

PPCUG

NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

Monday February 14, 2000 Use A Computer & The Internet To Do Your Taxes

Dr. Ronald Rouse

With tax filing time only two months away, it is time to consider using your computer and the internet to prepare and file your federal tax return. Quicken's TurboTax program is one of the most popular such program. Come and see a demo and have your questions answered.

At

Lawrence Library

Meeting 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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Yes! It is that time of year to renew your membership with the PPCUG. Please bring your check to the February meeting or mail it in to the. This is your last newsletter if you do not renew!

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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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

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

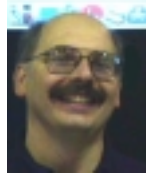
Vic Laurie will continue the series of Win 9x Tips & Tricks

April 10, 2000 - Intelligent Video Cameras on the Web

Keith Sproul will be here again to enlighten us on new techniques

May 8, 2000 - Tentative - Web Lifestyles by Microsoft

June 12, 2000 - To Be Announced!



Presidents Message

by Paul Kurivchack

Scheduling speakers for user groups can be a very frustrating task. Just ask Sol Libes about it. He has been juggling the speakers for the past two months now. Back a few months ago Fred Kagel was scheduled to speak about the book "Microsoft Office Annoyances" but due to a family situation, we rescheduled him for the February meeting instead of January. Now he will be unable to speak at the February meeting and was not able to commit to a future date at this time.

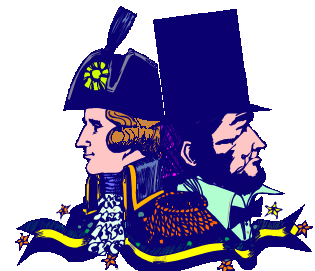
So, what does the group do when a speaker is unable to present? Tap our members who have experience with software or hardware to speak at a moments notice. Thanks to Sol's quick action, Ron Rouse will speak about TurboTax and how to use it to file your 1999 Federal Taxes. Ron has been teaching this class for a while now at the senior's group and will cover TurboTax and along with other popular tax programs. It should be very useful at this time of the year.

Thanks to Paul Bergsman for his presentation at the January meeting on controlling devices with your PC. For those of us in attendance, Paul covered a lot of ground with the theory and applications of interfacing a PC to the outside world. It was a very interesting presentation to say the least!

Our membership renewal is moving along at a very good pace. We have over 50 percent renewals to this date, so if you have not renewed yet, please send your check to the PO Box or bring it with you to the February meeting, as this is the last newsletter that will be mailed.

On a similar subject concerning our members who have e-mail, please check your address listed in our members list here in the newsletter. Sol uses those addresses for his monthly meeting announcements and as of late has been getting a number of returned messages. For those AOL users, please make sure that your spamming software does not kick out Sol's messages. Sol will be noting the returned messages and we will be dropping them off the member e-mail directory. So if you want to stay in the directory and want to receive the monthly meeting notices, please let us know.

See you all on the Valentine's Day, February 14th and do not forget President's day on



Windows 9X Tips: SPLASH!

By: Vic Laurie - PPCUG

As everyone who has used a PC will have observed, software companies often try to use our video screens as billboards. They put up their logos or advertise themselves in various other ways. The larger displays are often referred to as *splash screens*. While many people may have developed immunity to these attempts to grab our attention and are able to ignore them, some of us are annoyed by these intrusions into our space. For those who prefer to have more control over the content of their own computers, I am going to give some prophylactic measures against unwanted logos and the like. A couple of reference sites are <http://www.dgyates.demon.co.uk/splash.htm> and <http://www.annoyances.org/win95/win95ann7.html#01>. The free all-purpose tweaking tool, *X-Setup*, has a number of settings for the control of splash screens. It can be obtained at <http://www.xteq.com/products/xset/>.

Windows Start Screen

We might as well begin with the most ubiquitous of all splash screens. Many people may pay no attention to that well-known screen with the clouds that appears at boot-up; but if desired, the screen is easily turned off or even replaced. The easy way to remove the splash screen is to use *TweakUI*. Click the Boot tab and uncheck the entry, "Display splash screen while booting." *X-setup* allows this option as well. It can also be done the hard way by editing the file MSDOS.SYS. In spite of its SYS extension, it is a text file and can be edited in Notepad. It is a hidden system file and the procedure is a little tedious. It is described at <http://users.aol.com/axcel216/msdos.htm>.

