PPCUG

NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

Monday October 21, 2002

Adobe Photoshop Elements
Kiyomasa Toma
Adobe Systems

**Kiyomasa will make a presentation on
the unique and powerful digital imaging features of PhotoShop Elements
and the benefits of using Acrobat PDF file format.**

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*

In this issue

Doug Dixon presenting "Making Sense of DVD"at the September General Meeting.

Digital Photo by: Tom Carman

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

For information about upcoing meetings or joining PPCUG call 908-218-0778 to leave a message.

Board Meetings

For Meeting Location, Date and Time, call 908-218-0778

Board meetings are open to All.

Board Members

President:
    Paul Kurivchack 908-218-0778
Vice-President:
    Tom Carman 732-828-6055
Secretary:
    Don Arrowsmith 609-883-9874
Treasurer:
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    Jon Abolins 609-883-8126
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Newsletter Editor:
    Paul Kurivchack 908-218-0778
Program Coordinator:
    Sol Libes 609-520-9024
Web Master:
    Jon Abolins 609-883-8126

Web Site

http://www.ppcug-nj.org

Annual Dues Rates

Normal dues rate is $30 per year.
    New Members Only: after February, the rate is $2.50 per month times the number of months remaining in the year.

Coming Events

November 18, 2002 - Print Artist *(Third Monday!!)*

Karl Julech will demonstrate his use of Print Artist and the neat graphics stuff that can be created easily such as greeting cards, announcements, etc.

December 9, 2002 - Holiday Party & Elections ?

January 13, 2003 - Will there be a meeting? ? ?

Will Decembers meeting be the last for the PPCUG or will we have a new President to start the new year off?

Presidents Message
by Paul Kurivchack

We have all seen at one time or another the cartoon of the man walking down the street carrying a sign reading "The End is Near" and not really knowing what is ending. Well that man is me and what will be ending is the PPCUG if a member doesn't step up to take on the task of president. For those in attendance at the September meeting heard first hand that I will not be returning in 2003 as president for an eight year. It is time for new leadership or to put the PPCUG out to pasture.

Surprisingly enough the only comment made to me about this was from a long time member who said "the group should be really happy that Paul stayed as long as he has as president and has given the group an extra year or two of life". That statement made me really think about what I have done for our group over the past seven years and did I only prolonged the group's demise? Should I have thrown in the towel years ago? Should I have encouraged our members to become more active in the leadership as part of being a member? Should I have done a less than adequate job of running the group? Who knows, but as it stands right now we have no volunteers for the presidents position. As I stated in my August presidents message, item 3 is fast becoming the leading measure. Put the PPCUG on hiatus for 2003 but most likely just dissolve the group. I never wanted to be the person who shut down our group, but I guess I will earn that dishonor.

But there is still time left in the year for someone to step forward. With that in mind, I will put together a meeting schedule for 2003 and submit it to the Library so in the event we need the meeting space, we will still have it. I also paid the 2002-2003 liability insurance so we are protected. The one thing I will not do is collect dues for 2003 until a new president is announced. Despite the doom and gloom, I am still optimistic that the group will continue on without me as president.

I want to thank Doug Dixon for making a great presentation on the technology behind DVD's and what is ahead. Too many times we wonder what the difference is between competing technologies and who will ultimately win the battle. Doug helped us out very well and I think that we all left enlightened. Thanks also to all our members who turned out for this meeting.

See you all on the 21st.

DOS is Dead, Long Live the Command Line

By: Vic Laurie - PPCUG

With Windows Me, Microsoft began the last hurrah for venerable old DOS. Windows 9X systems provided a way to boot into a straight DOS configuration as well as allowing for a DOS box that could be run inside Windows. Although DOS is still present in Windows Me, it is no longer accessible through booting from the hard drive. (Of course, you can still run DOS from a boot diskette.) The option of running a DOS box was retained, but a pure DOS environment can be obtained only by a roundabout process. Some applications such as the restore and repair functions of the Registry Checker, which require straight DOS, can be accessed from within Windows Me but they invoke a process that first closes down Windows, reboots into a DOS environment, runs the application, and then reboots back into Windows.

