

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 upcoming 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:

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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.

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Coming Events

January 13, 2003 - PowerPoint - It's Easy to Use!

Paul Kurivchack will demonstrate some tips & tricks in using PowerPoint to make those great looking presentations..

February 10, 2003 - Buy & Sell on Ebay!

Martin Masho will host the evenings presentation on the ins and out of buying and selling anything on Ebay or any auction site.

March 10, 2003 - to be announced



Presidents Message

by Paul Kurivchack

2002 is coming to a close, as is my presidency of the past seven years. As I look back over the past twelve years of my involvement with the group, I still remember it like yesterday, attending my very first meeting back in 1990 at the insistence of my friend, Steve Shaw (Steve was President in 1991).

I was in awe of the technical skills of the members in attendance at that meeting and I wondered if I would ever have that level of knowledge? Well I have learned a lot from our meetings, our members and I continue to learn as I hope you do too. I do not think I will ever stop learning and I think that this is one of the greatest strengths of a user group, the continuing education on using personal computers.

We have had and continue to have a great diverse group of people attending our meetings from all walks of life and computing skill levels. We need to continue to learn and to have a warm, friendly atmosphere where everyone is welcomed. That is the one thing I still remember from that very first night. I was made to feel right at home despite being a very novice PC user.

Do you remember attending your very first PPCUG meeting? If you do, please email me a short twenty-five words more or less of the month and year and what you remember about the first night. I will comprise them over the next couple of months and put them in a future newsletter. This is not only for long time members but for new members too.

It has been a great seven years of being president of the group and I look forward to helping Clarke Walker make the transition to being the eight PPCUG president in the history of the group. Let us all help Clarke make the PPCUG a great group to share ideas and learn about personal computers.

I also want to thank Karl Juelch for the fine presentation on Print Artist. There are many programs we use daily that may not be as mainstream as the Microsoft's of the world but still provide the results that make us all productive. Karl's presentation proved how useful and easy to use a product like Print Artist can be. Karl also demonstrated that getting up in front of the group is not that hard either. Thanks Karl.

I look forward to seeing you all at the Holiday Party & Elections on December 8th.

PS: Remember we have a box full of MS software and other items to raffle off.



More Windows XP Tweaks

By: Vic Laurie - PPCUG

In this article we continue the discussion of Windows XP tweaks begun last month. Once more, I remind you that not all systems behave the same way and that “your mileage may vary.” Also never tweak without first knowing how to get back where you started.

Show All Files and Folders

Microsoft hides a lot of things in the default operating system settings for XP (as they did for Win 9X/Me). This may make sense in a multi-user office environment with many computers but it is a distinct annoyance for the home user who wants some control over his or her computer. The default setting of hiding file extensions, for example, just makes life more difficult. For a number of reasons, I have always suggested that these settings be changed. Go to **My Computer** (or any folder window) and open the “Tools” menu. Select “Folder Options” from the list and click the “View” tab. In the list in the area headed by “Advanced settings” (Figure 1) make these changes:

Check “Display the contents of system folders”

Check “Show hidden files and folders”

Uncheck “Hide extensions for known file types”

Uncheck “Hide protected operating system files.”