If you would like to see your own personal screen at boot-up (and also at shutdown) the procedure is described at <http://www.windows-help.net/windows98/tune-23.shtml>. There is also a *PC Magazine* utility LogoMania that lets you replace the standard logo with your own animated logo bitmap. It is at <http://www.zdnet.com/pcmag/pcstech/content/16/06/ut1606.001.html>.

OEM Splash Screen

Even before the Windows start screen, you may see a screen from the manufacturer of your computer, known as the OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) screen. This is loaded by the BIOS so preventing it is a little tricky. However, *X-Setup* allows you to replace it with a screen of your choice if you wish.

Anti-virus Programs

Both Norton and McAfee are fond of splash screens. When you start a virus scan with Norton, up pops the bespectacled visage of Peter Norton himself (except the very latest version, which has a different splash screen). Fortunately, there is an undocumented file *Logo_off.reg* located in the Norton AntiVirus folder. Double-clicking this file (or merging it into your Registry) keeps the logo from being shown. If you miss Mr. Norton and want him back, there is also a file *Logo_on.reg*.

To remove the McAfee splash screens you will have to edit a couple of files. Back up the files first. To disable the splash screen when Vshield loads at Windows boot-up, edit the DEFAULT.VSH file in the McAfee program files directory.

Under the [General] section change the entry
bNoSplash=0
to
bNoSplash=1

To disable the splash screen for VirusScan first turn off the program. Then edit the DEFAULT.VSC file.

Under the [Scan Options] section change
bSkipSplash=0
to
bSkipSplash =1

Unfortunately, every time you update your virus definitions you may have to repeat this procedure.

E-mail Programs

Here is another place where all the vendors want to make sure you don't forget their name.

Eudora Pro

Search for a file called EUDORA.INI and open it in Notepad. Find the section headed "Settings". Add a line "NoSplashScreen=1" (without quotes).

Outlook Express

For OE 4 you can edit the Registry as described on Windows-Help.Net at <http://216.55.4.177/windows98/oe-13.shtml>. For OE 5 the applicable Registry key is somewhat different. Go to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Identities\{GUID}\Software\Microsoft\Outlook Express\5.0 and follow the same editing procedure as described for OE 4. The {GUID} in the key refers to some long number randomly generated by your computer and is your personal ID. If editing the Registry is not your thing, *X-Setup* has an entry for this tweak.

Netscape Communicator 4.5+

It is not exactly a splash screen but Netscape Communicator 4.5 and higher will automatically load the page, "Netscape Communications Services/Welcome to Netscape Messenger", every time Messenger is started. Changing this requires an edit of the file named *prefs.js*. First be sure to exit Netscape. Go to the folder \Netscape\Users\{username}\. Find the file named *prefs.js* and make a backup copy. Using Notepad or other text editor (but not Word), add the following line to *prefs.js*:

```
user_pref("mailnews.start_page.enabled", false);
```

Note that the semi-colon at the end is required. When saving the edited file make sure that the text editor does not save it as a .txt file but retains the original name *prefs.js*.

Internet Explorer Title Bar

As well as by putting up splash screens, vendors may advertise themselves in other ways. One very common spot for company names is in the title bar at the top of Internet Explorer. If you are using software from an ISP like AOL, its name will show up

Creating a Small LAN & Proxy Server

By: Sol Libes - PPCUG

I am a retired Senior Citizen and a volunteer at a Senior Citizen Center where we teach a number of computer courses. We have two classrooms with eight computers in each room. We have two ISP accounts and two phone lines. When we teach the Internet course we would like to have a student at each computer accessing the Internet. We therefore decided to install a LAN (Local Area Network) and a Proxy Server program such that all eight students could use the Internet at the same time. This article relates our experience doing this.

