

January 2007 Volume 23 Number 1

PPCUG NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

Using Removable Storage: Cassette Tapes to UTDs

Joel May

Monday, January 8, 2007

The history of removable memory and how to use devices, such as flash memory and pocket hard drives, to improve your computing experience.

Joel has spent most of his adult life teaching, first at the Graduate School of Business of the University of Chicago and, subsequently, at the School of Public Health of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. He holds a BS degree in Economics from Albright College and an MBA and PhD in Economics from the University of Chicago. He's been using computers since 1961, the Internet since 1974, PCs since 1979, and the World Wide Web since 1994.

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.*

In this issue:

Meeting Minutes	2
President's Message	3
Meeting Calendar	3
Link of the Month.....	3
Buying an HDTV	4
Skype	5
VistaVexes	6
Pictures by Judge	8

Coming Schedule

February 5-----	Douglas Dixon—Portable Travel devices: GPS Mapping
March 12 -----	Joe Perignat—Computer Security
April 9 -----	Vic Laurie—Windows Vista Now or Later?
April 27, 28, 29, 2007	Trenton Computer Festival at TCNJ
May 14, 2007 -----	Gabe Goldberg—Association of Personal Computer User Groups
June 11, 2007 -----	Dave Brody—Astronomy: Explore Space on Your PC

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

Members-At-Large:

Al Axelrod 609-737-2827

Kim Goldenberg 609-631-9140

Paul Kurivchack 908-218-0778

Vic Laurie 609-924-1220

Sol Libes 609-520-9024

Chairpersons

Hospitality:

Bill Hawryluk 609-655-0923

Member Records:

Judge Landis 609-737-2997

Newsletter Editor:

Clarke Walker 609-883-5262

Program Coordinator:

Sol Libes 609-520-9024

Web Master:

Joe Budelis 609-921-3867

2007 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 December Meeting

At 7:30 p.m. Clarke started the Annual Meeting.

The first item of business was to elect officers for the coming year. The members unanimously approved the proposed slate.

2007 Officers

President.....	Clarke Walker
Vice President	Tom Carman
Secretary	vacant
Treasurer	Judge Landis
Board Members-At-Large	
.....	Al Axelrod
.....	Kim Goldenberg
.....	Paul Kurivchack
.....	Vic Laurie
.....	Sol Libes

As you can see we are still looking for a Secretary. We also need a person (or team) to fill in for Bill while he recovers to handle the refreshments and membership board.

2007 "Chairpersons"

Hospitality	Bill Hawryluk
Newsletter Editor	Clarke Walker
Web Master	Joe Budelis
Members Records	Judge Landis
Program Coordinator	Sol Libes



Tom Kirk from Creative Labs (<http://www.creative.com>), then demonstrated several audio and video players.

- Submitted by Clarke Walker

Tom Kirk by Judge Landis

Membership Renewal

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



President's Message

Thanks to **Tom Carman** for bringing the refreshments at the last few meetings. And sweet thanks to **Judge Landis** for bringing the cake.

I also want to thank **Sol Libes** for arranging the presenters for the past several years. He has already lined up speakers for the next several months.

This year there are three holidays on Mondays when the Library will be closed. So make sure you take note of the appropriate date changes.

- *Clarke Walker*



2007 Meeting Dates

January 8
February 5
March 12
April 9
May 14
June 11

July 9
August 13
September 10
October 15
November 5
December 10



Link of the Month

Karen Klapperstuck in her talk on "Social Software" at the latest Technology Talk held at the Princeton Public Library recommends this site to help families be safe surfers on the Internet::

<http://wiredsafety.org/>

You can read about past Technology Talks at their blog:

<http://tuesdaytechtalks.blogspot.com/>

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



Buying an HDTV?

by Bob Elgines., Elginesz@rraz.net
Editor, Colorado River Computer Club, AZ

There are three things necessary for true High Definition (HD) Television (TV): an HDTV, HD receiver (or tuner) and HD programming. All TV stations will be capable of HD by 2007.

New HDTVs are here and will be required starting in 2009; but, of course, there will be converters available. The standard for Antilog TV was 525 lines per frame vertically. The old mandates of FCC requirements were first 2004, and then 2007. There are many HDTV models out there and some of the description of their characteristics are confusing. Hopefully I can clear up a few items of concern.

First let us consider the three **types** of TV screens or TV monitors:

1. **LCD** – Cheaper in price.

They can be wall mounted;
37" weighs about 50 to 60 pounds;
Sizes up to 52"; 4" to 5" thick;
160 degree view angle (with decreasing contrast);
Lasts 10 to 20 years;
The thinnest, lightest sets and have minimum reflection of lights in the room.

2. **PLASMA** – Moderate in price.

They can be wall mounted;
42" weighs about 85 to 90 pounds;
Sizes 42" and up; 4" to 5" thick;
170 degree view angle (contrast good thru-out);
Lasts 10 to 20 years;
Better color accuracy and displaying the deepest black, but screen's shiny surface can produce reflections of lights in the room and static images can "burn-in" and produce a ghost image.

3. **DLP** – (digital light processing).