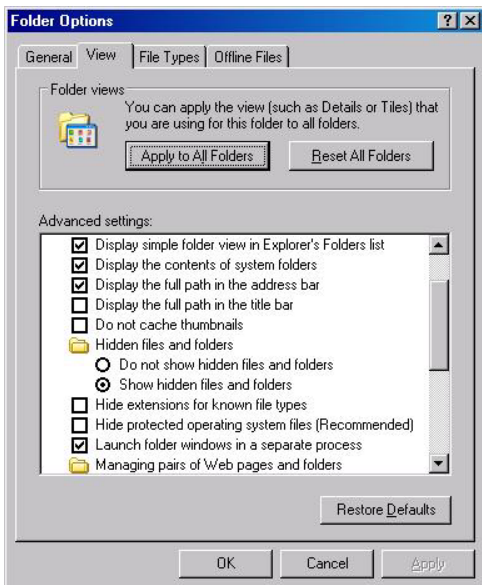


Figure 1. File and folder settings

A Dog of a Feature

For whatever reason, Microsoft is enamored of animated figures. (Remember Bob?) I have never liked the notorious animated paper clip in Office (which Microsoft finally killed) and I don't really need the cute little dog that has been added to the search function in XP. I love dogs, but not here. If you want this pup to help retrieve your files, fine, but otherwise go to **Start-Search** and in the panel called “Search Companion” (Figure 2) click “Change preferences” and then select “Without an animated screen character.



Figure 2. Search Companion panel

Protect Your Privacy from Media Player

This tweak applies not only to Windows XP but also to all systems with Media Player 7.1 and later versions. When you play streamed clips from an Internet site, Media Player sends that site a number specific to your machine called a “globally unique identifier” or GUID. To turn this off, open Media Player and go to the **Tools** menu. In the Tools menu select “Options” and then the “Player” tab. (Figure 3) In the “Internet settings” area, uncheck “Allow Internet sites to uniquely identify your Player.” While you are there also uncheck “Acquire licenses automatically.”



Figure 3. Media Player settings

References

Additional tweaking possibilities can be found in these references:

<http://www.techspot.com/guides-os.shtml>

Time to Consider a Notebook (Laptop) Computer?

By: Ira Wilsker

One of the questions I often have been asked on my weekly radio shows, and emails from readers of this column is, "What would be better (for me); a new laptop or a desktop computer?"

A simple review of the Sunday sale-books from the major office supply and electronics stores clearly shows that there is an abundant supply of notebook computers available. Standing in the security lines at the major airports also shows the popularity of notebook computers.

So, which one is better? Desktop or notebook? As I have consistently replied, "What are you going to use it for?"

If a computer is intended for home or office use, likely in one location for a period of time, a desktop computer is more practical. Usability features, such as a full size keyboard, large screen monitor, and readily accessible drives, coupled with significantly lower prices for comparable machines, make the desktop the clear choice in this scenario. Another factor is longevity. The average useful life of a desktop computer, according to both personal experience and published reports, is typically four to six years. Desktop computers are also usually easy and relatively inexpensive to upgrade or repair. The average desktop computer becomes functionally obsolete long before it physically fails.

Notebook computers, commonly called "laptops" by many, have some very strong advantages, compared to desktop computers, as well as some very strong disadvantages. The obvious advantage of a notebook computer is portability. At Golden Triangle PC Club meetings, when I would have to present, I would often have to drag my desktop from home to the meeting place; it was heavy, bulky, and easy to break. Lugging around the computer, monitor, keyboard, and mouse was a headache. I was not the only one hauling a monster around. For a while, I had a "lunchbox" computer that I used for my presentations. It contained a standard sized PC motherboard, hard drive, floppy, and other internal parts, along with an integral 7" monitor. The keyboard snapped over the front of the computer, closing it. While mine was a home built, no-name generic, it was the early lunchbox computers that gave Houston's Compaq its early competitive edge. While still large and heavy, it was portable.

Today's notebook computers are a far cry from my long-gone lunchbox. They are a fraction of the size and weight of the old lunchbox machines, but contrary to other high-tech electronic items, have not dropped substantially in price. Feature for feature, it is not rare for a notebook to be twice the price of a comparably equipped desktop computer. The relatively small size, and lightweight is what makes today's notebook computer popular. They are convenient portable, and can often run for a few hours on their internal battery, but those are about their only major advantages. For those who need portability, such as businesspersons who travel and need computing power, or people like me who frequently do presentations, a notebook computer is a near necessity. For those who want the power of a

modern PC, in an even smaller and lighter package, the next generation of "Pocket PCs" is speculated to do to the contemporary notebook the same thing that the notebook did to the lunchbox; render them functionally obsolete. Pocket PCs will be covered in a future column.

