January 2000 Volume 16 Number 1

PPCUG NEWS

A Publication Of The Princeton PC Users Group

Monday January 10, 2000

Controlling Devices With Your PC

Paul Bergsman

Author / Teacher

Paul Bergsman, author of "Controlling The World With Your PC" will discuss how to use your PC to control your lights, motors or any AC powered device, sense temperature and generate musical tones plus much more.

At

Lawrence Library

Meetng Rooms 1 & 2

US 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 implies endorsement of its programs

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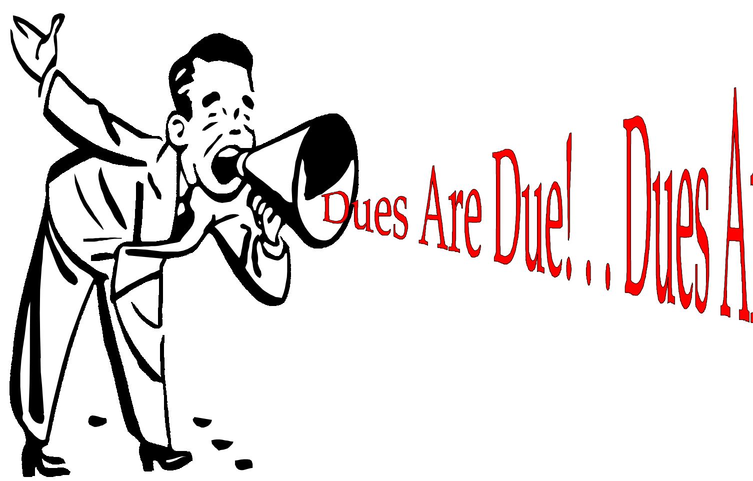
Association of Personal Computer User Groups
APCUG



Yes! It is that time of year to renew your membership with the PPCU
Please bring your check to the January meeting or mail it in to the

About PPCUG

General Meetings

Second Monday of the month at the Lawrenceville Library.
Route 1 and Darrah Lane.

7:00-7:45 PM: Social Time / Tech Corner

7:45 PM: Meeting Comes to Order

8 PM: Featured Presentation

Board Meetings

Third Monday of the Month
8 PM at Lawrenceville Library.
Board meetings are open to All.

Board Members

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TBA .....

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Voice Mail System

For information about, meetings, etc. call 908-281-3107 to leave a message.

Web Site

http://www.ppcug-nj.org

Annual Dues Rates

Normal dues rate is $25 per year.

New Members Only: after February, the rate is $2 per month times the number of months remaining in the year.

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Coming Events

February 14, 2000 - Microsoft Office Annoyances

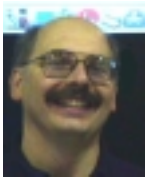
Fred Kagel will speak about Office issues!

March 13, 2000 - My Favorite Free Win 9x Utilities

Vic Laurie will continue the series of Win 9x Tips & Tricks

April 10, 2000 - To Be Announced!

May 8, 2000 - To Be Announced!



Presidents Message

by Paul Kurivchack

Despite all the hype, the Y2K bug did not kill my PC or any one else's at least as of yet. I decided to wait until the First to write this article as I was firmly convinced that planes would not fall out of the sky, the lights would stay lit and there would be running water on Saturday.

I'm sorry for all those people who horded food and water, purchased generators or fell for any of the Y2K scams in preparation for the end of the world. It didn't happen! Who knows when the next blizzard or hurricane will hit and they'll laugh at us for not being prepared.

Now Monday may be a different story as businesses come back on line, but as I have been saying for the past two weeks, the major problem on Monday will be how many people have forgotten their login passwords due to partying over the holidays and can't login to their WinNT PC's. It is good to see that all the efforts made by so many people during the past year have paid off so far.

I hope every one enjoyed themselves at the December general meeting. Bill Hawryluk did an outstanding job again this year with the holiday hospitality goodies. Thanks again Bill.

Debra Pfundstein of Microsoft made an excellent presentation on some of Microsoft's new products that would make great holiday gifts including Works Suite 2000, Encarta, Flight Simulator and Age of Kings. This was Debra's last official visit to our group as she has assumed a new marketing territory. I was contacted, just last week by her replacement and will be scheduling another presentation from Microsoft for later in the year. Thanks to Microsoft's continuing support of user groups, Debra was able to raffle off a number of software products. Congratulations to our winners: Karl Juelch – Win98 2nd Edition, Bill Hawryluk – Greetings 2000, Laxman Phadke – Money 2000, Bill Koosman – Encarta DVD, Don Arrowsmith –Midtown Madness, and Philip Papier – Links 2000.