Moderate in price for size;
Not wall mounted;
42" weighs about 45 to 60 pounds;
Sizes 42" and up;
8" to 15" thick;
160 degree view angle (contrast good thru-out);
Lasts 8 to 10 years (bulb or lamp);
A "rainbow effect" that some viewers may notice on the edges of bright objects on the screen.
DLP is used in most new projectors.

Second, lets discuss **Resolution** (pixels are the number of dots per line), the higher the resolution the better the picture, or higher quality. The old Standard Digital TV format is 720 (Horizontal) x 480 (Vertical). The new HDTV formats are 720 and 1080, but most HDTVs also allow using the 480 standard. There are not many things out there for the 1080 "i or p" format. Where "p"= Progressive – draws lines on screen from top to bottom, and is considered the best for high speed movement without blur. Whereas "i"= Interlace – draws odd lines from top to bottom then even lines from top to bottom.

1024 x 768 pixels, 1366 x 768 pixels, and 1780 x 720 pixels all fall under the 720p format and many 720p-HDTVs accept the 1080i format.

1920 x 1080s fall under either the 1080i or 1080p format and most accept the 720p format.

Screen size is measured diagonally. Therefore, if you now have a 32" TV, you will most likely want a 37" to 42" for your replacement. That way you will have basically the same height, but of course it will be wider.

Third, let's discuss other concerns such as inputs and outputs (most sets come with stereo sound speaker systems):

1. **HDMI** – latest version is 1.3, this is a connector that requires a special cable and is not usually included with your TV. This could be used for 5.1 or 7.1 surround sound systems, video games such as X-Box, HD-Cable boxes, HD-DVD players, etc.

2. **Component** – One to three inputs are provided, used to connect DVD Players, games, etc.

3. **Cable Slot** – latest version is 2.0, used for Cable Simm Cards. Most cable companies are not interested, but new FCC mandates starting next year, 2007, may change this. Also some companies are considering including the Cable Card internally.

4. **Tuners** - Usually two tuners are included, one NTSC (we are now using Antilog & Digital TV, also called Standard TV) and one ATSC (this is the new HD digital TV tuner, required for HDTV). Stay away from a TV listed as "HD-ready", it does not have an ATSC tuner.

Summary. It boils down to what you think looks and operates the best for your situation. Ask questions and check out the specification of the unit you wish to buy. If you are upgrading your cable or satellite service to HDTV, be sure to ask for "hi-def", not digital. Good luck!



Skype – The Most Popular Internet Calling Service

by *Sandy Berger*, sandy@compukiss.com
Compu-KISS, www.compukiss.com

If you have an Internet-connected computer and you are still paying the telephone company for long distance calls, it may be time for you to try free calling over the Internet.

Other than the Internet connection you already have, there is very little initial cost and no ongoing costs. Right now you can call anyone for free. This is an offer you really should investigate.

Although there are several online services that you can use for Internet calling, the most popular one and the one I'll talk about today is called Skype. In order to use Skype you need an Internet-connected computer running Windows XP or Windows 2000 or an Apple computer running Mac OS X v10.3.9 Panther or newer. Your computer must also have a built-in or external speakers and a microphone. That is where your small initial cost may come in. While most computers, even laptops, have speakers, many do not have microphones. So you may have to purchase a microphone. Just pick up one from a local electronic store. You can get them as cheap as \$10 or \$15.

Then all you have to do is download the free software at the Skype website at www.skype.com, and you are ready to make your calls. If you want to call someone who also owns an Internet-connected computer you can have them add a microphone and download the software. Then you will be able to call computer-to-computer. It is just like talking on the telephone except that you click on their name in the Skype software to call them, they hear their computer "ring", and they click on the "answer" button that pops up on their screen when you call.

Until the end of the year you can also call regular telephone and cell phone numbers in the United States and Canada for free. You simply enter the phone number you want to call, click on the green telephone icon and your computer will call your friend's telephone number. They answer the phone as usual and you can talk for as long as you like with no long distance charges.

Previous to their special promotion, Skype charged a small fee for calls to landlines and cell phones. Their promotion for free

calls is scheduled to last until the end of the year, but many of us are hopeful that they will continue it into the next year. In any case, calls from computer-to-computer are always free. While sometimes there are small glitches and skips in the calls from computer-to-telephone, my experience has been really great with computer-to-computer calls. Some International calls have a slight echo, but I can live with that for the price.

I save a ton on long distance calls to my daughter in Sweden, and my mom in Missouri. I also save on intra-state charges to my son in Eastern Carolina. You will need a broadband Internet connection to get really good Skype calls. If you are still on dial-up, free Skype calling may be just the financial incentive you need to make the move to broadband.

The Skype software is an easy download, and it is easy to use. Skype is constantly improving their service. Last year they added video calling. If both you and the person you are calling add a web cam to your computer you can both see and hear them. (An added benefit is that most web cams also have built-in microphones.) Skype also has conference calling so the whole family can get in on the same conversation. For those of you who like talking into a handset, now you can even purchase telephones to connect to your computer for Skype calling.

