

PPCUG

NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

Monday April 14, 2003

“Global Positioning Systems”

GPS mean never having to say “I’m Lost”?

Don Arrowsmith will demonstrate the
Garmin Street Pilot III Auto Navigation unit
and
the MapSource PC software.

At

Lawrence Library

Meeting 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*

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Digital Photo by: Tom Carman

President Clarke Walker making his opening remarks to the group at the March general meeting.

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:

Clarke Walker 609-883-5262

Vice-President:

Tom Carman 732-828-6055

Secretary:

Don Arrowsmith 609-883-9874

Treasurer:

Paul Kurivchack 908-218-0778

Members-At-Large:

Jon Abolins 609-883-8126

Vic Laurie 609-924-1220

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Newsletter Editor:

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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.

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Coming Events

May 3 & 4, 2003 - Trenton Computer Festival

May 12, 2003 - Lindow Operating System - Jim Russ

June 9, 2003 - Batch Files & Scripting - Vic Laurie

July 14, 2003 - Music & Video on Your PC - Don Slepian

Presidents Message

By: Clarke Walker

I want to thank everyone who participated in last month's "Digital Camera Show, Tell and Shoot". It was very useful to see different cameras and hear user's suggestions and comments. If you took pictures at the meeting please send them to Don and Paul so we can use them on the web site and in the newsletter.

During the meeting I took a series of group shots, I stitched them together to create a 180 degree photo. Then I created an executable which has been placed on our web site. You can download the file to see who was at the meeting. I will most likely do the same thing at future meetings.

Monday evening on March 31, 2003 we held a board meeting. We used the time to review the club's programs. We also learned from Paul that he feels he does not have time to do all the work he has been doing for us. Don has agreed to take over the publishing of the newsletter. We need some one to be the club's treasurer. If you are interested please send me an e-mail or speak to me at the next meeting. You can also contact any of the Board Members. We (actually Paul) would like the next Treasurer to start in June. Paul can fill you in on the details.

If you haven't already, please renew your membership to the club. Also please sign up to help at the package pickup area for TCF'03. It is fun and interesting to see all the stuff people buy at the computer flea market.

Parcel Pickup @ TCF2003

By: Paul Kurivchack

Spring has sprung and we're back to Day Light Savings Time. It is only one meeting away to the bright warm sunshine of early May and the Trenton Computer Festival at the NJ Convention Center in Edison, NJ.

The Princeton PC Users Group will again be hosting the Parcel Pick-up Area in front of the Flea Market on May 3 and 4. We need to start asking for volunteers to help out for a four-hour shift on Saturday or Sunday.

As in the past, TCF provides free admission to the show for volunteering at the Pick-up area. Come in the morning, pick up your badge to shop and then work the afternoon (In fact we always need more help in the afternoon than the morning).

The parcel pick-up area has been a great moneymaker for our group. It continues to help hold down the cost of dues and allows the group to purchase new equipment.

A sign up sheet will be on the sign in table at the next meeting or e-mail me at: kurivchp@optonline.net of the day and time you can work. Thanks!!!!

Backups-Lite

By: Vic Laurie - PPCUG

Over the years, I have preached the paramount importance of external backups many times. I continually encounter PC users who have problems that a backup would have fixed or ameliorated. Even worse, I see hard disk failures with the concomitant total loss of valuable and often irreplaceable data. People know they should back up but somehow they just don't seem to get around to it. The common failure to carry out this vital chore is due in part to human inertia but it is also partly due to hesitancy about what is involved in the backup process. In addition, really proper backup requires some extra software and external storage devices and this is a hurdle for many people. I also think that many people are unaware that hard disk failure is not an especially rare event.

Everybody would be better off with regular and thorough backups. However, experience indicates that a large group of PC users are just never going to do this vital housekeeping. I am going to address this group in this article in the hope that that it will help persuade people to at least back up their most vital data. I would like to outline some simple backup strategies, which use resources that most people already have, and that even the most casual PC user can employ. These minimum procedures are not substitutes for the real thing but they will at least prevent total disaster.

Those who wish to do thorough and complete backups will find many "how-to" articles on the Internet. One excellent and comprehensive discussion is from Fred Langa at <http://www.langa.com/backups/backups.htm>. (By the way, if you are willing to shell out \$200, Maxtor has a new external USB hard drive that comes with its own software and is supposed to enable "one-button" backups. A review is at <http://storage.ziffdavis.com/article2/0.3973.799121.00.asp>).

Where and How to Backup

The whole point of these backups is to protect against hard drive failure, a virus infection, or other problem that either destroys vital data or makes it inaccessible from your present system. Thus, the backup medium must be external to the hard drive. Ideally, this means another hard drive but for a minimum procedure a CD-RW drive will serve. Most computers now come with CD burners and I strongly urge that you include one (or better yet a DVD burner) in any new computer that you buy. (Options for systems lacking a CD-RW are discussed later in the article.) Please note that GoBack, System Restore, and similar programs provide no protection against disk failure since they back up on the main hard drive itself.