Speaking of the New Year, our programming is well under way. Paul Bergsman will be here in January to present "Controlling Devices with Your PC", followed in February by Fred Kagel – MS Office Annoyances and then in March by our very own Vic Laurie presenting his continued series of Windows Tips, a solid line up of interesting topics for the cold winter months.

I want to thank the members for their continued vote of confidence in my leadership of the Princeton PC Users Group. As I enter my fifth year as president, I hope that we can continue our growth in membership and grow the interest of our members to become more active in our group.

I look forward to seeing you all on January 10, 2000. §

Windows 9X Tips: My Favorite Free Utilities

By: Vic Laurie - PPCUG

The holidays have come and gone but the bills are still with us so let us talk of something free. The advent of a New Year (and millennium if you are not a purist) has spawned the usual plethora of people making lists of one thing or another and I am going to join the fun. In a previous article (see http://www.ppcug-nj.org/articles/vic_laurie/freeware.html) I discussed the many places to go on the Internet for a whole variety of free software. There are some really useful things to be had and I am going to give my Top Ten list of free utilities. Naturally, it is a personal choice and others would doubtless make different selections. But for what it's worth, here goes.

First, however, let me point out that a great favorite of mine, Microsoft's *Power Toys*, is not on the list. That is not because I no longer espouse it but because I have mentioned it so often already. The component *TweakUI* is on the Windows 98 installation CD (but not for Second Edition) so many users have it already. If truth be told *TweakUI* is becoming a little fusty and for some, *X-Setup*, described below, is a superior alternative. Also I am not including any other of Microsoft's various add-ons, useful though they may be, since I think of them as really part of the operating system (Bill Gates would be proud). They are all at the Microsoft download site (wherever that is when you read this) or on the Windows installation CD.

Aside from being free, all of the following programs have the common characteristics that they are quite small (with one exception) and easy to uninstall if you do not like them. They are given in no particular order. They are available at many of the typical freeware sites mentioned in my article cited above as well as at the sites given below.

Notepad+

The text editor Notepad that comes with Windows is pretty puny with limited capabilities. There are many substitute applications available with more or less similar improvements. (See http://www.ppcug-nj.org/articles/vic_laurie/potpourri.html.) I use a text editor quite frequently and I happen to like *Notepad+*. It is available at many places including its home http://www.xs4all.nl/~theroge/. Among the features listed by the author:

"No more file size barrier. Opens multiple files. MAPI enabled to send files through e-mail. Drag-and-drop of selected text. User-definable fonts & colors, Open & Save dialogues Filters"

Irfanview

Irfanview has got to be one of the best bargains on the Internet. Although whatever Web browser you use is typically the default viewer for graphics files such as JPG and GIF, they are pretty big and clumsy for simple file viewing and not at all versatile. Office suites may also have graphics software but they are typically overkill for doing relatively simple things. *Irfanview* really shines here. This very fast image viewer/converter supports all major graphics formats, including BMP, DIB, JPG, GIF, PNG, PCX, ANI, TIF, TGA, and more. It will play video files AVI, MOV, and MPG (assuming the basic Windows Media Player is installed). It also has TWAIN support, slide shows, batch conversion, and editing features such as crop, blur, and sharpen. It consists of a single EXE file of less than 400 Kbytes and a Help file of 340 Kbytes. It is widely available on the Web including its US home site http://members.home.com/rsimmons/irfanview/english.htm

A Quartet of PC Magazine Utilities

Over the years Neil Rubenking and his colleagues at *PC Magazine* have provided a real service to the PC community by turning out one useful free utility after the other. I have used many of them. For a general list go to http://www.zdnet.com/pcmag/stories/downloads/0,9063,2350368,00.html or http://www.zdnet.com/downloads/pcmutil.html. For the purposes of this article I have chosen four but I could have chosen others just as well.

Folder Pointers

http://www.zdnet.com/pcmag/pctech/content/18/15/ut1815.001.html

With this nifty utility, you can place any folder you choose on the Start menu as a cascading entry. Thus you can view its contents, including sub-folders and their contents, without having to open a separate window. Since the *Desktop* folder includes *My Computer*, adding this folder pointer gives you submenu access to your entire system. Folder Pointers does require the Windows Desktop Update function that comes with Internet Explorer 4 and will not work on systems where only Internet Explorer 5 has been installed. It will work if Internet Explorer 4 was previously installed and then upgraded to Internet Explorer 5. For reasons known only to Microsoft, new systems with Windows 98SE do not include the Desktop Update.

