PPCUG

NEWS

Monday 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..

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 this issue

Houston Landis and Bill Hawryluk looking over the table of holiday goodies at the December General Meeting / Holiday Party.

Digital Photo by: Paul Kurivchack

apcug

Coming Events

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

April 14, 2003 - to be announced

Tired of Netscape, Internet Explorer??

By: Ed Weiss - PPCUG

I'm writing this article for those members who were not at the December general meeting to hear the quick brief about a new browser that is available. It's called Avant Browser, and is available from www.avantbrowser.com. Currently it's available in 27 different languages.

The latest stable release is 7.0.2.5.

OK, so what makes Avant so different from all the others? Well, there are more buttons across the top that give you added control. The first five buttons are identical to all other browsers, Back, Forward, Stop, Refresh, and Home. The next group of three includes Search, Favorites, and History. Then next portion of the toolbar is where the major differences begin.

The first button here will allow you to go to full screen with only one line of icons across the top. It even covers over the Windows tool bar at the bottom of the screen. Very useful, when you want to see the entire screen not just a portion. Clicking on the button again restores the screen to include all the toolbars etc. The next button allows changing the fonts to one of 5 sizes. A complete selection of fonts is available under the Tools => Internet Options => Fonts location. The next button allows for selecting the different encoding languages. Next on the list is the HTML editor button; this allows plugging in your favorite HTML editor. Next is the print button, and the mail button.

The next section of buttons allows more control over the browser. The first button will disallow pictures; this makes loading pages very quick. And the next button is the best of the bunch. Block ads. By pressing this button, it will prevent 99% of the pop-up ads that are one of the major annoyances while surfing the web. You should note that there are some instances where these pop-ups are necessary, such as logging into some accounts. By having the button easily available, you can enable the pop-up when necessary, but shut it down right after with out having to go thru pull down menus all the time. The last button on this line is "New", and this starts up a new window that can be set to a blank page, a copy of the same page, or a home page.

One of the many other features that make this browser handy to use is that the "Back" button has a pull down, that is not limited to 15 or 20 items, so that you can jump back a lot more pages at one selection. The "Forward" button also allows for moving many pages forward after jumping back. In the top right hand corner just under the Windows bar, is a similar bar that controls the multiple browsing windows. There are Left and Right arrows that allow you to sequence thru the open pages, Three buttons that allow you to tier the browser windows, Split Horizontal, or Vertical the screen. And just in case you have many windows open, a button will cause all windows to close so you can start over again. The browser window can be minimized, stacked, or deleted.

One more feature that makes Avant one of the handier browsers is that when you shut it down, it can ask you if you want to save the pages, so that the next time you start up the browser, you will be starting just where you left off.

Google is Great!

By: John Lenihan, Pikes Peak Computer Application Society

Listen to any of the technology talk shows or read articles that discuss "search engines" and you'll see that Google has been rated high for a long time. I find it accurately displays whatever I'm looking for, so much so, that it's like having an encyclopedia of knowledge at my finger tips. Newer engines are coming out, but I still trust Google to find my answers. But have you dug deeper down into what's available with this search engine? Well read on, because there's a lot more to it.

Let's start by using the basic search window found on http://www.google.com. When my computer runs into a problem and can give me enough of an understandable error message, I've found that typing the message into a Google search window usually gives me enough hits to help me narrow the problem. My son called me a few months ago and said he thought he had sent me a virus, and wanted me to delete the file called sulfnbk.exe. It sounded a little fishy, and since he was close to his computer, I asked him to type the file name into Google. He saw the words HOAX come up in big block letters. Google saved me the hassle of trying to resurrect that file later. If you want to narrow your searches to just Microsoft-related pages, you can click on "Advanced Search" and go to the bottom of the displayed page and click on "Microsoft." Thus, if you have an operating system or Microsoft application question, this narrows the boundaries of the search. You can also get there directly by going to http://www.google.com/microsoft.html. Notice from the "Advanced Search" page that other narrow searches can be done for Apple, BSD Unix, Linux, and Government-related sites.

Try doing a "vanity search" by typing your name in the search box. Or even try it with friends you've lost contact with. I've found some long-lost souls just by doing this. Enter a name, city, state, or zip code for a business or a person and see if you get a hit. You may be surprised at how easy it can be to find information about yourself. Enter a phone number and see if you get a name back. If Google recognizes what you entered as an address, you'll get a street map back. Google is so good at finding things that there was even a game called "googlewhacking" where people would try typing in a combination of words that just returned one search reply. It's fairly hard to do unless you use some really obscure word variations.