Although many people recommend the rewritable kind of CD (CD-RW) and the use of incremental backups, I am going to suggest using the plain CDs (CD-R) that can be written to only once. Actually, if you have packet-writing software and don't close the CD, you can keep writing in multiple sessions until the CD-R fills up. However, I am going to keep this as simple as possible. I am aiming this article at those who want the least possible bother. Both CD-RW disks and packet writing to CD-R disks require extra software and care and involve special formats that can have problems. For example, not all CD drives can read some of the formats. (A good discussion of formats is at <http://www.aumha.org/a/xpcd.htm>)

For simplicity, I suggest that once a week you burn to a CD-R whatever files you want to protect. Each week use a fresh CD blank. To be safe, keep a couple of week's worth and throw away the rest. Since we are not talking about a full backup, one CD should be

enough to hold everything that you wish to back up. (If you have a lot of photos or multimedia, you should probably be considering another hard drive.) Almost any computer that comes with a CD burner will have the necessary software and the procedure isn't much more involved than copying to a floppy. If you have Windows XP, you can use the minimal CD burning capability that is bundled with the operating system. A spindle of 50 blank CDs costs only a few dollars at most. Often you can find a deal, where the CDs are free after a rebate. Thus, the cost of using a new CD every week should be no more than 10-20 cents, probably less. Completely recopying files each time may take longer than an incremental backup, but it keeps the process simple. In any event, even burning an entire CD doesn't take all that long. Learning how to use backup software and how to restore backups is an obstacle that keeps many people from bothering; straightforward copying avoids that problem. A simple copy on a closed CD-R requires no special software to restore and can be read by any ordinary CD drive.

Alternate Backup Media

If your computer does not have a CD burner, and you do not want the expense of buying one or the bother of learning how to use one, consider the fairly new devices known as USB memory keys or USB flash memory. This handy type of storage is about the size of a slim cigarette lighter and plugs right into a USB port. Windows Me and XP have the necessary driver already installed. Windows 98 requires installation of a small file that is provided with the device. When plugged in, the device is assigned a letter and is just like a little extra drive. Copying to it is no different to copying to a folder. Interestingly, Dell is now omitting the floppy A: drive on many of its computers and is offering USB memory keys instead. Prices keep coming down and 64 Mbytes of memory cost around \$50. For many people, 64 Mbytes is sufficient to back up all their important personal data. File compression can help keep the required space down. (However, if you have photos or music files, you ought to bite the bullet and get an external hard drive.)

I still encounter people who use 1.44 Byte diskettes for their backup. Their very small capacity and slowness make these diskettes a medium of the absolute last resort and only for people who have almost nothing of importance on their computer. Often, the people who do use diskettes are omitting to back up important data. (I once encountered someone who thought he had backed up his entire Programs folder on one solitary diskette. What he had copied were the shortcuts in the Start menu.) If you must use diskettes, file compression programs like WinZip or the XP compression applet can help keep file sizes down. WinZip will automatically span diskettes if a file is too big to fit on one diskette. Thus, if you zip into one big file everything you want backed up, you can then copy the file in one operation to however many diskettes are needed. Using a zipped file will also avoid the "disk full" error message that you can get when putting a number of small files on a diskette, caused by the rather low limit on root directory entries.

What to Backup

So what should be included in a minimum backup? Obviously, it will vary from person to person, but there are certain basic categories everyone should consider. Since we are addressing the needs of the prototypical average home PC user, these categories are primarily:

- 1) E-mail, address books, Internet bookmarks/favorites, passwords
- 2) Financial data, banking, tax data
- 3) Other important personal data
- 4) User-created documents such as correspondence and school reports

New Year's Resolutions & Your Computer

By: Ira Wilsker

This is the time of the year that many of us make New Year's resolutions, promising to keep them, and eating black-eyed peas to insure our good luck and good fortune. Despite the many hours per week that a lot of us spend on our computers, we often neglect resolutions that can make the time we spend computing more enjoyable, productive, efficient, and secure.

Resolve to reduce Internet irritants, those pesky spam mail solicitations, pop-up ads, assaults on our machines from hackers, and attacks by computer viruses.

Resolve to follow the three most important words in computing, which are: **Backup, Backup, and Backup.**

Resolve to finally dump those big national Internet providers that so many of you subscribe to and complain about, but never get around to canceling. Resolve to subscribe to a local provider.