In Windows XP, DOS has been killed outright. All remnants of DOS are totally gone from the Windows XP kernel, which is a protected memory system with a totally different approach from the DOS/9X/Me family. Although I certainly welcomed and appreciated the stability of the new system, part of me mourned the passing of dear old DOS, whose command line finesses and batch files I have long savored. (Although, of course, they never had the power of the Unix type systems). I always had the comfort of knowing that, when (not if) Windows acted up, I could patch things up in DOS. I even still have some ancient DOS programs. (As an interesting aside, these DOS programs are so much more tightly coded than today's bloatware that they are about only 1/20th the size of certain comparable Windows programs.) However, my nostalgia for DOS was short-lived as I soon discovered that XP comes with a powerful assortment of command line utilities. DOS may be dead but it has been replaced by something that is reassuringly familiar, including the capacity for batch files. In fact, there is much that looks just like DOS (but is better). In addition to its command line functions, XP also has a DOS emulator and many DOS programs run quite happily in XP. (For reasons unknown to me, the version that is emulated is DOS 5. This seems to be a carry-over from older Windows NT operating systems)

Those who started using computers in the last few years and have never used DOS or any other command line language (if any are still reading this article) are probably wondering why anyone should care. In general, I suspect that the average PC user has little appreciation of how useful the command line can be; in fact they may not even be sure what I am talking about. In this GUI oriented world, actually typing in a computer command may seem to be an archaic practice from the days of punch cards or something that only Linux geeks do. Actually, the command line has always been a mainstay for systems administrators and power users of most operating systems. Even within Windows itself there is a Run line where certain kinds of commands can be entered. (This command line function is in addition to the DOS command prompt available in Windows 9X/Me. Some examples of using RUN in Windows 9X are given at http://www.ppcug-nj.org/articles/vic_laurie/potpourri.html.)

The Command Line in Windows XP

The command interpreter in Windows XP is provided by the file *cmd.exe*, which is in the folder **\Windows\System32**. If you look in this folder you will also see several files that look suspiciously like some of the old DOS files. They are, however, a different version. The command line in XP is a full-fledged 32-bit function running in protected memory with many new features. The command prompt can be opened in its own window by entering "cmd" (without quotes) into **Start-Run**. Depending on your setup, the command prompt may also be available through **Start-All Programs-Accessories**. It is possible to open several windows containing command prompts. In the Professional version of Windows XP there is a graphical help file *ntcmds.chm*, which has details of all the commands and their many switches. The help file can be opened by entering (without the quotes) "hh ntcmds.chm" into **Start-Run**. For whatever reason, Microsoft makes the graphical help file hard to find in the Home version. (Bott and Sichert, in the book "Microsoft Windows XP Inside and Out", page 338, give a very long and tedious method.) However, in both versions a list of many (but not all) of the commands available can be obtained by entering "help" (without quotes) into a command prompt. For more detail on a specific command, enter "help *command-name*" or "*command-name* /?" For example to get information on *xcopy*, enter "help xcopy" or "xcopy /?" It may be noted here that the XP version of *xcopy* provides a versatile way to back up directories. It comes with a number of switches that allow for options such as copying only those files changed since a certain date. Naturally, the XP version has no problem with long filenames, something that can cause problems in the DOS version of *xcopy*.