The Hardware & Software

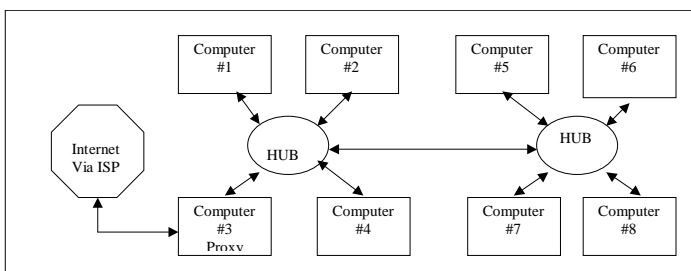
For each room, we purchased two Linksys "EtherFast 10/100 Network in a Box" kits (\$100 each) <<http://www.linksys.com>>. Each kit included a Hub, two PCI NICs (Network Interface Cards), two 15-foot Cat-5 cables, NIC driver software, and instructions. Also, we purchased four more NICs (\$19 each) and five cables (\$50) since we wanted to have a total of eight computers on the LAN.

The Hub automatically switches between 10 and 100Mbps operation. We found that it always operated at 100Mbps. The Hub has five ports with one of the ports used to interconnect the Hubs to create an eight-port Hub system. This is called stacking. The LAN is called a Peer-to-Peer arrangement since any user can access files and printers on any other user's system (there is password protection and access lock-out ability).

The kit also included a CD with the "Internet LanBridge" software so that systems can share a single connection. We felt that for an eight-user LAN we needed a more powerful Proxy Client-Server program. We choose the "Midpoint Gateway" Proxy Server software <http://www.midpoint.com> (\$250) which works with up to 10 clients. The Midpoint software contained a cache to speed up multi-user performance, server management tools, and works with many applications including different browsers, e-mail programs, FTP, and both standard ISP and AOL connections.

The total cost for the 8-user system came to \$572, or about \$72 per user.

The organization of the LAN and server is shown in the figure below.



Installing the LAN

To install the hardware all we had to do was install the NICs in PCI slots in each computer, plug the Hubs into power and connect the NICs to the Hubs with Cat-5 Ethernet cables. A cable was also run between the Hubs as shown.

We then powered up the computers running Windows 98 Second Edition. The Windows Plug-And-Play function detected that new hardware had been installed and ran the "Add New Hardware Wizard" asking us to insert the manufacturer's floppy disk containing the NIC driver software to install the driver. It also created settings for the NIC in the Control Network window. We did have to do some of the settings ourselves (e.g. enable file and print sharing) and these were described in the NIC manual.

Everything went smoothly on six of the computers. When we clicked on the "Network Neighborhood" icon on the desktop the other computers were listed and clicking on the icon for each computer allowed us to access folders and files on the remote computer. We now had a working Peer-to-Peer LAN.

However, two of the computers (they were all supposedly identical machines) did not see the other systems on the LAN. We spent some time checking settings, cables, seeing that the NICs were installed correctly and did not find anything wrong. The manual said that as a last case resort we should delete the driver and the Network settings, turn off power and start over again. On one computer this worked. Apparently, the Windows Plug-and-play function did not work the first time. On the other computer, we had to go through the re-installation several times before the NIC driver would work.

After about six hours of work we had an eight-user Peer-to-Peer LAN operational.

Installing the Proxy Server

Two of the computers contained 56K modem cards. We chose one to be the server and installed the Midpoint Gateway software on it. Midpoint will work with multiple modems and ISP connections for even faster performance. We elected to go with the single modem configuration for simplicity. Midpoint will also work with other servers (e.g. a printer server).

There was no printed manual. Rather the manual was an Acrobat file on the CD (102 pages) plus an FAQ file containing troubleshooting information (another 60 pages). We decided to proceed without printing the manuals. When we ran into difficulties we printed about 30 of the pages containing the most important information.

We went through the installation using the default settings suggested by the manufacturer. When we finished installing the Proxy Server software we found that the LAN no longer worked on the computer containing the Server but still worked on the other computers. We again deleted the NIC driver and NIC Network settings and reinstalled them. We checked the Proxy Server settings. We then started studying the manual printing out the more important pages. Nothing we did would get the LAN and the Proxy Server working on the machine.

