

September 2003 Volume 19 Number 9

PPCUG NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

Monday, September 8, 2003

Genealogy: Tracing Your Ancestors Blanche Sneath

Is your family history on scraps of paper tucked away in shoe boxes and drawers? Learn how to use your computer, the Internet, and other archival sources, to find, organize, display your detailed genealogy information, and much more, using Family Tree Maker. Blanche Sneath teaches a Genealogy course at the Ewing SeniorNet Computer Literacy Center. She has helped many people trace their family roots.

At:

Lawrence Library

Meeting Rooms 1 & 2

US Alternate 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 imply endorsement of its programs.

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PPCUG Online News: The meeting reminders that are generated by our Yahoo! Group are now set for 4 days prior to the meeting date. The email address we have for you is listed on the Members page of our web site. If you're not receiving messages or if your address is listed incorrectly, let the Secretary know.

Coming Events:

October 20, 2003 - Pocket PC (Third Monday!)
November 10, 2003 - Recycling Inkjet Cartridges
December 8, 2003 - Annual Meeting and Party

About PPCUG

General Meetings

Second Monday of the month at the Lawrenceville Library, Alternate Route 1 and Darrah Lane.
7:00 PM: Social Time / Tech Corner
7:45 PM: Meeting Comes to Order
8:00 PM: Featured Presentation

For information about upcoming meetings or joining PPCUG, see our web site:

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

Board Meetings

For meeting location and time, call 609-883-5262. Board meetings are open to all members.

Board Members

President:

Clarke Walker 609-883-5262

Vice-President:

Tom Carman 732-828-6055

Secretary:

Don Arrowsmith 609-883-9874

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Paul Kurivchack 908-218-0778

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Annual Dues

Dues are \$30 per calendar year. New members pay \$2.50 per month times the number of months remaining in the current year.

President's Message

Clarke Walker

Well, I wasn't sure what to write about, but events have prompted me as to what subject to write on: "Viruses and their Authors".

Since our last meeting, at least two viruses have infected computers around the world. The people who write these noxious programs should be banned from ever accessing a computer. Even when it is a non-fatal virus, it costs us time and money. It also costs us trust.

Even those of us who try to protect our computers have been tricked. About a year ago, I received an e-mail from one of our club members. It suggested I view some pictures he had just taken. What struck me as odd were two things: I wasn't expecting pictures from him, and second he did not describe what the pictures were of in the text. So before proceeding I contacted him. He was unaware of the e-mail (he didn't write it) and quickly did some research and found out that his PC was infected.

What are also dangerous are virus hoaxes. One I received yesterday. It was from a friend who had been told by another friend that their PC was infected. He was told to delete a file to prevent the virus from spreading. I checked and sure enough, that file was on my PC. But my Windows XP system indicated that this was a genuine system file. I then contacted my friend and warned her that I thought this could be a hoax. Sure enough, it is. If you want to read more about this hoax you can go to: <http://www.snopes.com/computer/virus/jdbgmgr.htm>

There are a few things we can do:

- run anti-virus software
- keep it up-to-date
- be suspicious

It is that last one that worries me the most. We try so hard to make the computer experience user-friendly and appealing to everyone. Yet there are those who seek to exploit us and our good intentions.

Microsoft has made available an article on "Protecting Your Computer." It can be found at: <http://www.microsoft.com/security/protect/default.asp>

See you on September 8th and have a healthy computer.

August Meeting Minutes

Clarke opened the meeting at 7:45. Questions were asked concerning: Ways to prevent a child's uploading of music via Morpheus (or similar); Suggested backup methods for a Windows Me system (Ghost, Partition Magic, or a 2nd hard drive were recommended by various people); Compatibility of computer generated DVD+R discs with existing DVD players (see below).

Jeff Gould of Princeton Online presented an interesting overview of How the Web Works. Princeton Online is a web hosting service with large and small clients and also provides free hosting to many local non-profits. Jeff described what happens after you hit the Enter key following a URL string. He covered how your computer and the web server computer are physically and logically connected to each other. Several tools that come with Windows and are useful for troubleshooting were pictured. He outlined some of the software he uses to design web pages and also showed how he configures a web server to present pages to us. Look for a file of links and a short PP file on our web site. The program ended about 9:15.