Anybody who has ever made use of the very handy method of running a sequence of commands called a "batch file" will be glad to know that this type of file is alive and well in Windows XP. Most of the old DOS commands (in a new XP version) are available as well as some new ones. The added functionality of the XP list of commands makes it possible to write more powerful programs. For example, it is possible to edit the Windows XP Registry with a batch file. There are many references on batch files but here is a recent one, http://66.39.115.252/a/batches.htm

The Recovery Console

Even if you never intend to use batch files or the command line, it would pay to become familiar with the Recovery Console. (Don Arrowsmith briefly covered one aspect in the May newsletter.) In the event of a problem getting Windows XP to boot, this command line facility might allow you to repair a corrupted system. The console can be accessed by booting from the Windows XP CD. When you see the "Welcome to Setup" screen, enter the letter "R". A prompt will ask for the administrator password. Users of the Home edition can just enter a blank. The Recovery Console will provide a command prompt where a limited number of system tasks can be performed. For example, Windows system folders and files can be copied or replaced, the

RoboForm
Software Review
By: Don Arrowsmith - PPCUG

Filling in forms and login screens is one of the more boring, time wasting and error prone tasks required while surfing the web. I've tried several methods to make the process faster and more accurate for me: Using Internet Explorer's built in Auto complete helps on some pages. Windows password keeper doesn't always detect login screens. TypeItIn not only can fill in web forms but can also add repetitive text in most applications, but each field must be manually completed. There should be a better answer.

Now, I've found RoboForm and I think RoboForm is the answer! The latest version, v4.6.8, is available at http://www.roboform.com. Free for personal use with no ads or spyware, it is very high quality with an excellent installer and documentation. Although most browsers are supported, it works best with Internet Explorer v5 and later. (I am using IE6 and my examples will refer to it.) You can choose among many different ways to control RoboForm: IE toolbar, Explorer Bar, TaskBar Icon, or Web Page Context Menu. I've chosen the Context Menu method.

To get started you should create a new Identity. Click the Edit Identities application and hit New. Assign an identity name and then begin to fill in any or all of the personal data fields you choose: name, address, birthday, credit cards, etc. If an identity field isleft blank, RoboForm will never try to complete that field on a web page. You can set identities for the various people who may use your computer and you can set different identities for yourself in different contexts: work, home, etc. Save your entries in an Identity File by clicking OK and then proceed to your normal web browsing.

When you get to a page with a form on it, a small box will pop up offering to fill in the form from an identity. RoboForm will attempt to correlate the identity's entries with the form field display names and will automatically fill the form as completely as possible. You can manually add any other data that isn't stored in your identity such as an account number or a page-specific password. Note that the pop up will appear only after the entire page has loaded. If the connection is slow and a graphic takes a longer time to load, the RoboForm pop up will be delayed. The fill from identity pop up can be optionally turned off. In that case right clicking on a page will let you select FIll Form from identity.

At this point with the web page form completely filled in, right click and select Save Form. All data for the form on this page will be stored in a file called a Passcard. You're given a suggested name for this passcard, which you can change to whatever makes sense to you.

There is an option (on by default) that, after submitting a form, will offer to save a form if you haven't already done so manually.

Once you have saved a passcard for a page, whenever you return to the same page another small box will pop up. You can then click Fill Forms or Fill Submit. The fill option will fill in the form from the passcard and leave the page displayed. The submit option will complete the form from the passcard and then punch the Login button (or whatever button name the page designer used). You can save multiple Passcards for the same web page with different names. You might want to do this, for example, if you have multiple Yahoo email accounts. If you do have multiple passcards, which apply to a page, the names will appear alphabetically in a column on the pop up. Simply select the appropriate one and then fill.

Like the other pop ups, the fill from passcard can be optionally turned off. If you've done that and you're on a page with a saved passcard, right click and select Fill Form.

When you change a password at a web site (You do that periodically for security, don't you?), you can easily change the value stored in a passcard: Click More... on the fill pop up and then click Edit. This also provides a way to see the data stored for a page.

You have the option of password protecting Passcards and Identities. The password will be cached as long as RoboForm is in memory so you ill have to enter it only one time per session. To protect your data between sessions, this password can be cleared manually or via auto-forget timer.

