron Hirsch print it out, and place it in a loose leaf notebook, for future reference.

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Let's never forget the first king: DOS

by Rick Smith, Rants (at) vcmail.net

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Oh where, oh where has my little DOS gone.
Oh where, oh where can it be,
with its life cut short and windows cut long
Oh where, oh where can it be?

Some might say that I'm losing it, but you cannot lose what you never had.

Where has DOS gone? Some might say it's still around in the various forms of Linux. Others might say it's buried deep in Microsoft operating systems waiting to be called out by a powerful wizard to cast potent spells with a command prompt. But most of us just believe that it's just lost, never to found again. Like a lost pet that you once had affection for, once it's gone you seem to remember only the good times and seem to forget all the problems that it caused you.

DOS does that to people. There are still a few of you "old-timers," and you know who you are! Those who sit at the doughnut table at club meetings and reminisce about the "good ol' days" when all you needed was a Northgate keyboard and a monochrome screen to have absolute power over your world. You know what I'm talking about. Way back when people spoke about computers with fear and awe. They were things better left to experts and shady government entities. The quickest way to kill a conversation in those days was to talk command line technobabble. It always made everyone in the room feel uncomfortable that they couldn't understand you, like you were speaking a different language.

On the flip side, though, it gave you an incredible feeling of power, that you, and you alone, could master the savage beast and control your own destiny. Neh Ahh Ahh Yahh. (Sometimes I think all those comic books I read have permanently warped my thinking.) But really, didn't you feel special? That you and you alone, could master something that would make others wince and shirk away. You didn't have to be popular at school. You didn't have to be good looking. You didn't have to be wealthy. You did not have to have any of those things that everyone else needed to be important. You had knowledge.

And knowing the secrets of the PC universe, did you use that knowledge to gain wisdom or for greed? I think most of you, unfortunately, like me, used it for personal greed. We gave ourselves over to the dark side of the force and used our skill to enrich ourselves financially. But eventually as we all grew older, and some of us wiser, we started using or skills to teach and help others, which led you to me, to read these words and words of others in this tome. You all became a band of brothers forming the fellowship of the DOS.

And just! And just as your powers were at their peak, everything came crashing down like the Jedi of old. A new power rose in the universe to supplant the old ways. Windows came rushing down like a wind from heaven with trumpets blazing and fire and smoke billowing up in great clouds. And when this behemoth came to rest. its great weight crushed the last vestiges of DOS underneath its feet.

A new group came forth to rule the PC world. A group of men, and, yes, women, too. who knew nothing of the old ways but were formed from clay in the new ways. These new acolytes grew up in the ways of the PC, each having their own since they were young.

Gone was command prompt. In was the mouse. The wizards of old became legend. And after time they have become forgotten to be remembered by only a few at computer club meetings. There are still a few prophets preaching to us not to forget the old ways. I saw one at last month's meeting giving a history lesson at the club meeting. But they are old and feeble now with most of their words echoing on deaf ears.

So I say to all today! Remember the DOS! Don't let the old ways die, as you never know when you will be called upon as I have this week to use my skills again. Fortunately. I have not been found wanting as I was able to vanquish the beast with my skill at the command prompt. I have beaten down one enemy, but more are waiting to attack.

So be on your guard, be ready, and be faithful to the cause. Put away your mice as they are no use against such foes. Operate you PC only with the keyboard and keep yourself ready for the fight. For it shall come. It shall come.

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Is It Time To Switch To 64 Bit Windows?

by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., bwsail at yahoo.com
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In my February 2008 article in the Monitor comparing 32 bit and 64 bit computing, I was still advising caution for those wishing to upgrade. Today every new computer is capable of running a 64 bit operating system. As a result there are many voices saying if you have the capability to run a 64 bit operating system, you should take advantage of it. Microsoft had previously indicated that Windows 7 would be available only in a 64 bit version. However, they now say both 32 & 64 bit versions will be sold. There some speculation in the computer industry that Windows 8 may only be 64 bit. So it appears to be time to reconsider the move to a 64 bit operating system (OS). There are many advantages for 64 bit over 32 bit, but in order to better understand them, we need to take a brief look at how these will affect your decision.