Finally, out of desperation, we decided to remove the Proxy Server software from the system and reinstall the NIC driver. Now the LAN again worked on the computer. Rather than reinstall the Proxy Server on the system we decided to install it on the other computer containing a modem. This time there was

Creating a Small LAN continued on page 6

there. Your ISP may also customize the animated Internet Explorer logo in the upper right corner. The default name, of course, is Microsoft. However, it is easy to place whatever heading you prefer in the title bar. There is a specific key in the Registry where the information to be displayed is kept. A detailed discussion is available in Microsoft Knowledge Base article Q176497. (Knowledge Base articles can be searched at <http://support.microsoft.com/search/>) The Registry value to be edited is HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Main\Window Title. There is also some discussion at <http://www.infoworld.com/cgi-bin/displayNew.pl?/livingst/990920bl.htm>. If you have been reading the previous Newsletter articles on the Registry and want to try using a REG file, the one given below will remove branding from IE and restore the default Microsoft settings. Copy and paste the material between the lines to a new, blank text file using Notepad. Save the file as *filename.reg*, where filename is whatever you choose. Double-clicking the file will merge the new settings into your Registry.

```
----- CUT HERE -----
REGEDIT4
;
; Registry Update File to remove IE Branding
;
[HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\INTERNET
EXPLORER\MAIN]
"BigBitmap"="Default"
"SmallBitmap"="Default"
"Window Title"="Microsoft Internet Explorer"
[HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Internet
Explorer\Toolbar]
"BrandBitmap"="Default"
"SmBrandBitmap"="Default"

[HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Outlook
Express]
"Window Title"="Outlook Express"
;
----- CUT HERE -----
```

Those who are leery of directly editing the Registry can get a small VB script at http://members.xoom.com/_XMCM/dbknox/registry/cosmetic/scripts_desc/chgietitle.htm

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 editing. If you are not sure what some of the things discussed here mean, do not try them. \$

PCDI NEWS RELEASE

**DATE: JANUARY 31
609-924-6280**

CONTACT: AMY RHETT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

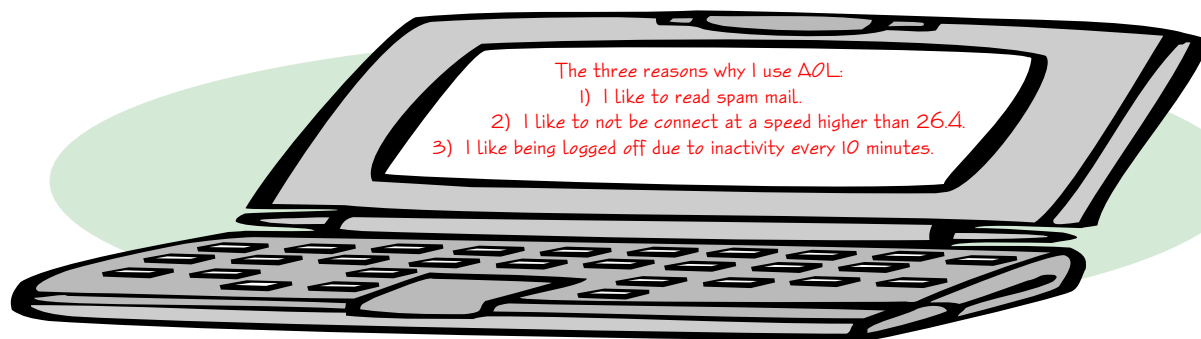
Dan Schulman, President and chief operating officer of Priceline.com, the online company that allows consumers to set prices for services, will give a talk at Princeton University on the future of the internet, e-commerce, and information technology. Entitled "The Digital Revolution: A Look Ahead," the lecture is sponsored by the Princeton Child Development Institute as part of its 30th anniversary celebration.

Mr. Schulman, a benefactor of the Institute, spent 18 years at AT&T before joining Priceline last June. At AT&T, he was the youngest member of the Operations Group, the company's senior executive body. As president of AT&T's consumer division, he oversaw the company's long-distance consumer business. He built AT&T's WorldNet service into the largest and fastest growing Internet service provider in the country. Mr. Schulman also served as marketing chief for AT&T's \$24 billion Business Markets Group, where he led the integration of wireless, e-commerce, and local services. USA Today recently featured Mr. Schulman as one of the Internet's most influential executives in a report of the newspaper's second annual technology summit.

Founded in 1970, PCDI was the first community-based research and intervention program in New Jersey for children with autism. Today, the Institute is recognized worldwide as a leader in developing groundbreaking intervention programs based on the science of applied behavior analysis—the only autism treatment proven effective.