Keyboard Capers Redux

Vic Laurie, PPCUG

Almost five years have passed since I last wrote in the newsletter about using keyboard shortcuts (http://www.ppcug-nj.org/articles/vic_laurie/kbcaper.html) and I think it is time to revisit the subject. Although most of us think of the mouse as the main means of sending commands to the computer, the keyboard can be just as effective and often is a faster method. For example, when you are already typing something, switching back and forth between mouse and keyboard can slow you down considerably. Of course, a hindrance to using the hundreds of different keyboard shortcuts is the practical fact that few people are going to want to have to remember a whole lot of different combinations of keystrokes. Thus, the best way to take advantage of the keyboard shortcuts is to remember a few of the most useful ones for your particular applications and computer usage patterns. Also, it doesn't hurt to know a few emergency escape routes for those occasions when the mouse freezes.

There are a great variety of keyboard shortcuts, and I will mention only a few that I personally find useful. The Internet abounds with lists of shortcuts, and Microsoft has several useful sites. For example, Windows XP keyboard commands are tabulated at <http://www.microsoft.com/enable/products/keyboard/keyboardresults.asp?Product=27>. A similar list for older versions of Windows is at <http://support.microsoft.com/support/kb/articles/q126/4/49.asp>.

These days many keyboards come with special shortcut keys. Depending on which brand of computer you have, these keys can have functions such as dialing up your Internet provider. Most of these special keys are proprietary and vary from computer to computer, but one special key that is very common is the Windows key. This is the key with the Windows flag logo, usually located between Ctrl and Alt. (Because of space restraints, laptops may not have this key.) I find that many people do not know what this key is for and often ignore it. However, there are some useful shortcuts involving the key. Some of these are tabulated below. Note that wherever a key is designated by a name such as F1 or F4, one of the function keys (usually on the top of the keyboard) is being referred to, not a letter key plus a number key. Also the "plus" sign means a combination of two keys and not the actual key for "plus".

Windows key	Displays START menu
Windows key +e	Starts Windows Explorer
Windows key +f	Displays Find Files or Search
Windows key +m	Minimizes all windows
Windows key + r	Displays the Run dialog box
Windows key +Tab	Cycles through the taskbar buttons
Windows key +Pause/Break	Displays the System Properties sheet
Windows key+F1	Opens Windows Help

There are a number of shortcuts that involve using either the Ctrl or the Alt key together with a second key. Some are listed below. Probably everybody knows the three-finger salute, Ctrl+Alt+Del, but it is so useful that I would be remiss not to mention it anyway. This action brings up the Task Manager, which shows running processes. It is a way to stop frozen programs or to close down Windows if there is a problem.

Alt+F4	Exit Windows, if no applications are open
Alt+F4	Close active window if one or more applications are open
Ctrl+F4	Within an open application, close active file or window for that particular application but not exiting application itself
ALT+Underlined letter	Within an open application, carry out command, e.g Alt +f to open File menu
Ctrl+x	Cut
Ctrl+c	Copy
Ctrl+v	Paste
Ctrl+a	Select all

Do you ever wish you could make a screen-shot of an open window on your computer? Using the Print Screen key doesn't print but it will send an image of the desktop to the Clipboard accessory. If you only want a picture of the active window and not the whole desktop, use the combination Alt +Print Screen. After the image is stored in the Clipboard, it can then be pasted into any graphics program and saved as a graphics file. Microsoft Word can also be used. If you lack a graphics program, the Windows accessory Paint can be used.

Also, there are some operations that are worth remembering that combine both mouse and keyboard actions. Some of the most useful combine the Shift key with a mouse action. When deleting a file, holding down the Shift key will bypass the recycle bin and simply delete. If a file of interest is first selected, the Shift key is held down, and then a right-click is made, the context menu will have the additional action Open with... When working with text, the quickest way to select a block of text is to place the mouse pointer at the beginning of the block that is of interest, hold down the Shift key, and click the mouse at the end of the block to be selected. If you have a bunch of windows open and want to close them all at once, hold down the Shift key and close the last window that was opened by clicking the Close button in its upper right corner. All open windows should then close.

Drag-and-drop activities can also be modified by using the mouse in combination with a key. Using the left mouse button to drag-and-drop can be confusing because the dragged object is sometimes moved and sometimes copied, depending on the circumstances. In fact, sometimes the object is neither moved nor copied and just a shortcut is made. Using the right mouse button to drag-and-drop gets around the possible confusion by giving you a menu of choices but you can also use the left mouse button together with a keyboard action to ensure a particular action. To always move a file,

hold down the Shift key while dragging with the left mouse button. To copy instead, hold down the Ctrl key while dragging.