The disadvantages of a notebook computer are many, yet still they are a necessity to many users. Other than their relatively high cost, notebook computers are also typically fragile, difficult to repair, hard to upgrade (other than swap hard drives or add memory), and according to widely published tests, have a much shorter operational lifetime than do desktop computers. Notebooks are also subject to easy loss or theft. In a recent news article, citing a report from Safeware, an insurance company that specifically insures computers for loss or damage, notebook computers have a far higher rate of loss. In 2001, for example, Safeware states that an estimated 600,000 notebook computers were lost or stolen, up 53% from the year 2000. A large part of this increase is due to the rapid increase in sales of notebook computers. Notebook computers are also one of the most obvious items to steal (and stolen) at airport security checkpoints, due to their small size, high value, and obvious nature. By comparison, while there is an estimated seven times as many desktop computers in use than notebooks, only 15,000 desktops were reported stolen in 2001, according to Safeware.

While there are "ruggedized" notebook computers, such as Toshiba's Toughbook series marketed to law enforcement, utility, and construction companies, the majority of notebooks are very easy to break, and expensive to repair. The notebook reviews published in the major computer magazines often include a "drop test" where an open notebook computer was gently pushed off a tabletop on to a carpeted floor, simulating a common falling accident. Many notebooks suffered major physical damage, with some models of major brands shattering to utter destruction. In addition to extraordinary care in protecting from theft, notebook computers must also be transported in quality protective cases. I have seen people ruin a \$2000 notebook in a \$29 carry case, a false economy. Screens are especially sensitive to physical shock, can easily crack, and cost several hundreds of dollars to replace.

Lacking a large physical volume to circulate cooling air while turned on; notebook computers are more vulnerable to heat damage than desktops. Often containing only tiny cooling fans, and using the notebook itself as a heat sink, overheating is the principle cause of internal notebook failure. The more powerful the processor, the more prone the notebook is to overheating, a well-documented problem. I have heard several anecdotal stories of fairly new notebooks failing when left on overnight, due to overheating. I recently replaced my oldest daughter's notebook due to that exact cause. Published reports indicate that the average life expectancy of a notebook computer is only about 18 months, before it is lost, stolen, accidentally broken, overheated, or worn

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Buying a DVD Recorder

By: Bob Elgines

Well the prices are coming down, now under \$300 and as low as \$220, for a DVD recorder. The blank disks are now under \$2.50 each in lots of ten or more. But beware, the great decision as to which format is still under debate, DVD-R or DVD+R! If you just wish to make videos either one should work in most DVD players made after the year 2000, but not all. Cheaper DVDR disks and players will not work.

Support out there is very weak to almost NONE! Much time is needed to be invested like 4 to 10 hours to make a 2 hour video DVD, of which several programs require you to sit in front of your computer.

Most of the software is over priced and does not work without many problems and no support like "Video Studio 6" by Cyber. The best so far has been "MyDVD" by Sonic. Some of the suggestions listed below came from them.

The best input devices are: "USB Instant DVD" by ADS (\$160), "Bungee DVD" by Pinnacle (\$150), "DCS 100" (\$170) and "DCS 200" by Dazzle (\$230). They all come with software that have individual problems, and advertise "Fast, Easy & Fun", boy that is a huge JOKE! It's Slow, Hard, & Will drive you nuts.

If you can not provide all of the suggestions (really necessary evils) below then don't get involved. I became one of their guinea pig and I am about to throw it all in the circle file and call it a lost.

My ASUS computer is an Intel P3 @ 866MHz, 256MB RAM @ 133MHz, 60GB Hard Drive @ 7200rpm ATA100, ATI Radeon 32MB video card, with the "USB Instant DVD" input device (I tried out the DAZZLE equipment, but it had big noise problems and they had NO support at all), VIVASTAR (LF311) DVD-R recorder. I have tried two operating systems such as Win '98SE and Win'ME and saw no difference, went back to Win'98SE.