Looking at the basic search screen on the opening Google page, you'll notice four tabs on top. The default is the Web tab, which we were just using. The next one is the Images tab, taking you to http://images.google.com. This will allow you access to millions of images on the Web. Suppose your child is doing a school report on oak trees. Type "oak trees" into the images search engine and you'll find plenty of pictures for the report. Of course, I need to pass along the disclaimer that lots of stuff on the Web is copyrighted, so you need to be careful how you use what you find. But I doubt you'll get into too much trouble using a picture in your school report. But I did hear that teachers could use Google to search for text phrases in reports to check for plagiarism.

There are thousands of newsgroups in cyberspace, covering thousands of topics, and only so much time in a day. The third tab over is the "Groups" tab and it will let you find out what is (or was) being discussed out there that you would be interested in. For example, if you're thinking of buying a new digital camera, type the model number in the Groups search window. You'll see messages from people in various newsgroups that discussed that item. You can use this method to monitor almost any topic you have an interest in.

The last tab over at the top is the "Directory" tab. Click here and you'll see Web pages organized into directories by topic, much like you'd see at Yahoo. For example, click on "Computers" and you'll see almost 50 computer topics arranged by categories, any one of which takes you to many other Websites. They advertise they have over 1.5 million pages indexed in this directory.

Want to keep up with current news stories? Go to http://news.google.com and enter in a news topic. Say you wanted to stay abreast of the Hayman Fire that burned close to us a few months back. Entering those words into the search window resulted in stories from newspapers all across the country. Google would even tell you how old the stories were, with many only hours old.

For the linguists out there that need help translating short pieces of text from one language to another, there's http://www.google.com/language_tools. Need help translating "yo quiero" from Spanish to English, then give it a try.

Want to see additional tools being worked on by the Google development team? Look at http://labs.google.com. Four tools are listed, the most interesting to me being the glossary. If you come across an unfamiliar word or phrase and go here, you'll get a link or pointer to pages that offer a definition. Another tool at this site is Google Sets, where you can type in a few related words, and it give you a list of more related items. There's also a voice recognition tool to help you search Google by phone, and a keyboard shortcuts tool that lets you search Google without a mouse.

I hope I've convinced you why Google is great, not only as a search engine for the Web, but also for its many other capabilities for specialized searches. Do you ever wonder how history would look if recorded by the types of searches being done on the Web? Then look at the year 2001 laid out at http://www.google.com/press/timeline.html. You can see what was on the minds of many people that year by the searches that were requested. So search wisely—historians may learn about us, while we learn about what interests us.

IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN THE PPCUG!

Uses for old CD's?
By: Gordon Woolf - Worsley Press

What do you do with that pile of now-useless CDs? One-off transfers of large files that will never be needed again, last year's editions of anti=virus programs and free trials of ISPs that merged or went belly-up.

There are also the many "Frisbees"—the output of CD writers when you forget to disable the screen saver or defragmenter or there was a hesitation in the power supply. Increasingly too there will be the backup CDs made with low-grade dyes that fail after a year or less.

Recyclers don't want any of these plastic discs so they end in the wheelie bin on their way to landfills. But why? There are uses for some of them at least, as I found when I asked some net-friends (people I've never met face-to-face, but who are everyday contacts over the Internet). A common suggestion is to use them as coasters, but they have a problem in that role—the liquid stays on the surface and still drips from the glass or stubby. Carole Majors in the USA had an answer for that: "I found a lovely recipe for crocheting CD covers that make them into real absorbable coasters. I think it turned up one day while I was 'googling' for some resource on CD-R uses. <http://www.crochetmemories.com/archive/misc4.html>

Marc Zeedar (who wrote a very different kind of word processor, Z-Write, that is currently only for the Mac but which he's promised to transport to Windows): "I've heard they make beautiful mobiles— the lovely rainbow colors from the CDs look pretty spinning around" Former Adobe magazine editor Wendy Katz in Seattle tells: "My husband had an old microwave oven that he was intent on destroying, and he used to put the trashed CDs in it and fire it up. Made a heckuva sound and light show, with an olfactory track to boot. One new microwave and two impressionable kids later, he's kicked the habit." That's one suggestion we don't recommend.

Sue Mitchell in Fairbanks, Alaska, looking forward to a summer which we would regard as being too cold for winter, but who, unbelievably, has an ISP with the name "mosquitonet", wrote: "I've seen people selling clocks made from CDs with the hands inserted through the hole in the center. Either with painted faces or just plain as they were manufactured.