I hate the spam mail that I receive. I am tired of the solicitations for personal physical enhancement, cheap prescription drugs (often without a prescription), Nigerians offering to make me rich, home refinancing, and lonely females offering to make me happy. Harvesting our email addresses from a variety of sources is something that we can do little to prevent. Checking with out internet service provider (ISP) and software publishers on their privacy policies, and selecting the possible option to "opt-out" of their giving away or selling our personal information may help reduce future spam, but will do little to stop the spam we are currently receiving. Sadly, some of the largest national ISPs default to "opt-in", meaning that if subscribers do not explicitly tell them on an annual basis that our information is not to be sold, then they will imply our consent to sell our personal information. Many software products (and many other consumer items), solicit our email address with the product registration. Reading the fine print will typically offer the choice to opt-out, and hopefully prevent the company from selling our information to third parties.

Many of our local ISPs now offer email filtering as either a part of their basic service, or as a nominally priced premium service. Using the SpamCop blacklist, or third party filtering provided by companies such as Postini or BrightMail, our local ISPs tend to filter out more spam mail than do some of the large national providers, many of which offer no spam filtering service. As a bonus, some of the email filtering services also removes many of the email born viruses before they can reach our computers. Either as a freestanding product or as a supplement to ISP filtering, third party spam filtering services or software should be considered.

If using broadband Internet, such as cable or DSL, it is imperative that a good software firewall be utilized. For dialup users, a firewall would also be a good idea. A firewall can make it more difficult for hackers to get access to your computer while online, and can help reduce the chance of a "back-door Trojan" or spyware from sending personal information from your computer to unknown outsiders. As had been discussed in an earlier column, Zone Alarm (www.zonelabs.com) and Outpost (www.agnitum.com) are excellent firewalls, and free for personal use. In addition to a firewall, an antivirus program, frequently updated, is a necessity for all computer users. To try to eliminate the spyware that may be infesting our computers, and transmitting our personal information to unknown parties in cyberspace, the use of a spyware killer is also important. One of the best ones available is the free Ad-Aware, available from

www.lavasoftusa.com. Be sure to keep firewalls, antivirus, and spyware utilities current, as their publishers often post updates to the software.

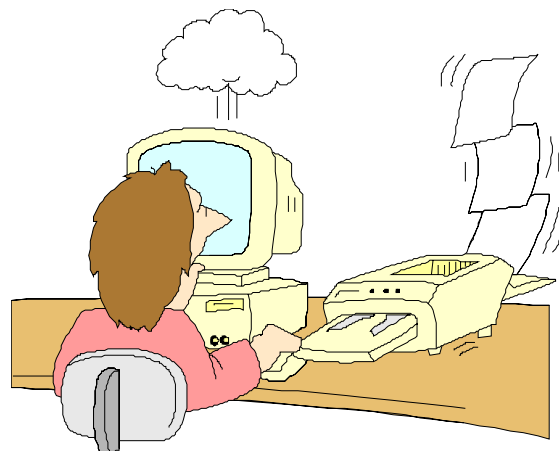
Another way to help secure the Windows PC is with the "critical updates" released by Microsoft. In 2002, Microsoft released about 70 critical updates. These updates typically close newly discovered security flaws found in browsers, email programs, media players, operating systems, office software, and other vulnerable products. These updates can be freely obtained and installed by going online, and clicking on START - WINDOWS UPDATE and allowing Microsoft to send individualized updates. One warning to users of Windows 95; check for updates immediately, as Microsoft is about to cease all support and updates for that version of Windows.

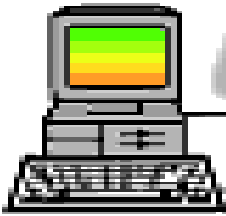
Hard drives are machines. They all do eventually wear out and fail. A full backup of the hard drive, with periodic incremental backups of new files, will enable the disaster of a hard drive failure to be easily recoverable. At an absolute minimum, critical data files should be backed up frequently. Backing up to writable CDs or DVDs, or an external hard drive, using any of a variety of backup utilities, is great insurance. One step in recovering from a hard drive failure is often booting off of a floppy; now is a great time to make that bootable floppy, sometimes called a "rescue disk".

Most of us spend a great deal of time online, and many of us also overspend on internet services that bog us down with ads, spam mail, slow service, busy signals, and frequently knock us offline when least expected. Many of you also overpay for the inferior service that some of the large national carriers provide. Switching from the national carrier to a local ISP, such as Eonet, advertised on this page, can be a great move in terms of improved service, as well as a big money saver. Local ISPs may save those who use the national services over \$200 per year, providing better service for far less money.

Finally, resolve to stay informed by continuing to read this column every week, and listening to my twice-weekly radio shows on KLVJ.

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.





PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

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

PPCUG Member E-mail Directory

Name Last	First	E-Mail Address	Name Last	First	E-Mail Address
Abolins	John D.	jda-ir@njcc.com	Konvalinka	John W.	jkonvalinka@msn.com
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(Last Update: April 5, 2003)

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

Backups-Lite continued from page 3

5) Limited numbers of photos

For the most part, backing up just means copying a file (perhaps compressed) to the desired medium. In some cases you may need to find in what folder the original files are located. However, in many cases, backup file copies can be created directly from the file menu of the software involved, as in Word, Quicken or tax programs. However, it is best to create these copies made directly from programs in a backup folder on your hard drive first. They can then be copied to a CD or whatever.

Backing up Internet related items can be more complicated and the methods depend on what browser and which e-mail client you use. If you use AOL, only mail that you have stored in your "Filing Cabinet" can be backed up. How you back up the "Filing Cabinet" depends on the version of AOL in use. Similarly, backing up AOL Favorites and the AOL address book depends on the AOL version. Later versions store things at AOL itself. AOL users should consult their Help files. If you use Outlook Express (OE) for your e-mail, backing up involves some rather obscure files with the extension DBX. See the excellent site: <http://insideoe.tomsterdam.com/backup/index.htm> for instructions. The address book for OE is in a file with the extension WAB. The folder where the file(s) is kept varies, depending on your version of Windows and your setup. Do a search

for *.wab to find the file(s) on your system. How Internet favorites (or bookmarks) are stored depends on the browser. For Internet Explorer (IE) they are stored in a folder named "Favorites." If you know where the Favorites folder is, one way to back up is to copy all the files from the Favorites folder. However, the location of the Favorites folder varies depending the Windows version and on the user configuration. An easier way to back up is to go to the File menu of IE and click on "Import and Export". This will open the Import/Export "wizard", which will allow you to create a single hypertext file "Bookmarks.htm" containing all your Internet Favorites (this is the Netscape format) and to export it to your backup location. This file in turn can be imported by IE should you need to restore your favorites. If, for some reason, you want to, you can also back up your Internet "cookies" with the "wizard."

Lament for PC Magazine Utilities Vic Laurie- PPCUG

On a number of occasions I have praised *PC Magazine* for providing a regular series of free and useful utility programs for downloading. I just recently mentioned them again in the February Newsletter. Unfortunately, the bean counters at Ziff Davis have decided to start charging a subscription fee (separate from the magazine subscription). They also replaced the old team of programmers. This decision was implemented without warning. I regret any inconvenience that any of you may have experienced by trying to follow up on my February article.

General Meeting Minutes

March 10, 2003

By: Don Arrowsmith

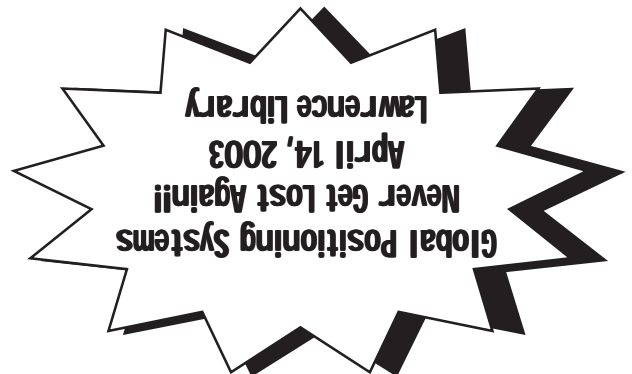
President Clarke Walker started the formal meeting at 7:45 pm with a Q&A. Some of the topics were: Using Partition Magic on a Dell, Limiting program access for different users on WinXP Home, Ethernet problems could be bad wiring at a jack.

At 8 pm, Clarke began the Digital Camera Show and Tell program by describing the different types of storage media used by various cameras: Compact Flash, Smart Media, Memory Stick, Floppies, CDR/W. Sizes, costs, and compatibility were noted and media readers were displayed. At that point many members described the features of their cameras, which they had with them.

PPCUG Gets a New Portable Computer

By: Don Arrowsmith

As was shown at the March meeting, the club's Keynote laptop computer is inadequate for today's computing needs. The PPCUG board decided to purchase a new unit with the features needed to demonstrate the software that each of us is using with their own systems. The unit selected is a Toshiba Satellite 1905-S303 with a Windows XP Home, 2.4GHz Pentium 4 processor, 512 MB of RAM, 40 GB Hard drive, 15 inch TFT LCD display, Ethernet adapter, V.92 modem, DVD-ROM/CD-RW drive, floppy, touchpad plus external mouse, and many other features. In keeping with our idea of encouraging more presentations by club members, the unit will be available for members to install software for demonstrations and to display documents or PowerPoint shows through our video projector. Hopefully, someday we'll also be able to use it to connect to the Internet to bring even more powerful and interesting programs to our meetings.



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