Clip Trak

http://www.zdnet.com/downloads/pcmutil.html

I cut-and-paste text a lot. Unfortunately, each new use of the Windows Clipboard erases the previous contents, which greatly reduces its practical functionality. There are a number of programs available (usually for a price) that allow multiple entries. *Clip Trak* is as good as any. It saves copies of the text you put in the Windows clipboard, and gives you easy access to them for later use. It maintains a list and a cache of the most recent 100 clips that you've copied to the clipboard.

MenuEdit

http://hotfiles.zdnet.com/cgi-bin/texis/swlib/hotfiles/info.html?fcode=000OG4&b=pcm

The right-click context menu is a very useful tool. It can be edited in several ways, including by direct Registry editing, but this utility makes it simple. It lets you easily edit the commands available on context menus or add new ones. You can make menu commands available to all files on the system, to all files of a specified type, or to all file types the system does not know

Windows 9xTips continued on page 5

Is On-Line Privacy Dead?

By: Sol Libes - PPCUG

Online companies have assured us that even though they could track user's actions their identity remained anonymous. Many advertisers have for years placed "cookies" on user computer hard disks. They then could tailor their web pages to each user's specific needs. However, they assured us that the cookies did not identify the specific user.

E-Mail Cookies

Advertisers, in their eagerness to promote their products and services, are finding ways to get around the anonymity of cookies. The most recent stratagem is to have the cookie tell the advertiser the user's e-mail address. From this they can build a profile on each user of the World Wide Web.

This has become possible via a security hole in most e-mail programs. If you want to see exactly how this is done go to the following web page:

http://www.tiac.net/users/smiths/privacy/cookleak.htm

Briefly, the system works like this. Most e-mail programs can accept HTML code and banner ads as part of e-mail messages. The e-mail programs can also accept cookie that are placed in the user's cookie file. The sender knows the recipient's e-mail address and can embed it in the cookie file.

Now, when the user uses his browser to access a web page that looks for cookies it can get the cookie and know the e-mail address of the person viewing the web page. Web marketing companies (Exactis, Digital Impact, and Responsys) have appeared serving many different web advertisers that specialize in this activity. They collect the data and develop a detailed profile of the user's web browsing activities, which they market to advertisers. The following advertisers are already using this data: Barnes and Noble, eToys, Cooking.com, Microsoft, and InfoBeat.

Junkbusters <www.Junkbusters.com> and several advocacy groups including The Electronic Privacy Information Center <www.epic.org>, the Center for Media Education, Privacy International, Ralph Nader's Consumer Project on Technology, The Consumer Federation of America and the Electronic Frontier Foundation have petitioned the FTC asking that supplier's of e-mail programs close this security hole in their programs.

It is interesting to note that in Europe the European Union does not permit companies to collect and transfer personal data to United States data gathering companies.

You can protect your privacy to some extent by sending your e-mail through an anonymous service like the Global Internet Liberty Campaign's W3 Anonymous Remailer <www.gilc.org/speech/anonymous/remailer.html>, or a free Web-based e-mail service like Hotmail <www.hotmail.com> or HushMail <ww.hushmail.com>, which offers encryption-based privacy features that other Web-based e-mail services lack. Both ask for personal information when you create an account, but nothing says that information has to be true.

Another way of protecting yourself is to limit your cookies file to contain only the cookies you need to surf the web sites you are interested in. Several shareware programs are available for this purpose and can be downloaded from a number of web sites (e.g. Cookie Crusher and Cookie Pal). If you are using Windows 98 and Internet Explorer, you can install a VBScript program to manage cookies. <www.zdnet.com/pcmag/pctech/content/solutions/in1801c.htm>

Web Bugs & Privacy Holes

A Web Bug is an HTML graphics tag in a Web page or in an E-mail message that is designed to monitor who is reading the Web page or Email message. Web Bugs are often invisible because they are typically only 1 pixel in size. An example of a GIF image HTML tag that collects data on the http: www.quicken.com web page can be found at: http://www.tiac.net/users/smiths/privacy/wbfaq.htm

The tag sends the user's IP address (in the case of users of Cable modem, DSL, etc.) which tells the advertisers exactly who the user is. It also includes the time the page was viewed, the browser used, and the information in a previously set cookie value. The following companies are already reported to be using the Web Bug technique: Quicken, FedEx, Metamucil, Oil of Olay, and StatMarket. This technique can also be used in HTML newsgroup messages.

Microsoft and Netscape have recently disclosed that their browsers contain potentially serious privacy and security holes. Both have been busy creating patches, which can be downloaded from their web sites to close these holes. For more information go to <news.cnet.com/news/0-1005-200-1494316.html> and <www.winmag.com/fixes/webbugs.htm>.