Individual software applications often have their own set of shortcuts. Microsoft Office has many and here are a few for Word:

Ctrl + l left align text
Ctrl + r right align text
Ctrl + j justify text
Ctrl + e center text

There are many hundreds of keyboard shortcuts and nobody can remember them all, but a few well-chosen examples will make you more efficient and speed up your use of the computer.

Tom Carman's Video

Here are the details about the video that Tom Carman presented at the July meeting:

"I use an older model of Kodak's EasyShare line, the DX3600. It seemed superior to some of the newer ones available at the time I bought it because it had 2x optical zoom along with the (junk) 3x digital zoom, and a movie mode. 2.2 megapixels has always been more than adequate for my needs.

The movie mode uses the QuickTime .mov format, with settings of 160x120 (never used) or 320x240, running about 20 frames per second. I took movie exposures of up to 3 or so minutes (it really eats the batteries on long exposures).

I didn't use the QuickTime movies straight; I wasn't sure they would work. The .mov files were converted to AVI using the free (PayPal donation suggested) downloaded RAD Video Tools from <http://www.radgametools.com/>

ArcSoft ShowBiz is the software I used to assemble the still shots, dissolve transitions, movies and added MP3 soundtrack into a MPEG1 file. I used Ahead Nero - Burning Rom to write the file as a VCD."

DVD Compatibility

At the July meeting a question was raised about DVD disks. Folks wanted to know if DVDs recorded on DVD+R/+RW writers would play on consumer DVD players, especially older models. The following is a response from Doug Dixon:

Roughly, +R and -R should be pretty similar in compatibility, even with old machines. +RW and -RW definitely lag behind. Different studies show slight advantages of + over -, or vice versa --

HOWEVER - The variation between different BRANDS swamps the differences between plus and dash -- the key today is to test, find name-brand discs that work well for you, test more, and resist the temptation to buy off-brand discs or from off-brand manufacturers!!

See below for an extract from an article on this I just published in Computer Video (UK) magazine.

Recordable DVD Compatibility Test

The other pressing issue for recordable discs is compatibility, and especially whether we can burn discs that play reliably on set-top players.

The first strong answers came from Ralph LaBarge's DVD Compatibility Test, reported in DV Magazine, July 2002. This stunning effort involved over 2400 unique tests of the playback performance of over 35 different brands of media on over 70 set-top players from some 22 manufacturers.

Not surprisingly, the results showed differences in compatibility between professional DVD-R for Authoring, write-once recordable (R), and rewritable (RW) formats, since we are used to RW discs being less compatible from the experience with CDs. But instead of providing ammunition to use in the ongoing dash vs. plus format war, the key results showed stunning variation in the performance within each individual format, and across different media and players. For example, for DVD-R for General format, the compatibility ratings between the best and worst brands ranged from 80 to 40 percent!

LaBarge's conclusions stressed that to achieve higher compatibility, customers need to be careful selecting products, paying attention to both the disc media brand and player make and model. The results did show that the situation was improving, and that newer players (since 2001) had dramatically improved results.

At the DVD 2003 conference, LaBarge reported on phase 2 of the DV Magazine Recordable DVD Compatibility Test. The test still focused on consumer DVD-Video players, using a test matrix of 70 different formats and brands of recordable DVD media, and over 30 late model players. Testing with newer players, the results showed some improvement, with some consumer formats up to 97% compatibility. Again, the differences between formats were less important than the variation within each format, typically around 10 to 15 percentage points. Unfortunately, the industry still seems to not have matured enough to achieve consistent and reliable manufacturing.

DVD Compatibility Test

Ralph LaBarge, AlphaDVD
DV Magazine, July 2002

www.dvdtoday.com/Recordable_DVD_Test.htm

What was that error message?

Don Arrowsmith

Here's a tip that I haven't seen elsewhere: The situation is either you're getting an error message window and want to send it to a support person. Or perhaps someone you know is asking you about an error and you want the exact error text. Some have suggested using Print Screen to copy it and then sending the image. I've just found out that in the case of a standard Windows error message window you can hit Control-C to copy the error text to the clipboard which can then be pasted into an email message.

To verify it you can open Notepad, type some characters and then try to exit. An error will appear asking if you want to save the changed file. Hit ^C and then Cancel to return to Notepad. Now hit ^V and the error text will be included. I'm using Windows XP - I'm not sure how far back in Windows versions it works. Pretty neat, huh?

Lockergnome's Win XP Tips Chris Pirillo, Chief Lockergnome

Windows Update Transfer Details

Windows Update hasn't been faring too well lately; it's caused a few users some unnecessary headaches. It'll say something along the lines of: "Here, I think you need this patch." When, in fact, you don't. Mike Vigneau passed along an interesting tip for those of us who want to know what's happening when we're using this particular Microsoft tool.

