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PPCUG NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

Starting a Successful eBay Business

Martin Mosho

Monday, March 13, 2006

Martin will discuss starting a full, or part-time, successful eBay business.

Some of the topics he will cover are: Where to get merchandise? Obtaining liability protection from manufacturers. Ship products yourself or have the manufacturers do it? Martin will also cover the advantages of using eBay.

Martin has 40 years in Advertising Sales and Marketing management with several major publications and also owned a retail business and franchise.

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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Coming Schedule

April 10 ----- Dave Whittle on New Software Applications
April 21 - 23- TCF'06 at the College of New Jersey
May 8----- Alfred Poor on Will your next computer be HDTV?
June 12 ----- Sol Libes on Podcasting and Videocasting with iTunes
July 10----- to be announced

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

7:30 PM: Meeting comes to Order

7:45 PM: Featured presentation

For information about upcoming meetings or joining PPCUG, see:

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

or email us at:

ppcug.nj@gmail.com

(Please include "OK" in the subject line.)

Board Meetings

Board meetings are open to all members. Notice of an upcoming meeting will be posted on the web site.

Board Members

President:

Clarke Walker 609-883-5262

Vice-President:

Tom Carman 732-828-6055

Secretary:

vacant

Treasurer:

Judge Landis 609-737-2997

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Sol Libes 609-520-9024

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Joe Budelis 609-921-3867

2006 Annual Dues

Dues are \$40 per calendar year with a mailed newsletter or \$20 per year with online access to the newsletter. New members pay \$3.25 or \$1.75 per month times the number of months remaining in the current year.



Minutes of the Febuary Meeting

The meeting started at 7:30 p.m. by Vice President Tom Carman.



Our presenter was Anna Lustenberg of Verizon. She talked about Verizon's service offering and the need for TV Choice in New Jersey. For more info see the web sites:

<http://www.verizon.com/nj> and <http://TVChoiceNJ.com>

Anna Lustenberg by Judge Landis



Pictures of the February Meeting

by Judge Landis, judge@alumni.princeton.edu

Member of the Princeton PC Users Group



 * **Help Wanted** *
 * **Secretary** *
 * The group is in need of a Secretary to take minutes of the *
 * meetings. Also to read and respond to club email. Please see *
 * Joe Budelis for more information. *
 * *****



President's Message

Anyone who is interested in volunteering for the pick-up area at the Trenton Computer Festival please talk to Paul Kurivchack at the meeting or send him an email. Before we can make a commitment we need to make sure there are enough volunteers.

The TCF is three days long this year. Friday will be for a Professional Conference. The usual lectures and sales will take place on Saturday and Sunday. The dates are April 21 to 23, 2006 and more info can be found at: <http://tcf-nj.org/>

This month Martin Mosho will be telling us how to set up an eBay business. You may want to visit the eBay site at www.eBay.com to become familiar with how the selling engine works.

- Clarke Walker



Links of the Month

Vic Laurie suggests The Elder Geek at <http://www.theeldergeek.com/>.

Have you discovered a useful link? Then share it with the members of the P PC UG.



Tips for Using Outlook Express (II)

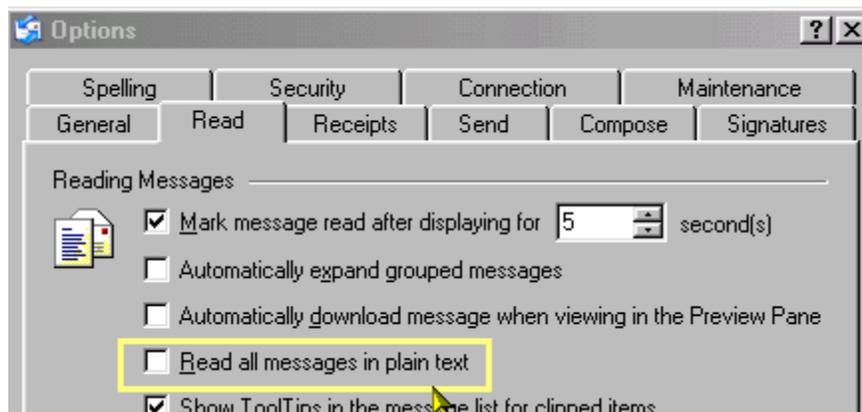
by Vic Laurie., <http://vlaurie.com>

Member of the Princeton PC Users Group

January's article gave some tips for using the Windows email client Outlook Express. This month we continue with some additional tips.