Commercial Web Site Security

Most commercial Web sites, portals, and online businesses ask you to give information about yourself in exchange for the free news, software, and other services they provide. The site may claim that it doesn't share the information with anyone else. However, government search warrants, subpoenas, and marketer's pressures have in many instances opened these files. Also, Webmasters, who administer these sites, have committed errors that make user personal information available.

Protect yourself by giving a made-up name, address, and phone number. Skip the optional fields and look for an option to not receive promotional mailings.

Bugging Web Plug-ins

In November, Real Networks was caught collecting musical preference information on users of its Real Jukebox Music Player. Music Player was a web browser plug-in program that a user downloaded from the web. In order to download it the user filled out a questionnaire that Real Networks required. What the user did not know was that the player software monitored its use reporting back information on every song the user listened to via the software.

The InfoBeat Newsletter Service also was found to be collecting data on readers and forwarding it to advertisers. Once exposed in the press, both Real Networks and InfoBeat have promised to remove the code from their software and cease collecting this data.

And then there are things such as Comet. Comet is software that can be downloaded from the web that changes your Web

Is On-Line Privacy Dead continued on page 6

Minutes for the General Meeting December 13, 1999

By: Ed Weiss

At 7:55 pm, Paul opened the meeting. At this, time the slate of candidates for the club's offices were announced. A vote was held, and by popular demand, all candidates were elected. The only office that remains unfilled is that of Vice President. Paul and the board will attempt to find an individual to fill the position.

The second item discussed at the meeting is that DUES are DUE !! Paul then questioned the group to see if there was any interest in having past newsletters available on a CDrom. A number of people responded favorably to the question, and this process will be looked into.

At 8:08 pm, Paul then turned the meeting over to Debra Pfundstein of Microsoft, who proceeded to give a very enthusiastic demonstration of a number of Microsoft products that are currently available, and would make excellent Christmas gifts.

Debra also answered a number of questions, both related to the products, as well as other items of interest about Microsoft. Debra's email address is debrapf@microsoft.com. Debra also mentioned that questions about Microsoft products concerning Y2K should be directed to 1-888-MSFT-Y2K.

At 10:03 pm, the presentation was over, and a number of people stayed to ask questions, and partake of the holiday party goodies.

The board would like to take a moment and thank all the members for helping to put away the chairs and tables, and clean up the room after all the meetings.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. §

Windows 9x Tips continued from page 3

about. You can also set the default command to be executed when an icon is double-clicked. The program was originally written for Windows 95 but I have used it in Windows 98 and Windows 98SE with no problems.

Startup Cop

http://www.zdnet.com/pcmag/stories/solutions/0,8224,394203,00.html

When you turn on your computer all sorts of programs may start running in the background without your knowledge (see http://www.ppcug-nj.org/articles/vic_laurie/fits_and_starts.html). Often there is no need for them and system memory and resources are drained unnecessarily. Sometimes they even cause unstable system behavior. Since startups can be loaded from any of six Registry keys as well as from the Startup menu, a utility to manage startups is almost a must for most users of Windows 95. Windows 98 users have MSCONFIG but I recommend installing *Startup Cop* as well. With this utility you have easy control over what programs are loaded when you turn on your system as well as some other useful features.

Dimension 4

http://www.pcworld.com/fileworld/file_description/0,1458,1856,00.html

Not everybody is compulsive as I am about having the correct time; but there must be quite a few of us in view of the number of time-synchronization utilities available (many for a price). *Dimension 4* Time Synchronization Utility accesses public time servers on the Internet to set and maintain your system clock.

EasyCleaner

http://www.saunalahti.fi/tonihele/

This Registry cleaner and duplicate file finder has become a favorite recommendation all around the Web. I mentioned this program in the November newsletter and since then it has gotten even better. The author (a 15 year old Finnish kid who drives an old motorcycle- but don't hold that against him) has added the one thing it really needed-an undo function. It is as fast and neat a utility of this type as any I have ever used. Naturally, no Registry cleaner should be used without first backing up.

Disk Catalog

http://www.rob.cybercomm.nl

Over the years I have accumulated a number of Zip disks with an assortment of many files, many in compressed format. Now that I have a CD burner, I am accumulating CDs with even more files. When I need to find a particular file, I could spend a lot of time hunting if I did not have *Diskcat*. It makes a catalog of the contents of any disk assigned a letter by Windows. The catalogs are efficiently stored and include the contents of any Zip-archives. They can be searched with wildcards and can contain descriptive information about files in the catalog.