With Skype's current offer for free computer-to-telephone calling, there's never been a better time to try Internet calling. After all, the price is right!



Vista Vexes The Windows Vista Pains'n'Gains Page

*by Jan Fagerholm., jan-f@pacbell.net
Assistant Editor, PC Community, Hayward, California, <http://www.pcc.org>*

OK, so I've suffered through the betas and RC1 and RC2 (Release Candidate = not quite done yet), and now through two succeeding RTMs (Release To Manufacturing = the finished product) So what's the final version of Windows Vista finally like? Is it worth the pain of upgrade?

I'm not going to spend much time telling you how pretty the Aero interface is, or how cool the Flip3D task switcher is – the computer press has already given lots of space to these features. I intend to relate some experiences with hardware and software that I have encountered. I'll sometimes talk about the new features, as these are the reasons for upgrading to Vista, but I'll mainly be focusing on the stumbling blocks, as these are the reasons that you may want to wait until the problems that relate to you are resolved. If you went through the XP changeover five years ago, you are in for a similar experience with Vista.

I've previously written bits about Vista and done Vista presentations for PCC, and now hope to provide you with some insights gained from experience with the final version of Vista. I plan to submit a "pains & gains" column on Vista to PCC News over the next few months as it makes its way into the marketplace and on to your desktop. What I can offer here is some real-world experience with hardware and software support, as well as a perspective gained from a programmer's view of the workings of Vista and how it affects you through the interface, as well as a comparison to other OSs that I regularly use, Linux and Macintosh OSX.

I am an unabashed Linux geek, so what am I doing messing with Vista? I tell myself that I need to know Vista because my Windows clients are going to ask me about it, and I need to give them a better answer than Microsoft's marketing department will give them. I participated in the beta program and even rejoined MSDN (Microsoft Developers Network) for the carrots they offered, one of which was a downloadable .ISO image of the final RTM version when it was released to MSDN on Nov. 17th. There is some real-world pain involved with upgrading to Vista, and I'd like to relate some of these experiences, for you shall certainly share my pain if you decide to go with Vista the minute it hits the street.

First, a bit of background on Vista: five years in the making, yet still rushed to finish on time. The Upgrade Install bug in the Nov. 8th RTM release, which destroyed existing XP installations, was fixed and the RTM was re-released on MSDN on Nov. 17th. This RTM version is the one that is going to computer manufacturers so they can preinstall it on the computers they sell.

After all this introduction, let's get on to some hard information. Bear in mind that I am talking about the final version of Vista, not the beta or RC versions.

Though I mentioned this previously, it's worth mentioning again because it will affect everybody. Vista has a new security feature called "User Account Control" that is intended to protect the system from "unauthorized changes" that can affect the system or other user's settings, particularly from malware and spyware. It does this by popping a dialog in your face every time something tries to write to certain system or user folders. It also does this whenever you attempt to do a normal software installation even if you are logged in on an administrator account. It came up during installation of Microsoft, Adobe and Corel software. In the case of Adobe and Corel software, it also made the installation fail, even though I told it to allow the changes during installation. Installation of this software did not succeed until I turned off User Account Control. To turn off User Account Control, go to Start -> Control Panel -> User Accounts -> and click the link for "Turn User Account Control on or off". Once you have turned it off, Security Center will complain that it is off, and penalize you by reminding you it is off every time you log on to the system, but this is a small price to pay for normalizing the system.

Among the hardware that you can expect to lose with Vista is the ubiquitous Creative Sound Blaster Live! 5.1 series of sound cards. Vista has a two-channel audio driver for the card, but you lose 5.1 surround sound and the game port. Thus, I not only lose 6-channel capability of my \$100 5.1 Surround speaker system, I also lose the use of my \$120 Microsoft Force Feedback Pro joystick. Creative's Web site says they do not plan Vista support for the Live! 5.1 series of sound cards - I must upgrade to at least a \$150 X-Fi card to get back both of these capabilities. I am NOT pleased, as I have Live! 5.1 cards in two of my computers.

Judging from manufacturers' Web sites, many scanners are going to be abandoned under Vista as well. This is similar to what happened when XP came out. (i.e. The manufacturer chose not to write an XP driver for the scanner.) My HP ScanJet 6300C doesn't work in Vista, and HP's Web site is depressingly silent about scanner support in Vista. Of the twenty or so different scanners of different make that I have plugged into Vista, none of them over two years old would work.

Printer support, on the other hand, is quite good. Judging from the printer database, it looks like almost everything that works under XP will also work in Vista. The Vista drivers are as rudimentary as XP's though -- you will need to get the manufacturers' drivers for high resolution printing in many cases.

Early returns are in on Vista. Many of the developer forums that I belong to are abuzz with Vista experiences, from installation (or failure thereof) to device support (or failure thereof). I intend to relate more of these in upcoming articles.



*** 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 February meeting please send the form and payment to our post office box. Thanks!

Pictures from the December Meeting

by Judge Landis, judge@alumni.princeton.edu
Member of the Princeton PC Users Group



Princeton PC Users Group
PO Box 291
Rocky Hill, NJ 08553