PPCUG

NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

Monday May 8, 2000

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FOR THE HOME OR OFFICE

Randal Whittle
MGI Software Corporation

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in No Way implies endorsement of its programs*

In this issue

Member of

APCUG
Association of Personal Computer User Groups

Keith Sproul presenting Intelligent Video Cameras on the Web at the April meeting.

Digital Photo by Ed Weiss

Coming Events

May 6 & 7, 2000 - TCF2000, Edison, NJ

Visit the largest computer show on the East Coast for the past 25 years!

May 8, 2000 - MGI Software

Randal Whittle will be here to demo the latest offerings from MGI Software, makes of VideoWave lll, video editing & PhotoSuite III, photo editing software.

June 12, 2000 - Web Lifestyles by Microsoft

Sonal Shah will be back to talk about using the internet to organize, communicate and improve your life.

July 10, 2000 Selling & Buying on the Internet

Sol Libes will discuss how to sell anything on the web!

August 14, 2000 - Create Your Own Personal Web Page

Learn how to get your own web page up and running!

Presidents Message
by Paul Kurivchack

It seemed like just last week that I finished April's newsletter and here it is May already. I hope everyone finished their taxes and are getting ready for TCF2000, our next meeting and Mothers Day.

TCF is upon us and for all the folks who are coming out to help, thanks. It is still not too late to sign up to help or even just stop by during the festival and lend a hand for an hour or so. It would be greatly appreciated.

Our next meeting should be very exiting for all aspiring moviemakers. MGI Software Corporation, makers of VideoWave III and PhotoSuite III will be presenting to the group. VideoWave III is a very inexpensive video editing application that allows you to take all that VHS, 8mm video footage and put it together into a professional looking video presentation. PhotoSuite III is a digital photo editor, which provides extensive editing tools at a very competitive price. Randal Wittle was kind enough to stay over from TCF an extra day to do his presentation. Please let all your friends and business associates to come on Monday night. I would like a capacity crowd if possible. Hopefully Randal will have a couple of copies of the MGI products available to give away at our meeting.

Speaking of video, Keith Sproul did an outstanding job explaining the many difference in video camera technology and their uses on the web. Keith brought enough equipment that I thought I was in a video lab or in a TV studio. Check out Keith's web site: http://dorm.rutgers.edu/~ksproul/camera.htm for additional information on the cameras he demonstrated. On a side note it was interesting that Keith did his presentation on a couple of MACs, proves that we are becoming OS independent and that the content was more important than the operating system or hardware platform that it is running on. Thanks again Keith.

See my "In the Mail Box" section for info about the free software the first 45 members will get at Mondays meeting courtesy of IntelliSeek.

I look forward to seeing many of you at TCF2000 next weekend and at Monday night's meeting.

Windows 9X Tips: Calling 007

By: Vic Laurie - PPCUG

Last month's article discussed some security measures for preventing malicious programs or hackers from gaining access to your computer. There is another more subtle security issue involving programs or code that do not carry out obviously destructive actions but which relay information about you and your system to someone else. Sol Libes discussed some of the aspects in the January Newsletter < http://www.ppcug-nj.org/newsltr.html#past> but the problem is growing rapidly and is the subject of this month's article.

Spyware

Recently, there has been an increasing use of what is often referred to as *spyware*. Developers of software have been searching for new ways to make their efforts pay. As a result, the old concept of shareware has evolved into a variety of forms. Many programs are now offered under the guise of freeware but with strings attached. Among these programs are what is called *adware*, *clickware*, or *bannerware*. The idea is that the cost of a software package will be borne by an advertiser rather than the actual user. Then, in some manner, the sponsor will present the user with advertising and/or in some more subtle way obtain data from the user to be applied toward some advertising end.

Some programs are straightforward in alerting you that advertising banners or pages will be downloaded to your computer and shown to you whenever you try to use that program. Others are less up front and bury the notice about ads and other actions in the EULA (End User License Agreement). Having seen this type of turgid legalese innumerable times when using Microsoft applications, most of us just click the "I agree" button without reading the stuff. If you do read the EULA thoroughly, you may find that you have signed away all your rights to privacy. How legally binding this really is, I am not competent to say, but personally I find the implications disconcerting. Still other software packages do not even bother with hiding details in the legalese but simply carry out surreptitious actions on your system without notifying you beforehand. It is these surreptitious actions that are a cause for concern to many. Given advance notice and a choice, some people are willing to trade the disadvantage of having advertising downloaded to their system for the advantage of obtaining free use of some application software. However, the undisclosed use of certain kinds of tracking methods by some programs has led to much controversy. Applications using these tracking methods have been dubbed "spyware".