PCDI offers a broad spectrum of services for people with autism from infancy through adulthood, and shares model treatment programs with professionals and organizations throughout the U.S. and abroad. Almost half of the children who enter PCDI before age 5 later make transitions to regular schools. Some PCDI graduates are in college and some have graduated and are now pursuing careers. The Institute is one of only a handful of organizations to report such successful outcomes.

The talk by Mr. Schulman will be held on Thursday, February 24 at 7:30 pm in McCosh 50 at Princeton University. It is free and open to the public. For more information, please call PCDI at 609-924-6280.



no problem. Both the Proxy Server and LAN software functioned on the computer. We concluded that these systems were not identical after all and that the system that gave us all the trouble installing the NIC driver and then disabling it when we installed the Proxy Server must have some differences. I should have explored further (e.g. check the BIOS settings) to see if a hardware setting could be the problem. However, we still had more work to do on the Server so I did not bother.

The Midpoint software allowed us to create a client setup floppy disk. We ran this on each computer. This installed the static Server IP address on each client so that each computer could find the server. We chose the DHCP (Dynamic Host Control Protocol) option on the server so that it assigned IP addresses to the clients automatically). We configured the Proxy Server to automatically dial and connect to our ISP (Internet Service Provider) when any client runs software that wishes to access the Internet.

To test that the Proxy Server functioned we ran Internet Explorer and tried to access a web site. IE could not find a website. We decided to use the Ping program in Windows to see first if we could do a loopback ping to test the connection to the hub. There was no problem here. We then tried to ping the Proxy Server and found that this did not work. We tried to ping from the Proxy Server to each client and found that this worked. Obviously something was wrong on the clients. A check of IE's Internet settings showed that it had not been configured to use the Proxy Server for an Internet Connection. Entering the server's IP address fixed the problem and we were able, at last, to access pages on the World Wide Web.

Printer Sharing

We set up two printers on the network. The printers were connected to two of the computers and settings in Windows allowed them to be shared. If one expects to do a lot of printing then it would be advisable to create a printer server on the LAN.

We do not do that much printing so that we felt this was not necessary.

Performance

When a client runs a browser and makes a web page request, that request is sent to the Proxy Server, which has a cache. The Proxy Server's cache is independent of the Client browser cache. The Proxy Server checks its cache to see if the requested web page files are in its cache. If it is, then the web page files are sent to the Client via the LAN at 100Mbps (as opposed to the slow telephone modem operating at best 50Kbps). In this case the web page appears instantaneously. If the requested web page files are not in the Proxy Server's cache then the web page request is forwarded to the ISP.

The ISP services the request getting and forwarding the web page files to the Proxy Server. The Proxy Server forwards the files to the requesting client and at the same time places a copy of the web page files in its cache so that other clients can access them.

Since this is a classroom and the students are accessing the same web pages most of the time, the students rarely have to wait for the pages to appear on their screens.

The Proxy Server also creates a firewall between the clients and the Internet such that we can have file sharing without worry of a hacker getting into the systems. The firewall is created because the IP addresses for the Clients are different from the Server's IP address and someone on the Internet cannot see a specific user's IP address.

The system containing the Proxy Server software can also be used as a client. If one brings up the Proxy Server window and s/he will see all the activity on the server in real time. There also are administration tools that allow one to delete files from the cache, adjust the size of the cache, run a performance enhancement utility, and do accounting. Despite the installation problems that ate up hours of our time, we were very delighted with how this project turned out. §

Minutes for the General Meeting January 10, 2000

By: Ed Weiss

At 7:50 PM, Paul opened the meeting, several announcements were made:

- Starting this year, February will be the last issue of the newsletter sent to members who have not paid their dues.
- The new representative from Microsoft contacted Paul, and is anxious to come to meet the group (May June or July time frame)
- TCF will be May 6th & 7th. Starting next meeting there will be a list for volunteers to sign up to help.
- Paul offered two pairs of gloves that are supposed to aid with Carpal Tunnel Syndrome to any takers in the group.

At 08:06 PM, Paul turned the meeting over to Paul Bergsman who presented to the group on how to control different items via the parallel port on your PC. He recommended that the

Operating System of choice would be DOS, mainly because windows does not allow access to the parallel ports in the same manner that DOS provides. The group was also presented Paul's expertise on how to design and generate PC boards, and he also suggested a program available on most electronic CDroms called PADS. This program is used to layout the paths on the printed circuit board. Paul finished up with the lecture at 09:02 and returned the meeting back to Paul Kurivchack.