X-Setup

http://www.xteq.com/products/xset/

This is becoming the standard for all-purpose system tweaking. Because of its modular, plug-in format it is easily kept up to date. It already has entries for Windows 2000. It is well supported, with updates and additions appearing regularly at the Web site above. Because of its many functions it is the exception to my rule that utilities should be small. The download is about 4 Mbytes. *X-Setup* allows you to change more than 400 functions with some simple button clicks. Some topics *X-Setup* covers: Windows, Internet Explorer, Instant Messaging, Office, Explorer appearance, Server options, Network settings and Security.

Disclaimer: Everything mentioned here works on my and other computers but Windows systems can be highly idiosyncratic so your results may differ. Always back up before installing new software and do a virus check on anything you download. §

Is On-Line Privacy Dead continued from page 4

browser's cursor into a cartoon character. Behind the scenes, it is also tracking your movements on the Web. For more information on this invasion of your privacy go to <news.cnet.com/news/0-1005-200-1474252.html?tag=st.ne.1005-200-1489189>.

There are already several hundred Web browser plug-ins already in use. Who knows what is in the other plug-ins. If asked to fill out a questionnaire to get the plug-in, use your judgement when filling it out.

Software and Hardware Privacy

On the software front, Microsoft faced the fury of privacy advocates for collecting data from owner's systems. Microsoft acknowledged that Windows 98 collected information from each user through an on-line registration process and the "Windows Update" feature on the Start menu.

Earlier in the year, Intel disclosed that they are each of their newer processor chips contain a unique serial number, which can be transmitted to Internet sites for identification purposes. Most systems currently on the market have a BIOS setting to disable access to this serial number. Check if yours is disabled.

Protecting Your Privacy

If you are concerned about maintaining your privacy then there is software available that enables you to create a digital persona, or pseudonym, to mask your identity as you surf, Browse the web, use e-mail, chat sessions, telnet and access newsgroups. One such product is Freedom 1.0 from Zero-Knowledge <www.freedom.net>. It routes your Internet communications through its servers, which hides both the source and destination IP addresses. and substitutes a new identity, and allows you to filter cookies that identify you. Similar products and services are available from Lumeria <www.Lumeria.com>.

Conclusion

We are fortunate that we have several organizations, such as the ones mentioned above that are watching out to protect our privacy. It looks like it will be a never-ending battle. As far as the e-mail security hole, we will have to wait for our government to force the companies to close the hole. There does not appear to be any way of preventing Web Bugs except that users can inspect the source code of web pages. If users see an image tag with a 1-bit size then they should stop accessing that page.

For more protecting your privacy on-line, you can go to the following web sites:

http://www.ptclub.com/Links.html
http://www.privacyexchange.org/tsi/ptintro.htm
http://cyber.findlaw.com/privacy/anon.html.
http://slaughterhouse.com/privacy.html,
http://proxys4all.cgi.net/
http://www.ultimate-anonymity.com/
http://www.shadow-chasers.com/shadowknows.html
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I wish to acknowledge the following for reviewing this article and contributing information: Jon Abolins, Joel May, Victor Laurie and Lennie Libes. §

December General Meeting & Holiday Party Pictures

Digital Photos by Ed Weiss

The Programmer's Prayer

Our program, which art in memory
Hello be thy name
Thy operating system come
Thy commands be done
At the Printer
As it is on the screen.
Give us this day our daily data
And forgive us our input/output errors
As we forgive those whose circuits are faulty.
Lead us not into frustration
And deliver us from power surges.
For this is the algorithm
Application and solution
Looping forever and ever.
Return.

PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

http://www.ppcug-nj.org

PPCUG Member E-mail Directory

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(Last Update: 1 January 2000)
Send Updates to kurivchack_p@compuserve.com for inclusion in this listing.

Consultants Corner

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NEW MEMBERS

Seymour Adler
Jerry Goodkin

Thank You for joining us in 2000!

Welcome to the Users Group

The Lawrence Library is at the corner of Business Route 1 South and Darrah Lane.

From Princeton and North: Take US Route 1 South, past the Quaker Bridge / Mercer Shopping Centers. Continue on approximately 1 3/4 mile past I295 to the Route 1 split, stay to the right to Business Route 1(Brunswick Pike). First traffic light is Darrah Lane. Library is on right side. Park in lot towards Route 1 and to the rear. Enter Library at main enterance in front. Meeting rooms A & B are located through glass door on Route 1 side of building.

From Trenton and South: Take I295 North to US Route 1 South. Library is approximately 1 3/4 miles south of I295. Continue south to Business Route 1(Brunswick Pike). First traffic light is Darrah Lane. Library is on right side. Park in lot towards Route 1 and to the rear. Enter Library at main enterance in front. Meeting rooms A & B are located through glass door on Route 1 side of building.

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