This tweak has been confirmed with Windows XP and 2000 systems, although it may work in earlier versions of Windows as well. What we're going to do is set the transfer dialog to "debug" mode. This way, we can keep an eye on what's happening - at each stage in the process. Fire up the Registry editor and fly to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE \ SOFTWARE \ Microsoft \ Active Setup. Enter a new String Value and label it: "SteppingMode" (sans quotes).

Edit the String and give it a value of Y. The next time you use Windows Update, its actions should be a little more descriptive. If you ever wish to disable the verbosity, simply switch this value to N. If you want another way to grab these downloads, consider using the Corporate version of Windows Update (a quick search on Google will provide the appropriate URL).

Driver Queries and Wasted Space

What's the quickest way (in Windows XP) to get a list of the currently loaded drivers including module names and descriptions)? Get out of the GUI; you're better off at the command line for this tip. Browse to your desktop folder for simplicity's sake usually found at C:\Documents and Set-

tings \ [Username] \ Desktop). Now, at the command line, enter: "driverquery /V > drivers.txt" (sans quotes). That /V provides a more "verbose" output. Other notable switches include /FO (which formats the output as a table, list, or comma separated values) and /SI (which provides details about any signed driver).

Open that freshly-created drivers.txt file and you'll be in business. On a more entertaining note, do you remember the music that played when you first started Windows XP? Ya know, the one that sounded like an Enigma tune? If you wanna hear it again, you can find it at C:\WINDOWS \ system32 \ oobe images \ title.wma. Of course, if you want to free up 3 MB worth of space, you can delete it and the intro.wmv file sitting next to it.

Built-in Spell Checker

Quite honestly, there's no excuse for spelling errors anymore. Typos were frequent in the days of the typewriter; misspellings were common in the handwritten letter era. Though, there's virtually no quick way to spell check a word when you're in anything other than a "Microsoft Office Spell Checker" supported application.

Lockergnomie Tom Maenner had issues with the feature in Outlook Express after he upgraded to Windows XP. "I had to locate 'csapi3t1.dl_' on the Windows XP CD and expand it as 'csapi3t1.dll' in this directory: C:\Program Files \ Common Files \Microsoft Shared \Proof. Worked like a charm."

I'm not certain if this will work on every machine, but it's worth trying if the tool isn't operational for you. If you dork up words every other minute, consider turning on the "Spell Check before Sending" feature in your default e-mail client. It's and its, than and then, their and they're, or any other homophone may slip through the cracks. Butt at least you won't look like a total fool--just a parshal one. Even online, credibility counts.

CompactFlash Formatting

Digital Media (the non-Lockergnome kind) is wonderful when it works. Most people use it in their digital camera or PDA (as do I). Transferring data from a portable device to the PC is relatively painless. Lockergnomie Glen Fabian pointed out something recently posted to COMPACT-FLASH.ORG (the CompactFlash Association): "By default, Windows XP will format any CompactFlash card of 64MB or more with FAT32 format. Digital cameras and other devices use the FAT (FAT16) format and can not operate with a FAT32 formatted card. Either format your CompactFlash card in your camera or select FAT format to format your CompactFlash card in a Windows XP PC."

Even if you don't use CF media or Windows XP, this is something to keep in mind. And do you need another reason to own a laptop? My Pocket PC is a Walkman of sorts; I put new MP3s on it every day. However, transferring them via any USB (1.1) connection is slow as molasses. I picked up

a PCMCIA CF adapter for under five bucks a few weeks ago (they're inexpensive to begin with). Trust me, that will speed up the process. Visit PCMCIA.ORG for more information.

Media Access Control

It's no secret that 802.11b networks are not very secure; we've discussed this point at length in the past. When you enable wireless connectivity through your access point, you should filter out non-registered MAC (Media Access Control) addresses if your WAP supports this feature. A MAC address is unique to every network card on the market. Any Wi-Fi device may see your wireless access point, but it won't be able to use the WAP unless its MAC address matches the (manually entered) filter. Nice, huh?

Okay, so how do you determine a network card's MAC address? Either use WINIPCFG or IPCONFIG. You're looking for a hexadecimal string - twelve digits long (six sections of two hex characters each). This is easy to find when you're on your own machine, but what about those connected to your network?

As your home network expands, this information will become increasingly important. You could use your router's DHCP table to view the addresses, or you could use Windows XP's GETMAC command line utility (also available

as a free Windows 2000 Resource Kit download).

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