For Windows '98 'XP users start off with these suggestions on getting ready to record a DVD:

- *Install at least 256 MB of RAM
- *Disable the Screen Saver
- *Disable the Turn off Hard Disks option
- *Disable the Hibernation option
- *Disable the Network Time Server (Win'XP)
- *Disable Text to Speech (Win'XP)
- *Disable any scheduled tasks (for example, virus scan)
- *Do not increase Virtual Memory beyond Windows' recommended setting
- *Close any other running applications
- *Do not copy any large files while capturing
- *Do not allow any remote activities, such as PC Anywhere or Timbuktu connections
- *Your hard drives are formatted to NTFS (which as no files size limitations Win'XP)

- *You have at least 21 gigs available on a single drive
- *You have the latest drivers for the following: DVD Rom, burner, CD-ROM and burner.
- *Your hard drives have been defragmented.
- *In particular, while capturing video, do not use your PC for any other activity. Video capture requires all your PC's processing power, and any action such as inserting a disc or receiving e-mail may cause errors in the captured video files.
- *Your monitor resolution must be set to 1024x768 16 or 32 bit color
- *You are running ASPI driver 4.6. No higher, no lower. If you are unsure, you can go here to find out and/or download the appropriate driver: <http://aspi.radified.com>
- *You are not running you machine/session of a network/RAID configuration
- *Make sure you have the latest version DirectX (a must), WMP (a must):
- *If your "Input digital device" is on USB, then remove all other USB external equipment.
- *You may also find it beneficial to enable DMA for all your drives.

There are DVD-RAM and DVD+RAM which allows you to save up to 9.6GB of Data, but hard drives are much cheaper, like 20GB for \$69.00 or lower. It is just not FAST and EASY as they have stated in their advertising!

Bob Elgines can be reached by email: elginesz@rraz.net

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.

More Windows Tweaks continued from page 3

- <http://www.tweakxp.com/tweakxp/>
- <http://www.kellys-korner-xp.com/xp.htm>
- <http://www.dougknox.com/>
- http://www.onecomputerguy.com/windowsxp_tips.htm
- <http://members.fortunecity.com/computingx/xptweakguide.htm>
- http://www.winsupersite.com/showcase/windowsxp_tips.asp
- <http://www.windows-help.net/WindowsXP/cust-idx.html>
- <http://www.extremetech.com/article2/0,,5155,00.asp>
- <http://www.extremetech.com/article2/0,3973,550842,00.asp>
- <http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,4149,570867,00.asp>



Recycle your Old Equipment

By: Don Arrowsmith - PPCUG

All of us outgrow our computers at some point or other. Rather than pile it up at the curb or stuff it in the back corner of the basement for your children to dispose of, why not take it to the Trenton Materials Exchange. They are located just off Route One and will be happy to accept your old computer and other electronic items, including CPUs, modems, cables, answering machines, VCRs, projectors, telephones, typewriters, monitors, terminals, CRTs, TVs. Note: There is a \$5 handling fee for each computer monitor or TV monitor to assist with lead & glass disposal fees. They don't accept microwave ovens! Newer equipment may be refurbished and passed along to a worth cause. If the equipment is truly trash, it will be remanufactured by a properly licensed firm. They are a 501(c)3 organization and will provide you with a receipt for tax purposes. For more information see <http://www.tmex.org/computer.htm>.

If you have an old wireless phone that's gathering dust, there are several groups that will accept them and reprogram working units to dial only 911 to be passed along to, e.g., abused women. One group is the Donate a Phone project of the Wireless Foundation named: CALL to PROTECT. Contact at web site: (<http://www.wirelessfoundation.org/12give/index2.cfm>), which redistributes phones free of charge to victims in need. Phones with batteries, chargers and manuals can be mailed to Motorola (see web site for address) or left at numerous locations (see list by state at the web site) - one such location is Wireless Zone, 7 North Route 31, Pennington, NJ. This is a tax deductible program and receipts will be provided.