The "spy" part of these programs stems from advertisers' desire to present ads targeted at a user's personal habits and predilections. When an application software package is installed, additional tracking software is also installed. In many cases, this tracking software is activated in the background whenever you make an Internet connection, not just when the application is loaded. Not only does it download ads from various sites but also it sends information about your usage and your system back to these sites. If nothing else, your name, company, and e-mail address in Internet Explorer are easily obtained from the Registry. (For example, your name and organization is stored in plain text in the Registry at HKey_Local_Machine\Software\Microsoft\ Windows \CurrentVersion and is available to any Windows program.) If you have filled out the questionnaire that is often presented by the software, that information is also relayed. Aside from privacy issues, unexplained system problems may arise. Since all this Internet activity of the spyware uses bandwidth, it may cause slowness on your system or even instability. The Newsgroups have many stories from people who experienced repeated system crashes due to spyware. Since they were unaware of the existence of the spyware Internet activity, diagnosis of the problem was frustrating until the spyware was removed.

The most notorious examples of spyware involve the company Aureate, which recently changed its name to Radiate. Radiate Media is a company that collects demographic data and provides that data to their customers. "Radiate-enabled" or "Radiate-sponsored" programs have Radiate Media software integrated into them. Over 400 software packages are reported to use Aureate/Radiate technology, including such well-known ones as CuteFTP 3.0, GetRight, and Go!Zilla. The company says that Aureate/Radiate software is already installed on more than 17 million PCs. According to Symantec, <http://service1.symantec.com/SUPPORT/nip.nsf/docid/2000031016363336>,

"…..Each time you start the Radiate-enabled program, the Radiate component in the software pulls down banner ads that you are most likely to view. The Radiate software monitors which banner ads you click on and how long you spend reading a given banner. If you are on-line, this information is sent immediately to Radiate. If you are off-line, the information is stored and transmitted the next time you go on-line."

Steve Gibson at http://grc.com/optout.htm and Brian Livingston at

http://www.infoworld.com/articles/op/xml/00/03/20/000320oplivingston.xml give extensive discussions. Here are some of the findings by Gibson about Aureate/Radiate as stated by Livingston (who refers to the Aureate/Radiate system as a daemon),

"* None of the daemon-carrying software that Gibson analyzed notifies users before they install the uploading/downloading routines.

* None of the uninstall routines of the programs he examined make any attempt to remove or disable the daemon. Data is transferred by the daemon even when the host software is idle or has been deleted.

* Radiate could easily associate specific profiles with names or credit cards, because Radiate accepts online registration fees for host programs that carry the daemon."

Gibson has written a very compact (31k) free program, OptOut, that will analyze your system for Aureate/Radiate soft-

Test Your Internet Connection Speed Easily
By: Sol Libes - PPCUG

Do you feel that your Internet bandwidth (your connection speed) is not as fast as it should be? That your 56K modem, cable, DSL, or ISDN connection's bandwidth is not performing as you have been promised?

Now there is a very easy and simple way to test the performance of your Internet access. Microsoft has put up a web page to test the speed of your Internet connection. The web page is called the "*Bandwidth Speed Test*" and is at:
http://computingcentral.msn.com/topics/bandwidth/ speedtest500.asp

I am fortunate enough to have a cable connection to the Internet via Comcast @Home. I have been using it for about a year now. Comcast promised me that I would achieve a transfer rate of 2Mb/sec.

I frequently transfer large size files. There are times when the transfer takes no time at all. At other times, the transfer rate appears to be slower than a 28.8Kb modem. Hence, I wanted to know how fast by throughput was. To find out I went to the Microsoft web site and ran the test. I ran it ten times (hit the browser refresh key to repeat it) and got the following results:

> 832.7Kb/sec
> 412.5Kb/sec
> 1457.1Kb/sec
> 1813.3Kb/sec
> 1651.8Kb/sec
> 2125.0Kb/sec
> 1426.6Kb/sec
> 824.2Kb/sec
> 1686.1Kb/sec
> 482.3Kb/sec

It is necessary to run this test several times since the Internet is a very complex network whose performance is constantly changing due to the changing activity on the Internet and the server used to perform the test.