RoboForm makes it very easy to backup your saved data and also to expunge your personal data if you will be moving to another computer. This is because all data is stored by default within the C:\My RoboForm Data folder. Each identity gets a new sub-folder with the Identity and all Passcards associated with this Identity. The identity data and each individual passcard are stored in separate files in that sub-folder. These folders can be copied or deleted as required. (I use a program to replicate them across my home network to my second computer.) There are print options for both an identity and passcards for that identity. This can be used to make a paper copy of your login data to store away for emergency backup.

There are many more features that I haven't mentioned: offline passcards, basic authentication passcards, random password generator (the generated password is display only and must be retyped for use), etc. If this small review entices you to start using RoboForm, refer to the User Manual to check out the rest of the feature set. A Proversion of RoboForm, available at $29.95, allows business use and extra features. One of these extra features is to add the ability to copy to the clipboard or drag and drop from the password generator. Another is defining custom fields to be filled from an identity.

Check their web site to find out if RoboForm will work with your browser and start planning how to use all the time you will save by having your forms filled automatically.

I heartily recommend RoboForm.

Are You Having "Buffer Underrun" Errors With Your CD Burner?

By: Ira Wilsker

During one of my recent radio shows (KLVI 560AM, Tuesdays 6-7pm, Saturdays, 1-4pm), I received many calls asking how to overcome the infamous "Buffer Underrun" error when writing to CD-R discs. While many of the newer CD-RW drives have built-in protection to prevent this error, the vast majority of CD-RW drives in use are subject to this most frustrating disc-ruining error.

According to several of the CD-RW drive manufacturers' websites, as well as the websites of several of the major CD burning software publishers, this error is the single most common problem encountered by users when creating CD-R discs. A buffer underrun occurs when the buffer or memory cache (temporary storage) either built in the CD-RW drive, or supplied by the CD burning software, can not keep up with the data being written to the CD disc. Normally the buffer receives data from the computer, and parcels it out to the disc, the buffer supposedly holding enough data to feed and write smoothly to the CD-R disc as it is also receiving data from the computer. Ideally, the data stream should be smooth and continuous. If, for any of many reasons, the buffer does not have the requisite amount of data available, it is possible that a buffer underrun error may be created. Common causes of this error are inadequate system performance (not enough memory, slow processor, hard drive problems, too many programs loaded and running), and low quality or defective CD-R discs.

There are several simple tasks that can be done to reduce the chance of buffer underrun errors due to poor system performance. Most CD burning software indicates the maximum speed that the CD can write, typically in the format of "8x" or "10x" on a pull down menu. By selecting a writing speed one or two levels lower than the maximum, the error often disappears. Running both the Windows integral Scandisk and Defrag programs, or similar third party utilities, can possibly ensure that the hard drive is not the culprit causing the errors. Most of the CD burning software uses that hard drive as intermediate storage while the CD is being created, and the rule-of-thumb is that hard drive space of at least 150% of the amount of data being written must be readily available on the hard drive. If cluttered with obsolete data, simply cleaning the c:\windows\temp directory by deleting obsolete files can often help prevent the problem. In many older Windows computers, mostly running Windows 98 and 95, the CD drive settings may be incorrectly configured. Go to My Computer – Control Panel – System – Device Manager – click on the "+" to the left of "CDROM" to show the drive model – click on the CD drive to highlight it – click on properties – Settings – and check both "Disconnect" and "Auto Insert Notification", and uncheck "Sync Data Transfer". On many computers, properly setting this configuration alone may be adequate to eliminate the error.

