

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.

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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

August 14, 2000 - Buying & Selling on the Internet

Sol Libes will explain how he had his own garage sale via the Internet

On-line Auctions and made a few bucks while doing it.

September 11, 2000 - Home Networks

Scott Vincent will be here to show how easy it is to Network your home.

October 16, 2000 - To Be Announced - 3rd Monday!

November 13, 2000 - To Be Announced

December 11, 2000 - Holiday Party & Elections!

January 8, 2001 - Microsoft

Sonal Shah will return to demonstrate WinME and Much More!



Presidents Message

by Paul Kurivchack

It is interesting how freely we throw around the term PC, for personal computer. I attended PC Expo this past week and was hard pressed to find many PC's. There were lots of PDA's with wireless services and a wide variety of e-commerce solutions. Digital still and video cameras

were a big item with all the major players displaying their stuff. Linux was there along with their Penguin.

I guess if you consider laptops PC's, then Toshiba, Sony, IBM and a few others were represented, but no major offerings of desktop PC hardware or add on boards such as video, sound, etc., were there like in the past. I was longing for the days when exciting new hardware, software or some exciting new peripheral was being hawked which was going to make you want to run out and buy it the next day. I sure did not find much to get excited about or want to run out and buy from this years Expo.

I guess that the PC is rapidly becoming just a toaster, a pre-assembled box that all you do is plug it in. Now all you need to concern yourself with is, what do you want to toast. The idea of hardware seems to lost and is seems that no one cares. The PC world is becoming oh so blurry that I am not sure if PC Expo should be called PC Expo any longer.

Last Month Meeting

I hope everyone enjoyed Sonal Shah's presentation on the Everyday Web and how it can benefit each of us. Sonal is now the fifth Microsoft representative to speak to our group and I think one of the best presenters. Her openness about her products and services was very enlightening. She spoke about her companies' products as a user and the benefits she receives each day she uses the products. I think that this is what a user group members want to hear from a vendor. How does your product benefit me, the user? I applaud Sonal for her outstanding effort and thank her for all the great products she raffled off.

This Months Meeting

Joel May will be here to teach everyone the ins and outs of putting together your own web page. So, if a web page is in your future, be sure to come to the July meeting and learn all you can.

I look forward to seeing you all there!

Windows 9X Tips: Be Resourceful

By: Vic Laurie - PPCUG

A problem that many people encounter involves something called "system resources." Low system resources are one of the more common causes of computer slow-downs or even crashes. The topic is a source of much misunderstanding since the term "system resources" is used in a number of varying senses. Also, "system resources" and "system memory" denote different things but are often confused with one another. In this article I will discuss what "system resources" are and how to manage them.

What Are System Resources?

System Resources are special little reserved pieces of memory (sometimes called "heaps") that have two components, *User resources* and *Graphics Device Interface* (GDI) resources. To quote from the Windows 98 Resource Kit:

"The User component manages input from the keyboard, mouse, and other input devices and output to the user interface (windows, icons, menus, and so on). It also manages interaction with the sound driver, timer, and communications ports."

And again from the Microsoft description,

"The *Graphics Device Interface* (GDI) is the graphical system that manages what appears on the screen. It also provides graphics support for printers and other output devices. It draws graphic primitives, manipulates bitmaps, and interacts with device-independent graphics drivers, including those for display and printer output device drivers."

The rub is that these two types of essential resources are limited to a scant 64 Kbytes each and there is nothing you can do to increase them. The amount of RAM or the size of the hard drive on your system has no bearing. This 64 Kbyte limit is inherent in making Windows 9X backward compatible with 16-bit programs originally written for DOS and Windows 3.x. Systems with Windows NT (and the successor Windows 2000) do not suffer from this particular limitation because they do not attempt to attain complete backward compatibility. Nor presumably will the imminent Windows Me be limited this way since DOS is being discarded completely. However, users of Windows 95/98 face the not infrequent possibility of a computer running more slowly or even locking up as time goes on and these particular resources are drawn down.

For the more technically minded, there is more detail on these "heaps" at <http://www.windows-help.net/techfiles/win-resources.html>.

Monitoring Resources

Windows 95/98 comes with two ways to check how much of your system resources are free. A crude single-number measure (the lower of the two types User and GDI) can be found by

right-clicking *My Computer*, opening Properties, and clicking the Performance tab. A better monitor is the Windows accessory *Resource Meter*, which usually can be found in **Start | Programs | Accessories | System Tools**. If it is not already present on your system, it can be installed by going to *Control Panel* and opening the *Add/Remove Programs* applet. Select *Windows Setup* and scroll to *System Tools*. Then click on *Details*, select *System Resource Meter* and click on OK. You may be asked for the Windows CD. If like many, you only have an OEM Restore disk, you may need to point the installation to the folder *Windows\Options* instead. The actual file for the program is *rsrsmtr.exe* and its normal location is the Windows folder.

When it is running, it is placed in the system tray. Clicking it will display three bars showing what percent of free User and GDI resources are available plus a third (superfluous) reading of so-called System resources, which is just the lower of the other two. A reading can also be obtained by simply hovering your mouse pointer over the tray icon. Be aware that running Resource Meter uses a small amount (~2 % on my system) of resources itself.