From these results I was able to determine that my average bandwidth is 1271.2Kb/sec or typically a little under 1.3Mbps.

As you can see, I actually achieved the promised 2Mb/sec rate once. Twice the test showed that I achieved less than a quarter of the promised speed. Of course and average of 1.3Mbps is very good when you consider that a T1 connection is typically 1.5Mb/sec. And this is much better than my old 56Kbps modem, which was typically about 40Kbps.

I wondered how reliable was this test.   For example, would there be a difference between a test run by the Microsoft server versus a test using a program on my computer and another web server.

To compare the different test methods I downloaded a free MS Windows utility, called "NetMonitor", from the Kissco website <http://www.kissco.com/>. This placed a program on my computer that allowed me to download a file from their web server have my computer determine the transfer speed. I ran the test ten times and determined that my average bandwidth was 1247.4Kb/s. In other words the Microsoft test, which did not require installing any software on my computer, was very close to the NetMonitor program.

Well, now I knew that my ISP service was operating at a fairly decent speed….over 60% of what Comcast promised. There is still nothing that I can do about the poor throughput I get when downloading a file from a server that is very slow and busy servicing many other users.

Incidentally, the Kissco NetMonitor program does have some nice features. It provided me with a little screen showing both the send and receive activity. Thus, I could see if the web server was very busy, pausing between packets or had stopped sending packets. It also showed me the transfer rate of each packet received, and the IP addresses of my system, my ISP, and the URL I was connected to. Kissco also has a free utility called RAM optimizer that they claim speeds up your transfer speed by freeing up RAM. I think that this program should prove worthwhile if you do not have much RAM in your system. They also sell a program that that promises improved Internet performance by optimizing all the system factors which influence bandwidth.

In The Mail Box
By Paul Kurivchack

Recently I received an e-mail from IntelliSeek™ offering our members the chance to try out their product BullsEye® 2, a personal information portal that will make searching the web easier than ever. Well, IntelliSeek™ sent out 50 CD's and they will be distributed to all paid members at the May general meeting. Try BullsEye® 2 out. If you have any comments, positive or negative, let IntelliSeek know about it by contacting jlewis@intelliseek.com. Make sure you also let them know you are a PPCUG –NJ member.

PartitionMagic 5.0
Software Review
By: Paul Kurivchack - PPCUG

PartitionMagic from PowerQuest has been around for a numbers of years now, see my review in the January 1999 PPCUG News of version 4.0, and PartitionMagic 5.0 just keeps the tradition for this product going with it being better and easier to use.

I received our review copy of PartitionMagic 5.0 back in December, quite a while ago, used it on one of my three PC's but just keep putting off writing a review of my experience.

Well here is a quick rundown of some of the new features, Merge Partitions, Convert Partitions and Cleaner User Interface while retaining the ability to create new partitions, formatting partitions, add free space to partitions, changing drive letters along with BootMagic. The area I will cover is the Resize and Merge Partitions using DriveMapper feature. This is one great product for anyone who has multiple smaller partitions due to BIOS restrictions from an older PC who is opting to just physically move hard drives from one PC to another as I did.

To start out the operator interface is much cleaner and simpler to use with only four options to chose from Create, Resize, Redistribute, or Merge.

Resize Partitions

Resizing partitions is a snap. Select resize and the Wizard comes up showing the various partition in both a graphical bar chart format and numerical data. Clicking next brings up a screen where the current size is shown along with a minimum and maximum size allowed. Type in the new size, I wanted to add an additional one gig of space to my C-Drive. Click next which asks where to grab the space from, D-Drive and lastly to confirm what will be done. At this point, select finish and PartitionMagic takes over rebooting your PC into DOS mode where the resizing is performed. Resizing takes place in DOS mode and depending on the amount of resizing, could take considerable time. So, be patient as it works extremely well and is much easier than reformatting the drive and reloading all the applications and data.

Merge Partitions

If you have multiple partitions, using the merge feature is very straightforward process. With the Wizards, you are walked through each step in clear, concise fashion. I found this feature very helpful as PartitionMagic is the type of utility I use only every once and awhile, and since I seldom read any manuals in depth, this is great for me. No need to keep reading the manual for instructions on how to use it.