To start with we should recall a little history. In the early days of personal computing the processors instruction sets were designed for 8 bit "words". This was the data size that could be used to express a single character. A bit is either a "1" or a "0". Eight bits were then referred to as a "byte" and that was considered a computer "word". In those days the CPUs we had were the Intel 8080, the Zilog Z80, Motorola 6800, and the MOS Tech 6502. These were all 8 bit processors with 8 bit data paths. The Apple I/II/IIe and Commodore Pet all used the 6502. IBM designed the first x86 CPU which was called the 8086 and it was a 16 bit processor. However, when IBM produced their first personal computer in 1981 it used their 8088 processor which was an 8 bit version of the 8086. The next step was to the 16 bit processor with the 80286 processor in 1984. The software changes rapidly followed this advance. The change to 16 bit processing allowed the central processor and the data bus to transfer data in increasingly larger sizes, referred to as double words. The 32 bit processor arrived in 1989 followed by the 64 bit in 2005. As this history shows, the 64 bit computer is just one more generational step in processing power. In addition, a computer "word" is now considered to be 16 bits, not 8 bits. So a 64 bit processor can handle a quadruple word (4x16). Naturally, the increase in the width of the CPU/data path does increase processing speed.

Every time the hardware has changed, there has been a delay while the software manufacturers play catchup. Applications have to be rewritten to take advantage of the hardware changes including the new instructions in the CPU instruction set. Only then can the application take advantage of the added processing power. Although Windows has been available in a 64

bit form since XP was released, it adoption has been quite slow. Many software manufacturers did not make 64 bit versions of their applications. This coupled with the limited acceptance of Vista has markedly slowed the shift from 32 bit to 64 bit. Another factor in this process is the development of 64 bit drivers for peripherals such as printers, scanners, graphics cards, wireless modems, network cards, etc. Microsoft has also indicated that Windows 7 will not install 64 bit drivers unless the software is "Microsoft Certified". Some manufacturers have obtained certification for some of their 64 bit drivers. For example, my Brother multi-function machine has a certified driver for 64 bit Windows. If you don't have a 64 bit certified driver, your peripheral will not work under Windows 7. Neither Vista64 nor Win7-64 will accept 32 bit drivers. Something to check out before you pop for a 64 bit OS. However, if you are buying an upgrade version of Windows 7, several of them are supposed to come with both the 64 bit and 32 bit versions in the box, but not in the OEM versions. This specifically applies to the Home Premium, Professional and Ultimate versions (as of this writing and may be subject to change by Microsoft.).

Another advantage of a 64 bit processor is in its memory management. By now I would hope that everyone understands that the 32 bit generation of computers can address a maximum of 4 gigabytes of RAM. This is the maximum number of addresses that can be handled and is calculated from 2^32 or two to the thirty-second power. This includes addresses needed by the system as well as the data. A 64 bit processor can address 2^64 addresses or roughly ten billion more than the 32 bit processor. The catch here is that both the hardware manufacturers and Microsoft have imposed limitations on the addressable memory. Generally, new personal computer's are limited to 128 GB of memory or less. Some manufacturers configure their laptops for a maximum of 4 GB of RAM. Windows OS software is also highly variable in its limits. Some versions of Vista limit addressing to as little as 8 GB (Home Basic & Premium). It is expected that these limits will be raised in Windows 7. For the present, these levels should be more than adequate for most people. If not keep in mind that it is the Ultimate versions of Vista and Windows 7 that have the maximum addressing ability.