Read email in text

What do you do if you receive an email that you are not sure about but want to check the contents to see if it is safe? Most email clients will give you the option of reading a message in pure text format. By using text only you prevent any nasties from executing. No HTML bugs, no JavaScript, or other scripts or HTML code can run. In Outlook Express, the option to read in text only is reached by going to the menu **Tools-Options-Read**. The dialog contains a check box "Read all messages in plain text". Put a check here before opening suspicious mail. The figure below illustrates the procedure.



Another way to read a message in text is to right-click on its entry (be careful not to left-click). Choose “Properties” from the context menu, click the tab “Details” and then click the button “Message Source”. If you are interested, this is also the way to view the message’s headers. Sometimes the header can help decide whether a message is legitimate.

If a message contains much HTML, it may be hard to read but it should be easy enough to tell if the message is from a friendly source. If in doubt, delete the message or email the sender asking about the reason for the message.

Combining and archiving emails in Outlook Express

I get a lot of email newsletters and I don’t always have time to read them all or extract the items that I like to save. I have a folder for saved emails and often the number builds up. Since I sometimes want to archive the collection, I make use of a feature in Outlook Express (OE) that can be used for combining a bunch of emails into one file. The feature was actually intended for combining emails or newsgroup messages that were sent in pieces (necessary for big files back in the days of narrow bandwidth) but it works for regular emails as long as they don’t contain graphics.

Select the emails to be combined by using either the *Shift* or *Ctrl* keys and open the OE menu “Message”. Choose “Combine and Decode” from the menu. A dialog box called “Order for decoding” will appear, listing all the messages. Don’t let the term “decoding” put you off. If you have some reason for doing so, you can change the order in which the different messages are combined but normally they will be in whatever order you use in your mailbox. Mine are chronological and I just leave them that way. When you are ready to combine the messages, click the button “OK”. The combined file will then be displayed in an OE window. Go to the “File” menu, click “Save as” and put the file wherever on your computer you want to keep it with an appropriate file name. The default format is the OE email format with extension “eml” but you can also choose a text format if your emails are pure text. The advantage of the *eml* format is that it preserves any hyperlinks in the original messages. Note that all the original messages are not affected and will still be in their original form and location.

I also use this method for transferring a bunch of messages from one computer to another. It is often easier than messing with the binary DBX files where OE messages are stored.

More on archiving or transferring email

In the previous section, I mentioned a method for combining Outlook Express (OE) email messages into a single file for the purposes of archiving or transferring to another computer. That method works nicely as long as no message contains a picture. Hypertext links are OK but mail with embedded pictures doesn’t work. Either the combination process stops with the first email or the combined file ends up displaying the underlying HTML code instead.

However, there is another way to combine emails that I sometimes use to transfer mail from one computer to another or to archive a bunch of email in one file. This one works fine with graphics. Select the emails you are interested in and then click the “Forward” button. All the messages will be attached in a single new message. You do not have to actually forward the new message with all the attachments but can save it anywhere on your computer that you like. I do not know what limit OE itself might place on the number of attachments but I have attached as many as 30 emails to a single message. If you do want to forward the combined message note that not all ISPs may allow multiple attachments. Also, ISPs usually limit the size of an email, with 10 MB being a common number.

How to repair Outlook Express

Tom Koch is a leading expert on the inner workings of OE. A very useful article that he has written outlines the steps to take if OE starts to act up. Here is the link for his article, “An Outlook Express basic repair kit”, (<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/IE/community/columns/oerepair.msp>)



Review: Buffalo LinkStation Network Attached Storage

by Lewis A. Edge, Jr., <http://www.lewisedge.com/>
Member of the Princeton PC Users Group

Dedicated network storage devices have been around for several decades. In the mid-eighties Corvus sold a 20Mb network hard drive for \$3,150.00. The Apple // network cards (Corvus called them *transporter cards*) for their systems cost more than \$200.00 dollars apiece. Understandably, the high cost of

networking in those days kept such devices out of most homes. Small business and professional offices in the early to mid-eighties were also put off by the high cost of networking and usually shared files by swapping floppy disks.