Once you start the merge wizard, you answer a couple of questions such as partition names, and the name of a folder for the contents of the partition that is being merged. This is so none of your applications or data files are lost and then can be placed in the merged partition. Once you agree to and approve the changes, PartitonMagic takes over, reboots the PC into DOS mode and performs the merge. This portion is somewhat time consuming based on the size of the drives being merged, but PQ provides a simple progress meter which keeps you informed of the merge status. Nice feature to keep you from wondering where in the process you are.

Once the merge is completed, you need to move all you applications and files from the merge folder created and by using DriveMapper, all application will be changed to the now correct path. Very simple and straight forward plus it works!

As I have very simple needs and do not convert partitions from Fat32 to NTFS or vice versa, I can not comment on those functions, but for the features I have used, PartionMagic 5.0 is the best of the best in hard drive utilities and should be in your hard drive utility toolbox.

For further information, visit PowerQuest's web site: www.powerquest.com and check out the User Group area, www.ugr.com for special deals.

In addition, PowerQuest will be at May 10th meeting of NJCC at the North Branch Reformed Church in Bridgewater, NJ. Visit NJCC web site, www.njcc.org for additional information and directions.

Minutes for the General Meeting
April 10, 2000
By: Ed Weiss

07:56 PM - Paul opened the meeting, with discussions on the following topics:

TCF - asking for all interested people to please sign the sheet with the times that they would like to volunteer for. Also stated that the area was going to be fenced in better than last year, and have tables and chairs.

The board meeting would be held on a different day than regularly scheduled.

Speaker for next month's program - was MGI, a company that has made quite a name for themselves with graphic software.

Speaker for June has Microsoft scheduled, and July is going to be "Personal Web Pages" by Sol Libes.

08:02 PM - Paul asked for questions from the floor, and there were two main questions, and one statement. The statement was that STM appears to be out of business selling to the general public. The questions dealt with how to print bindable output, and formatting/Fdisk'ing.

08:14 PM - Paul turned the meeting over to the speaker of the night, Keith Sproul. The topic of tonights program "Cameras on the computer/web" Keith's presentation covered several aspects, ranging from a single picture to live images. He discussed the different types of cameras, and the equipment necessary to connect and display the output.. Although Keith used a Mac for the demo, he explained that the processes were identical no matter what type of computer was used. Keith also gave the following URL as a location to check if you are interested in further info about cameras, their technical spec.'s, and other useful information. http://dorm.rutgers.edu/~ksproul/camera.html

09:32 PM - Paul closed the meeting, Many of the club members went to the front of the meeting room to talk to Keith on a one to one basis, asking many questions and getting some good information. The rest of the members helped put up the chairs, and clean up the room.

Please - If you enjoy the refreshments before the meeting, Kindly put your trash in the containers provided for such. The floor and the tables are not places to leave your empty coffee cups, and trash.

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ware and remove it if desired (Note: it does not remove the application software from which the Aureate daemon came. However, application software often is set up so it will not work without the Aureate file *advert.dll*)

You can also do your own search for the signs of Aureate/Radiate spyware on your machine and remove them if you desire. Open Regedit and look for the following key in your Registry

HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\Software\Aureate\Advertising.

Also try substituting Radiate for Aureate in the key name. Delete the key(s) if desired. Also do a Find for the file *advert.dll* and delete it. Please note that this will break some of the software programs that come with Aureate/Radiate technology. If you wish to continue using GetRight or Go!Zilla, for example, you may face the Hobson's choice of allowing the spyware to continue or losing the application. In some cases, registering and paying for adware will allow you to use it without the ads.

It should be noted that no malicious actions by adware seem to have been reported. In some cases, they have caused system instabilities but no one seems to have found actual misuse of personal data. What disturbs many people is the failure to inform potential users of all the implications of the installation of certain adware and the potential for misuse. While no abuses may have resulted yet, many are reluctant to rely, as Tennessee Williams might put it, "on the kindness of strangers." Nonetheless, one must sympathize with the desire of programmers to get paid for their efforts in some way and it is likely that adware in one form or another is going to be increasingly common.

More References

For a list of Aureate/Radiate-enabled programs go to http://www.aureate.com/advertisers/network_members.html.