There is considerable disagreement about what level of free resources is safe. Some say that as little as 10% free resources is perfectly reasonable. Others say that anything below 30% is dangerous. The real answer is- it all depends. What level of free resources is adequate is a function of the make-up of the particular system and the pattern of an individual's usage. Only by monitoring a particular system's behavior as resource levels vary can a firm idea of what constitutes a safe minimum be established. Some discussion of this issue can be found at <http://www.winmag.com/columns/insider/2000/20.htm#insiderqna>.

Symptoms and Causes of Low Resources

What happens when resources become too low? Your system will become flaky. It may respond to mouse clicks very slowly, or not at all. New windows may open very slowly or be jumbled or blank. Other sluggish or weird behavior may develop. You may get an error message such as "Out of memory" or "Not enough memory to display completely" (note: other problems can also give these messages) or "System Resources are running low." Or your system may freeze or crash. Perhaps the best thing to do is to reboot but if the system is still up, you can try closing some programs. If necessary, you can try the three-finger salute, *ctrl+alt+delete*, to bring up the list of running programs and close from there. If you have a lot of browser or Microsoft Office windows open, try closing up some of them.

Having open too many browser windows, Office files, and graphics files are frequent causes of low resources but, even with conservative usage, resources will drain away over time. For various reasons, programs do not return all the resources they have taken after they are closed. Resources will be marked as still in

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Minutes for the General Meeting

June 12, 2000

By: Ed Weiss

At 7:50 PM, Paul opened the meeting. Paul presented several items to the attendees for their information and discussion:

The need for new people to step up to take over several of the board positions that will be opening up at the end of this year, and what could be the results if no one volunteers.

How to grow the membership of the group, and the benefits to all. Described the upcoming programs for the next month.

Paul also mentioned his experiences with a site/program "Amazing Mail". He explained that you could upload graphic images, and they would print them onto postcard stock, put on the stamp and address the card, as well as print you messages to the people that you define.

At this time, Paul opened the floor for questions, and there were several. Any one using NetMeeting? Questions about SystemSuite 2000 from OnTrack? How to post on a bulletin board in color? Any one using Optimum Cable? Any one with experience using DSL in the Princeton area?

At 8:14 PM, Paul turned the meeting over to Sonal Shah of Microsoft who was giving the presentation

"The Everyday Web". After giving a very informative program, Sonal closed her portion of the meeting

by having several drawings for some items that were compliments of Microsoft.

Paul closed the meeting, and the members helped by cleaning up the meeting room and putting away

the chairs, and picking up. Thanks to all for leaving the room in a clean and orderly fashion.

Minutes for the Board Meeting

June 19, 2000

By: Ed Weiss

In attendance at the board meeting were: Bill Hawryluk, Ton Canavan, John Abolins, Paul Kurivchack, and Ed Weiss.

Paul opened the meeting at 8:30 PM. The following items were discussed:

- Program at the last meeting - All attending considered it an excellent presentation.
- So far, no volunteers for any of the board positions.
- What were the requirements to disband the club if no volunteers come forward.

· A company by the name of "The Short List.Com" offered to help sponsor the group

· Current membership - 85 paid members.

· The possibility of alternating between board meetings and SIG meetings on the Third Monday of the

month if there were enough interest in SIGs again. John Abolins announced that the Web site was back up and running.

At 9:35 PM, the meeting was closed, and the board members left the building.

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use even when the program is no longer running. As you open and close programs over time, free resources will gradually diminish. This phenomenon is one form of so-called "memory leakage" and some programs are much worse than others. There is a Microsoft Knowledge Base article on the subject at <http://support.microsoft.com/support/kb/articles/Q259/1/61.ASP>. In particular, watch out for 16-bit software (that includes a surprising number of things, e.g. Windows Solitaire). Rebooting will restore resources. See the article by Fred Langa on system resources at <http://www.winmag.com/columns/explorer/2000/11.htm> for a good general discussion (although I am not sure I agree with what he considers a safe level of free resources).

Because of the leakage problem (and other reasons), it is my personal opinion that those who always leave their computer on are more likely to get strange computer behavior than those who periodically reboot. (It is another subject but I also point out that the Registry Checker runs once a day when you reboot in Windows 98 and that is also conducive to more stability.)

Another source of low resources can come from programs that you didn't start yourself and that you may even not know about. When you get that shiny new computer it usually comes with a variety of preinstalled software. Many of these programs may be

set up to run applications at startup without telling you. Also many software packages have the bad habit of installing programs so that they run automatically at startup whether you want them or not. Microsoft Office, Quicken, RealPlayer, AOL, Norton Utilities, and many others will stick things in your system tray and/or have applications running always in the background. These processes all take resources. See a discussion of this at <http://www.winmag.com/columns/insider/2000/17.htm#systemresources>. Those who have Windows 98 can use the System Configuration Utility (MSConfig) to prevent things from running until specifically desired. Windows 95 users can use the freeware Startup Cop. (See the article on free utilities in the January, 2000 issue of the PPCUG Newsletter, <http://www.ppcug-nj.org/newsletters/jan2000.pdf>)

What about the many software packages that purport to keep system resources free? These programs do not, in fact, deal with what we are discussing here but rather mostly with Vcache and swap files. Whatever utility they may have had for Windows 95 systems, I do not think they are of any use to most Windows 98 users. Fred Langa has recently done a careful study and all who are interested in any of these programs should read his article at <http://www.winmag.com/columns/explorer/2000/12.htm>.



PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

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

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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 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.



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