As the cost of networking plummeted and Ethernet was adopted as an industry standard, servers and peer-to-peer networking became the preferred way to share and store files. Corvus, with its high cost, slow 1MBS speed and closed proprietary standard, fell out of favor and went out of business. Now virtually all computers come equipped with Ethernet connections and most laptop computers also have built-in Wi-Fi. Routers sell for as little as \$20, so networking in both homes and offices is a common and inexpensive way to share high-speed Internet connections.

Not everyone needs the sophistication and capabilities of a network server nor do they want to leave a computer running continuously just to be able to share and store files on a network. Now we have come full circle with the introduction of Network Attached Storage (NAS) storage devices. They work very much the way that Corvus drives did more than twenty years ago, but at a dramatically lower cost, higher capacities and with greatly improved features and speed.

Whereas a 20Mb Corvus cost \$157.50 per megabyte in 1985 dollars, the Buffalo LinkStations and TetraStations sell today at Buy.com for as little as 10¢ per megabyte in 2006 dollars. Since NAS devices use standard Ethernet connections and have their own built-in operating systems there are no extra costs involved with connecting them into an existing network. Buffalo Technology makes NAS devices from 160GB to 1.6 Tetrabytes of SATA RAID storage at costs ranging from less than \$200 to about \$1,600.00 for their most sophisticated models with gigabit connections.

Anyone who has basic knowledge of TCP/IP networking should be able to install and configure one of these Buffalo LinkStation NAS units in less than 15 minutes, which I found is dramatically easier than installing and configuring a server. I bought their least-expensive 160GB model HD-H160LAN, for my home office and installed another one at my son's office in Hoboken. The LinkStation plugs directly into an open Ethernet port on a router or to a connected switch and becomes accessible by any computer on the network as soon as it is plugged in, connected to the network and turned on. It can also be configured to be an FTP server through your cable or DSL Internet connection if you enable this feature and open port 21 on your firewall to the LinkStation. FTP is a convenient, secure way to access your files via a remote Internet location if you properly password protect them.

My Buffalo LinkStation is convenient, small, fast and quiet. I found the configuration CD that came in the package to be useless because it could not find the drive on my network. However it was easy find the drive's address in the DHCP table on my router and reset its IP address to a fixed one using my Web browser. Then I was able to do the remaining configuration with my Web browser in just a few minutes. Once a fixed IP address is assigned and folders are configured, mapping the drive from any computer on the network was routine. I successfully mapped my LinkStation network drive with Windows NT, Windows 98SE and the home and pro editions of Windows XP. LinkStation also supports Macintosh file access, but I did not test that feature because I only do Windows. Folders on the LinkStation can be individually password-protected or made available to all network users. The same applies to FTP. Different users can also have individual password-protected folder/file access via FTP.

Other features of the LinkStation include a built-in clock that will automatically synchronize with an Internet time server, the ability to schedule automatic backups to another attached USB hard drive, scheduling shutdowns and restarts if you don't want to run the drive 24/7 and using it as a USB print server. My drive came with Buffalo's most recent firmware, so downloading and updating it was not an

issue for me. There were some complaints about Buffalo's firmware prior to their October 2005 update, but I found no bugs in my version. Except for the configuration CD, which is not necessary, everything worked as expected. If you want to use this product as a printer server, be forewarned that only USB PostScript and 19 Epson Model LP and Model PM printers are supported.



Which is Safer, Firefox or Internet Explorer?

by Vic Laurie., <http://vlaurie.com>

Member of the Princeton PC Users Group

The battle over the question in the title has been raging in discussions all over the Internet. Unfortunately, this is the wrong question. In fact, it is a meaningless question unless a lot of additional factors are considered. Security is a multidimensional problem and cannot be usefully discussed in the kind of simplistic comparisons that are being made.