For some further reading on how to protect your PC, read the ZDNet articles at
http://www.zdnet.com/zdhelp/filters/pcprotection/ and
http://www.zdnet.com/special/filters/defense/ .
and Brian Livingston's articles at
http://www.infoworld.com/articles/op/xml/00/04/10/
000410oplivingston.xml and
http://www.infoworld.com/articles/op/xml/00/03/27/
000327oplivingston.xml.

Bill Machrone writes about spyware at http://www.zdnet.com/
pcweek/stories/columns/0,4351,2471181,00.html,
http://www.zdnet.com/pcweek/stories/columns/
0,4351,2478459,00.html and
http://www.zdnet.com/pcweek/stories/columns/
0,4351,2505712,00.html

For a discussion of privacy see http://www.edrenplanners.com/
present/privacy/

PPCUG Member E-mail Directory

Name Last	First	E-Mail Address
Abolins	John D.	jda-ir@njcc.com
Adler	Seymour	syadler@aol.com
Arrowsmith	Donald L.	donald.arrowsmith@bigfoot.com
Axelrod	Albert	aaxelrod@erols.com
Best	John J.	jjbest57@alum.mit.edu
Bolge	Eleanor	embolge@jersey.net
Canavan	Thomas	tcanavan1@aol.com
Caris	Paul D.	pd_caris@csi.com
Carman	Thomas	tom_carman@compuserve.com
Chilton	Neal W.	chilforce@aol.com
Cohen	Jon	jon@pluto.njcc.com
Colucci	Frank E.	DasWeb1@aol.com
Crossley	Helen M.	CrossleyHM@aol.com
Davis	Perry J.	perrydavis@compuserve.com
Dinkins-Belton	Joyce	Joyce8NJ@aol.com
Dodge	William B.	b-mdodge@juno.com
Donovan	Kyle R.	stoneflykd@aol.com
Duggins	Marsha	msd@gfdl.gov
Edge, Jr.	Lewis A.	lewis@edgeassoc.com
Einthoven	Bella	einthoven@mail.eclipse.net
Ewer	Tim	tjewer@worldnet.att.net
Foulkes	Frank	ffoulkes1@aol.com
Gibson	Dawson H.	wkgbill@earthlink.net
Goldberg	Edwin M.	EdGoldberg@home.com
Goldenberg	Kim	kim_goldenberg@bigfoot.com
Goodkin	Jerry	goddkin@erols.com
Griegel	Wayne B.	wgriegel@ix.netcom.com
Gunther	Bruce W.	bg1509@hotmail.com
Hardy	Wayne	wayne97wh@aol.com
Hawryluk	Bill	hawr@compuserve.com
Henry	Chuck	chenry@eclipse.net
Holly	Lois	lois@audet.com
Juelch	H. Karl	karljnj@nerc.com
Kahan	Maurice	mkahan@juno.com
Kerslake	David	dongsung@juno.com
Kleinerman	Milton	kukumafi@Juno.com
Konvalinka	John W.	jkonvalinka@msn.com
Koosman	Milton	miltonk2@aol.com
Kurivchack	Paul	kurivchack_p@compuserve.com
Landis	Houston E.	judge@alumni.princeton.edu

Name Last	First	E-Mail Address
Laurie	Vic	hampsi@bigfoot.com
Lazar	Joseph	joelazar@nerc.com
Lewis	Lloyd N.	Budnorth@juno.com
Libes	Sol	sol@libes.com
Metzler	Joseph	76116.3117@compuserve.com
Miller	Douglas E.	D.N.Miller@worldnet.att.net
Mintz	Herman	hmintz4@aol.com
Montani	Linda	l.montani@worldnet.att.net
Mooney	William P.	wmo8350722@aol.com
Oldenburg	Thomas A.	oldenburg-ta@worldnet.att.net
Olson	Gaylord	go@electrim.com
Papier, Jr.	Philip B.	papierp@superlink.net
Phadke	Laxman G.	layogph@aol.com
Pitcher	Barbara	bpitcher@ets.org
Polignano	Vince	vincepo@worldnet.att.net
Pratt	Zeblon H.	zpratt@aol.com
Reichart	Richard	reichart@pluto.njcc.com
Rothstein	Rick	fnroth@aosi.com
Rouse	H. Ronald	DrRonRouse@aol.com
Rutzky	Mark M.	marky@injersey.infi.net
Sked	Bill	billsked@aol.com
Steinman	Arthur M.	amsteinman@aol.com
Stockwell	Hunt	huntstock@aol.com
Suber	Michael J.	mpsuber@juno.com
Sweeton	Andrew	asweeton@roper.com
Tayyabkhan	Mike	tayyabkhan@aol.com
Tenner	Edward	tenner@clarity.princeton.edu
Treadwell	Isaac	itreadwell@msn.com
Walthall	Ronald K.	DKDM83A@prodigy.com
Weinberg	Robert	bweinb@worldnet.att.net
Weiss III	Edward A.	eweiss@nerc.com
Williams	Ken	krw1948@worldnet.att.net
Willis	Lloyd	lwillis1@prodigy.net
Willis	Robert S.	Robert4269@aol.com
Wolff	William V.	wvwa@bellatlantic.net
Shah	Sonal	sonals@microsoft.com