While not equipment itself, polystyrene is used to pack many electronics items (and eggs). The Alliance of Foam Packaging Recyclers (<http://www.epspackaging.org/>) promotes the recycling of expanded polystyrene, the white molded foam packing 'blocks' that accompany monitors, processors, DVD players, and other electronic items. They have a clickable map by state to locate cooperating companies. There are several in NJ but the closest one to Trenton is: Raybob Packaging, 215-943-4799, Tullytown, PA.

Household batteries, both rechargeable and non-rechargeable, include varying types of toxic heavy metals: mercury, nickel, zinc, lead, etc. These chemicals should be kept out of our landfills! In Mercer County batteries may be put at the curb for recycling as follows: Place the batteries in a clear plastic bag with a "Zip-Lock" closure and seal the bag. Place the bag on top of recyclables in the yellow bucket. PLEASE - do not put batteries loose in the recycling bucket! This could be harmful to the people collecting and sorting recyclables. Household batteries may also be brought to Household Chemical Waste Disposal Days or dropped off at the following locations: Municipal Buildings, County Administration Building, Yardville Supply, J&B Hill (Hopewell Borough), and Radio Shack Stores. Look for blue containers. More information on recycling in Mercer County can be found at <http://www.mcia-nj.com/recycling.html>.

More information about recycling electronics in general, with links to other local programs, is available at the National Recycling Coalition's Electronics Recycling Initiative (<http://www.nrc-recycle.org/resources/electronics/>).



*The 2003
Nominations Are!*

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- Vice President Tom Carman**
- Secretary Don Arrowsmith**
- Treasurer Paul Kurivchack**
- Member-At-Large Jon Abolins**
- Member-At-Large Kim Goldenberg**
- Member-At-Large Vic Laurie**
- Member-At-Large Sol Libes**



PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

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

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(Last Update: November 30, 2002)

Send Updates to kurivchp@optonline.net for inclusion in this listing.

Time to consider. . . continued from page 4

out. Notebooks, on average, have only about a fourth of the longevity of a desktop.

Desktop or notebook is a common decision to be made. Weigh the advantages and risks before purchasing either.

Ira Wilsker can be reached by email: ira@apcug.org

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Consultants Corner

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Consultants Corner

You can advertise your consulting business for \$25 per year in addition to your normal membership fee.

Minutes for the General Meeting November 18, 2002

By: Don Arrowsmith

Paul called the meeting to order at 7:46. Nominations for 2003 officers were announced for the election to be held at the December meeting. Next year's programs will include eBay, constructing PowerPoint presentations, and using batch files.

At 8:11 Karl Juelch began the evening's program on Print Artist. This software is used to produce typical graphic projects for home use such as newsletters, greeting cards, stationery, etc. It is similar to Print Shop or PrintMaster and more information can be found at <http://printartist.sierrahome.com/>. Karl teaches a class on Print Artist at SeniorNet and brought a display with many items he has made with this software. The evening concluded at 9:00.

Computing Factoids

Compiled by: Steve Bass - Pasadena IBM Users Group

Listen Up and Take Heed!

I always tell people to unplug their PC when working on the insides. It's something I never do. My unsolicited advice? Do it. All the time.

Here's why: I added a sound card to my wife's PC the other day. Easy enough, right? Then, while the system was up and running, I replaced the cover. I've done it that way since I started with PCs in 1983. This time it bit me on the butt. The case cover touched an add-in card and the systemboard fried. Better it should have happened to my PC, you know what I'm saying? -Steve Bass

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World and runs the Pasadena IBM Users Group. Check his Home Office columns at <http://snurl.com/homeoffice> and sign up for the Steve Bass online newsletter at <http://snurl.com/signup> §

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