To that, and closer to home, Loraine Chapman, who seemingly commutes between publication production work in Bribane and Thailand, added: "You have given me an idea Sue. I am going to use one of my 'dead' CDs as a backing for a cross-stitch clock—been wondering what to use for a 'circle'! Perfect!!

More recently, Judith Ball, editor of the 'Motherboard' user group newsletter in Redding, California, commented: "I teach a DTP/ graphics class for our computer organization, and my students have learned to make Christmas tree ornaments AND greeting cards out of them, using the Stomper's Click'NDesign CD Labeling software. Design a label for each side, punch a hole at the top of the CD and thread a colorful string through it to tie to a tree branch, etc. The holiday designs of these adults are limitless! Our initiator even put her family's pic on the CD with Christmas holly and snow around it as a greeting card."

Others suggested some commercial sites on the web where I found a desk organizer. The blurb states: "Made with three CDs, this desktop object d'art has a place for your business cards (or sheets of notepaper), a handy clip to hold urgent notices, and a spring funnel for your favorite pen. And, it brightens up your desk with color and bits of fancy. "These seem highly priced at $30 in US currency, but they seem to be works of art: "Myra's famous abstract designs are output on a digital press, then laminated on to a used, discarded CD. Add some clever construction and glass beads... and voila! All Dis-Organizers have a cork, felt or foam bottom so as not to mar your desk or slip. From friendly ceramic animals and miniatures to floral landscapes and witty mechanical puns... Recycle with style!"

There's more information and pictures at < http:// www.nanosite.com/confab/disorganizer.htm>
The same artist has also recreated from two reject CDs a handbag based on those beaded bags of the early 20th century. Myra described them as a "homage to the past, using discards of the present..." She's selling them for up to US$120!

If anyone has better ideas, let me know, either through this publication or direct to gordon@worsleypress.com Incidentally, the site with the crochet-CD coasters also has a pattern for covers for usable CDs. Little woolly jackets for CDs seem a step up on the so-called jewel case.

Gordon Woolf has written a number of books, which include Publication Production using PageMaker, and How to Start and Produce a Magazine. Contact details: info@worsleypress.com or http:// www.worsleypress.com
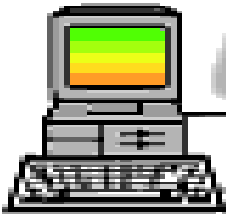
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PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

http://www.ppcug-nj.org

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(Last Update: January 2, 2003)
Send Updates to kurivchp@optonline.net for inclusion in this listing.

2003 General Meeting Schedule

January 13, 2003 – Monday

February 10, 2003 – Monday

March 10, 2003 – Monday

April 14, 2003 – Monday

May 12, 2003 – Monday

June 9, 2003 – Monday

July 14, 2003 – Monday

August 11, 2003 – Monday

September 8, 2003 – Monday

October 20, 2003 – Monday* - Third Monday

November 10, 2003 – Monday

December 8, 2003 – Monday

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.

In the description of Avant, the developer states:

"Avant Browser is a fast, stable, user-friendly, versatile multi-window browser. Avant Browser allows user to browse multiple Web sites simultaneously and block all unwanted pop-up pages. All opened pages can be easily stopped, refreshed, closed or arranged with one click. The integrated cleaner helps user to clear all traces and keep privacy. Built-in Google search engine enables user to search for web pages, images, groups and news in Internet."

Avant will run under Win98, ME, NT, 2000, and XP. It contains both Install and Uninstall options. As for support, there is a forum that you can read, and if you register, you can also input your suggestions to make Avant a better tool. This program is one well worth the time to download and install it. All In All, one of the better freeware programs of today

My suggestion to you is to pop open the Home page at the URL provided below, and give it a quick test. I started using it more or less as an alternative to the Netscape and IE, and now I use it 99.99% of the time. A very impressive program.

Enjoy

Again, here are all the links to Avant.

Home Page: http://www.avantbrowser.com
Download Link: http://www.avantbrowser.com/absetup.exe
Mirror Download Link: http://avantbrowser.host-it.no/download/absetup.exe
Screenshot: http://www.avantbrowser.com/images/sc.jpg
Program Icon: http://www.avantbrowser.com/images/icon.gif
PAD XML File: http://www.avantbrowser.com/pad/pad.xml
Author Email: author@avantbrowser.com

POWERPOINT - TIPS
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