I am not a security expert but there are some pretty obvious points that can be raised about how you define what is meant by "security". The most popular way seems to be a kind of numerology where somebody with a vested interest like Symantec purports to count "vulnerabilities" or even "possible" vulnerabilities. The conditions where these vulnerabilities apply are usually not specified. Many questions have to be asked before any meaningful assessment of the severity of a problem can be made, For example, does having a firewall prevent them? Do typical anti-malware packages detect them? Does the user have to click on a link or do something stupid for the problem to apply? Can the problem be fixed by changing a default setting? Not all "vulnerabilities" are created equal. A so-called vulnerability may be "potentially" very dangerous but not be a problem in practice because it easily fixed by standard measures or can only be incurred because of stupidity. So this numbers game looks very misleading to me.

The whole subject is quite complicated but in an attempt to keep this discussion reasonably short I suggest we replace the single question of the title with three questions (all pertain to Windows systems):

1. Which browser is safer for experienced computer users?
2. Which browser is safer for average computer users?
3. Which browser is safer for careless, uninformed or clueless computer users?

The answer to question one is that either browser will do. What browser is used by an experienced person is a matter of personal habits and preferences about different browser features. An experienced user knows what security precautions must be taken and will rarely get a problem just because of the browser that is being used. Personally, I use both Internet Explorer (IE) and Firefox. I prefer Firefox for most things but some sites only work in IE.

Next let's consider question 2. The term "average" computer user covers a lot of different people so only a few generalities can be stated. The average PC user is not going to be familiar with the details of security measures but most will be aware that they need some kind of defense. If they have a PC bought in recent years they will have quite a bit of automatic protection such as anti-virus programs that update

themselves and at least the Windows XP firewall. Also Windows update will be set to run unattended. Many PC users also have installed entire security suites. It is important to note the presence of these security measures because otherwise the question of which browser to use is moot. Unprotected machines are at risk no matter what browser is used.

For those people who have enough other security in place so that they can turn their attention to browser security, one question concerns updates. Both IE and Firefox have periodically been found to have security holes. Both IE and the latest version of Firefox have automatic updates. However, Microsoft can take many weeks to issue a patch for a known problem whereas Firefox patches come out within a few days after a problem is revealed. This is one place where the numerology argument is useless. Even one or two security holes are bad if they are not plugged for weeks on end.

There are also other security factors such as ActiveX, which I have discussed in detail elsewhere (<http://surfthenetsafely.com>). On the issue of ActiveX, individual PC users will have to balance convenience with safety to decide on a browser. Knowledgeable users can configure IE to avoid ActiveX problems but I wonder how many average PC users will actually do what's necessary. From a theoretical point of view, I think Firefox is safer because it doesn't support ActiveX but from a practical view it can be inconvenient.

What about the average PC user who has an older system with Windows 98/Me? These people are totally ignored by most commentators but there are still quite a few of them around. They will be missing a lot of the security that Microsoft has added to IE in Windows XP SP2. Personally, I think that these systems are safer with Firefox. However, there is the psychological barrier that many people have about installing a whole new browser when they already have one in place. Also, IE has to be used for certain sites and this is another obstacle to using Firefox. For these users, I think that the theoretical answer to question 2 is Firefox. As a practical matter, I suspect most of these users will stick with IE.

Now we come to question 3. This one is easy to answer. It doesn't matter what this group uses for a browser. These are the ones that do not use firewalls or do not install security updates or blithely click on any old link. They have much bigger problems than what browser to use. Unfortunately, their problems are our problems, too. This group is where most of the worms and Trojans hide out. It is also where the crackers get their "zombie" machines to carry out Distributed Denial of Service attacks and carry out various criminal activities.

I have framed the discussion in terms of who the intended user is. To really discuss the issue of browser security would require a much more complicated metric. However, I think the discussion helps illustrate my contention that measuring security is not simple and that there is no easy answer that applies to everybody for the question of which browser is safer to use. If you held a gun to my head and demanded that I choose a browser for everybody, I would personally pick Firefox. But you still have to use IE for some sites like Windows Update whether you like it or not.

There are other browsers like Opera or Netscape but their actual use is very small and they are relatively untested and are not really a factor in usage by average home PC owners.



*** There is no restriction against any non-profit group using these articles as long as they are kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which Princeton PC Users Group is a member, brings their respective articles to you. ***

All unattributed articles are solely the fault of the editor.



Membership Renewal

Please remember to renew your membership. If you can not attend the March meeting please send the form and payment to our post office box. Thanks!



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