If inadequate system resources cause the problem, it may also be easily resolved without the necessity of spending money to add memory or install a faster processor. Sometimes programs that have been already exited leave kernels of code or data in memory that unnecessarily consumes resources; typically the easiest method to restore those resources is to simply reboot the computer. By simply stopping any unnecessary programs from running in the background, and not performing any other tasks while burning CDs (multitasking), system resources consisting of CPU power, memory, and other resources may be easily and quickly made available. That traditional method to stop unwanted programs that may be running is to either right click on their icon in the taskbar and click on "close", or do a CTRL-ALT-DELETE, followed by task manager on newer operating systems, and "end task" all programs running except "systray" and "explorer", before burning the CD. After the CD has been successfully created, reboot the computer in order to load antivirus software, and other desired utilities. Another option, which may also improve general system performance, not just CD writing, is to stop unnecessary programs from loading at all during the boot "start up" sequence. Detailed instructions on how to do this for all Windows operating systems can be found by clicking on the first link on my radio show web page at www.mycomputershow.com. An alphabetical list of programs that may be in the startup, along with an indication of if they are necessary or unnecessary, is the second link on my website. Being connected to an "always on" broadband internet connection, such as DSL or cable can also consume resources. If the error occurs, disconnect from the net.

Another possible cause of the error may be the CD burning software itself. Most software included free with CD-RW drives is the "lite" or "limited" version lacking some of the features of the full commercial versions. Check your software publisher's website for updates to the version of software being used, as these may resolve the buffer underrun problem. Newer versions of the software, sometimes downloadable either as free upgrades, or available to registered users at a discount, may also resolve the problem. Some CD burning software better manage resources and buffers than others, and a software change may show improvement. Many of the CD software publishers offer a free trial version of their product for download; this may be a useful exercise.

The CD-R media itself can be the culprit. Newer disc technologies, often using a blue or green dye on the writable side of the disc, can usually be written to faster and more reliably than the older, and cheaper, silver dye technology. The difference in price between the better quality blank CDs, and the no-name cheap generics is often small, considering the savings in both ruined discs, and the time to create them.

By properly configuring your computer and software, the CD burning experience can be less frustrating, and more productive.

Ira Wilsker is a member of the APCUG Board of Advisors, hosts a radio show, writes a column for his local paper and is on the faculty at the Lamar institute. Email him at: ira@apcug.org .

This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.

Quick: Delete the jdbgmgr.exe file!!

By: Gabe Kingsley,
PIBMUG's San Francisco Special Correspondent

I've received a few of these dumb alerts over the past week. You haven't received one? It's an e-mail hoax pretending to be a virus warning that tells people to delete their Java Debugger Manager file, called jdbgmgr.exe.

What really ticks me off is the open list of recipients, often 30 to 50 of them, that become fodder for all sorts of junk through the systems of others.

So I'm on a one-man crusade to get people to use Blind Ccs for all mail, unless there is a compelling reason (such as a work group, etc.) in which they need to know who else received the message. Heck, I even send out tutorials for most e-mail programs to eliminate any excuses they may have.

Here's what I tell people whenever they forward me an ALERT!! ALERT!! About any virus:

Hey, Klez?

The most recent e-mail virus you're asking about is the Klez, and it has powers not seen in earlier types.

Klez can select an e-mail address at random from a CC list in a message on your or someone else's computer and send itself to the recipients of other messages. It's not limited to those addresses in your address book. In addition, it can "spoof" the return address, so that even if you were not the sender of a message infected with the Klez virus, your name and address may appear as the originator.

This is bad stuff and we should expect a raft of "me too" versions to come along!

Another, less harmful but no less irritating offense is the warning running around the world, advising you to delete a specific file from your system because it contains a virus. This is a hoax! The file, jdbgmgr.exe, is one that Windows put there and enables certain Java scripting capabilities. You need it!

You may receive either the Klez virus or the relatively innocuous hoax warning described above because your name and address were in someone's CC list.

One of the greatest potential dangers is in the e-mails that are forwarded, forwarded and forwarded again by unwitting people. I'm sure you get them every day, and may even pass them along. The result is list after list of available addresses the Klez virus can use to send itself to people you don't know, and for people you don't know to send it to you, possibly giving the impression it came from you.

When you forward a message, COPY ONLY THE TEXT into a new message and send it to your friends. DO NOT just forward the existing message, complete with the previous lists of recipients and their addresses. If you want to forward a message, take care to manually remove the list of previous recipients to preserve their safety. It's really easy.