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

Consultants Corner

Cascade Media Group, Inc.
Jon Conant
335 Wall Street
Princeton, NJ 08540
609.430.9080 Fax: 609.430.9086
Voice Mail, Win/NT Networks,
Phone Systems & Wiring
Provider of PPCUG Voice Messaging.

Meyda Online
"Meyda means Information"
J.D. Abolins
"Pro Bono" Educational Services
Specialties: Information Security, Privacy
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http://www.meydabbs.com
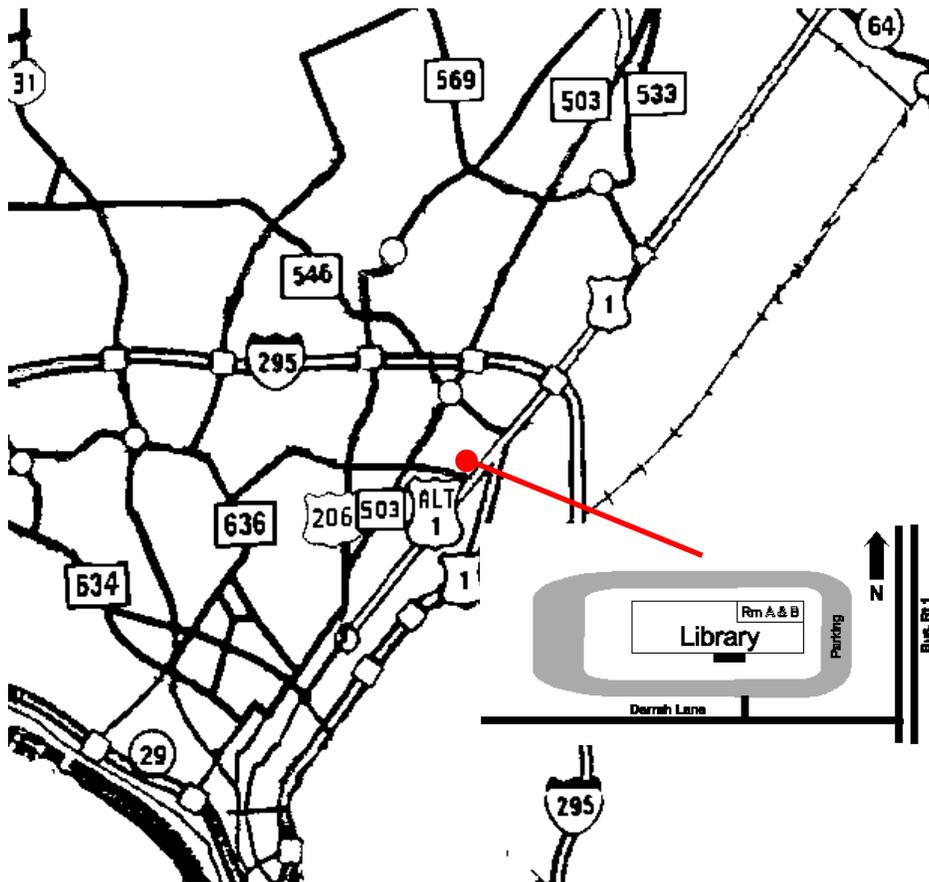**E-mail: jda-ir@njcc.com**

Consultants Corner
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.

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.

MGI SOFTWARE CORP
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO!
MAY 8, 2000
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Princeton PC Users Group
P.O Box 291
Rocky Hill, NJ 08553