The next thing to consider is the software compatibility. Just because you have a new operating system, no one really wants to have to upgrade all their software from 32 bit to 64 bit. For that reason both Intel CPU's and AMD CPU's are not true native 64 bit processors. They are, in fact, hybrids. By this I mean that they allow 32 bit code to run in an emulation mode. Consequently, 64 bit Windows has an emulation mode, Windows on Windows, which allows 32 bit software to be run. WOW intercepts system calls to the operating system made by a 32-bit application and switches the CPU to 32 bit mode. It can switch the CPU between 32 bit and 64 bit as needed. This also allows the 64 bit AMD/Intel CPU's to run a 32 bit OS. The only true 64 bit, non-hybrid operating systems for PC's are found in Intel's Itanium processor (IA64) and the various 64 bit versions of Linux. Systems using these CPUs will give you all the benefits of 64 bit computing, but require all 64 bit software. Windows WOW64 also allows for some 32 bit software to run on the IA64 CPU by converting 32 bit calls to 64 bit. Windows XP, Vista and Win7 contain large numbers of dll files. These are system libraries, many of which are loaded into memory when the computer is booted. In the 64 bit OS, these libraries can not be used by 32 bit software so instead, there are duplicate libraries written in 32 bit code included in Windows. Microsoft has devised a system so that these libraries can co-exist on the hard drive and in RAM without overwriting the files or accessing the wrong file so that 32 bit code can be run under the 64 bit OS. Sounds good, doesn't it? Yes, it does work, but with some caveats. Adding an emulation layer does slow the overall processing of software instructions. Also, there is an increase in the amount of memory (virtual memory included) needed for the additional 32 bit libraries that are loaded along with the 64 bit dlls at boot time.

There are other problems, but to a somewhat lesser extent as it affects fewer software applications. Some 32 bit applications still use 16 bit loaders. Since Windows 64 does not support **ANY** 16 bit code, these applications will not run, unless Windows can transparently substitute an installer with 32 bit code. Hopefully, all 32 bit software will eventually have 32 bit loaders or be replaced with 64 bit code. Additionally, some 32 bit software requires the use of 32 bit drivers. These drivers will not run on any 64 bit Windows platform. So until the drivers are available in a 64 bit form, these applications can't be used with Windows 64.

Another consideration is that any utility software that works at the hardware level must be 64 bit. This generally includes anti-virus software and other anti-malware products. Those few manufacturers I have checked do have 64 bit versions of their applications available. This includes some which provide free utility applications. This is just one more item that should be checked before you decide to move to a 64 bit OS.

If you decide you want to upgrade to the 64 bit version of Windows 7 when it is available, then you have several more things to consider. No matter which 32 bit Windows version you are currently using, you will have to do a "clean" install of the 64 bit version. That means backing up your data to an external medium and formatting your hard drive or at least a part of it (one partition). You can install Windows 7 in a new partition and dual boot with it and your current Windows version. Or you can install the new version in the space reclaimed from your old version. Either way you will have to reinstall software and drivers. Then you can restore your data. Only if you upgrade to the Windows 7 32 bit version from Vista can you do an "in-place" upgrade. If you are still running XP you have no choice but to do a clean install to convert to the 64 bit

version. Of course, if you buy a new computer with the 64 bit Windows 7 installed that reduces your problem to just installing applications and data from your old computer.

I have already pre-ordered a 64 bit version of Windows 7. So, you see, I have answered the question I posed in the title of this article. When it arrives, in October, I will be installing it, then testing drivers and applications. You probably won't see any of my experience until the December Monitor. In the meantime, I have obtained a 64 bit version of the Linux OS, Ubuntu. Over the next few months I will be installing and testing it on my computer. So you will be seeing more about 64 bit computing. I hope it will help you as the entire industry continues to move into a fully 64 bit era. Just think, the next move, in a few years, will probably be to 128 bit computing!

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor of physiology. He has been working with personal computers for over thirty years, developing software and assembling systems.

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All unattributed articles are solely the fault of the editor.

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