Learn and Use Blind CC

When sending messages to a group of people, unless it is REQUIRED that each one see the names of all others who received the message, PLEASE USE A BLIND RECIPIENT list. I am not aware of an e-mail program that does not allow you to send messages to a list of "blind" recipients, in which each person who receives the messages sees only their own address, and not the entire list of recipients.

If you have AOL, it is the easiest thing to do: Simply bracket all recipients in a pair of parentheses (address1, address2) each separated by a comma.

If you use Microsoft Outlook or Outlook Express, there is a special field for "Bcc" (Blind copies) just below the "To" and "Cc" rows. If you do not see it when you open the program, click on View and select "Bcc Field." Eudora and Netscape Navigator also have blind recipient capabilities.

Yahoo! And Hotmail users can find the "Bcc" field for entering addresses in the online address header. The Juno mail software works very just like AOL, in that you can enclose multiple addresses in parentheses to make them blind, and as with AOL, they must be separated by a comma. By doing this each recipient will see only their own address, and not anyone else's, just as with this message.

So far, because Mac's represent such a small percentage of the computers in use, the people who create the worms and viruses do not make them work with Mac computers. However, anyone using a Mac who does not hide the recipients of their e-mails makes their recipients vulnerable to the possibility of being hit with a virus from someone else on their CC list!

Anyone who wants to protect their privacy and safety will appreciate your doing this. Few things about e-mail bother me more than when something I sent gets forwarded to a large list of people I don't know, and because my address is now in their message base, I am then vulnerable to receiving a virus or one of those hoax warnings from them ... or anyone to whom they forward that message.

Please try to use blind recipient lists. It will make us all safer from viruses, worms and hoaxes.

Master Boot Record can be repaired, and the boot menu can be repaired. A description of the Windows XP Recovery Console is given at http://support.microsoft.com/default.aspx?scid=kb;en-us;Q314058 and a list of the available commands can be found at

http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/home/using/productdoc/en/recovery_console_cmds.asp. Some other references are
http://www.wown.info/j_helmig/wxprcons.htm
http://www.windows-help.net/WindowsXP/howto-12.html
http://support.microsoft.com/?scid=kb;en-us;q307654

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.	donaldarrowsmith@yahoo.com
Axelrod	Albert	aaxelrod@nerc.com
Best	John J.	jjbest57@alum.mit.edu
Bolge	Eleanor	embolge@jersey.net
Briggs	George R.	grolbriggs@aol.com
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Hawryluk	Bill	bhawr@aol.com
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Holly	Lois	lois@audet.com
Johnson	Florence	kredit@nerc.com
Juelch	H. Karl	karljnj@nerc.com
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(Last Update: August 30, 2002)
Send Updates to kurivchp@optonline.net for inclusion in this listing.

Minutes for the General Meeting
September 9, 2002
By: Don Arrowsmith

Errata: A sentence in last month's minutes could have been better written as "By the end, he had produced an entertaining video of the rather boring start of our meeting." My intent was to show that editing can spice up most any video and not to deprecate the quality of the meeting. I apologize if anyone took offense.

The September meeting opened at 7:54 with Paul introducing Doug Dixon. Doug works at Sarnoff Research Center and is the author of several books. More information is available at his web site: http://www.manifest-tech.com/. His very interesting presentation was on Creating Video DVDs on Your PC. This was a perfect follow on to last month's topic of editing videos. Topics covered were Consumer DVD players and recorders, DVD formats and compatibility, Desktop DVD: systems and burners, Video editing tools and DVD authoring tools. Slides for his talk are available at http://www.manifest-tech.com/docs/dixon_dvd_sense_0206.pdf and http://www.manifest-tech.com/docs/dixon_dvd_author_0206.pdf.

A short Q&A at the end of the meeting included the use of USB2 with Windows Me.

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