Paul announced that there would be a board meeting on the 18th due to the library being closed for the holiday on the 17th.



PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

<http://www.ppcug-nj.org>

PPCUG Member E-mail Directory

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Arrowsmith	Donald L.	donald.arrowsmith@bigfoot.com	Landis	Houston E.	judge@alumni.princeton.edu
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(Last Update: 6 February 2000)

Send Updates to kurivchack_p@compuserve.com for inclusion in this listing.

Consultants Corner

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You can advertise your consulting business for \$25 per year in addition to your normal membership fee. The text space is your or your company's name plus five lines.

NEW MEMBERS

**Kyle Donovan
Lewis Edge**

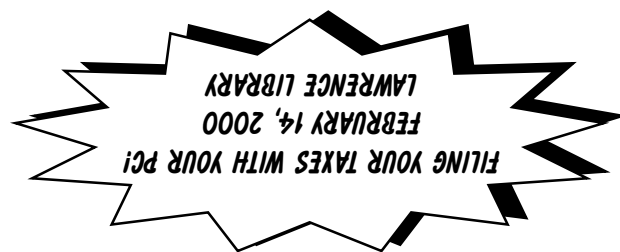
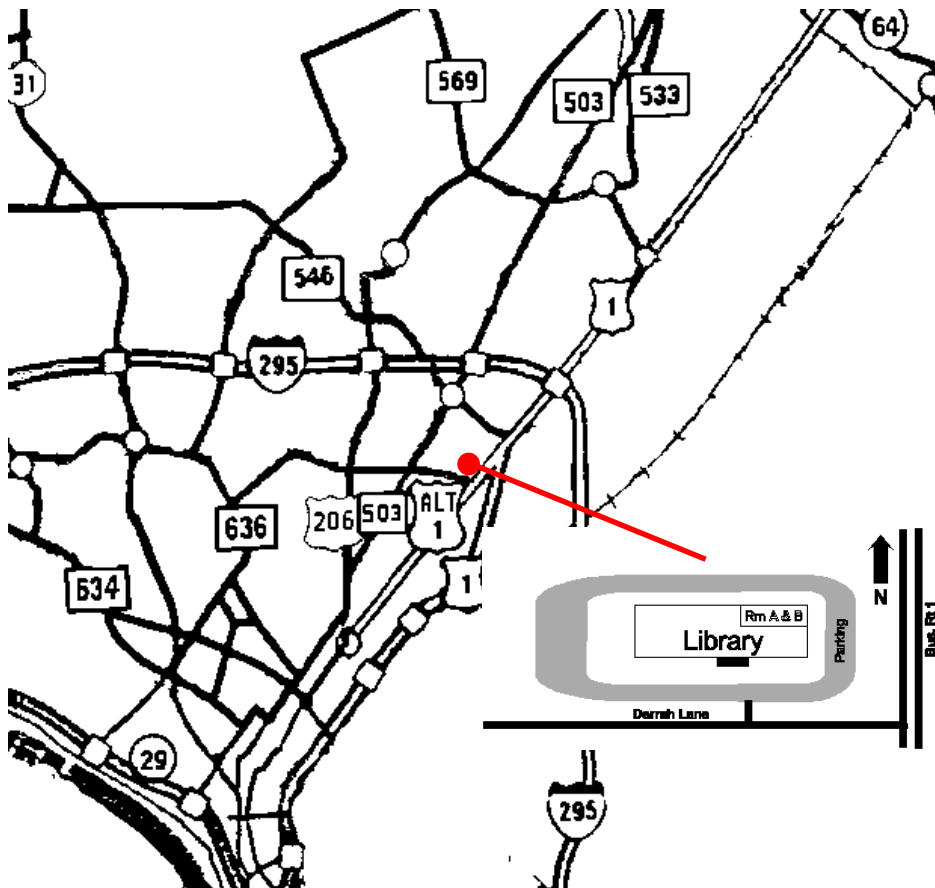
**THANK YOU FOR JOINING US IN
2000!**

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 entrance 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 entrance in front. Meeting rooms A & B are located through glass door on Route 1 side of building.



Princeton PC Users Group
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Rocky Hill, NJ 08553