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PPCUG NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

Highlights from the Consumer Electronics Show

Douglas Dixon

Monday, February 11, 2008

This year kicked off with the annual Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, followed by the Jobs-fest at Macworld. CES is just huge -- some 140,000 attendees trying to visit 2,700 exhibitors spread over 1.8 million square feet. That's a lot of walking!

Just for us, Doug Dixon fought through the crowds to scope out the new products, and to report back developing trends, especially for home and personal entertainment.

Douglas Dixon is an independent technology consultant, author, and speaker specializing in digital media. Doug is the author of four books and has published over 250 feature articles. He is currently Editor-in-Chief of CDSA's Mediaware magazine and East Coast Technical Editor for Camcorder & Computer Video magazine, and has contributed to DV Magazine, CNET Reviews, and the U.S. 1 Newspaper in Princeton.

He blogs new developments and makes his articles and technical references freely available on his <http://www.manifest-tech.com>.

Lawrence Library
Meeting Room 3

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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Upcoming Schedule

March 10, 2008 -----	Arnold Rosner - World Wide Web: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly
April 14, 2008 -----	tba
April 25, 2008 -----	TCF Professional Seminars
April 26 & 27, 2008 -	Trenton Computer Festival
May 12, 2008 -----	tba

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 (at) 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.

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2008 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 January 2008 Meeting

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

Clarke pointed out that we trying out a Technology Clearance table. This will be a way to transfer working hardware and software from one member to another at no charge. Members can recycling older or no longer needed equipment.

The Technology Clearance table will be open from 7:10 to 7:25 p.m. and again after the speaker completes their presentation. This will be first come, first served, however, please take only one item until everyone has had a chance to make a selection.

Neil Cherry spoke to us about automating our homes.

Submitted by Clarke Walker



Neil Cherry by Clarke Walker



Pictures from the January Meeting

by Clarke Walker, [Clarke Walker \(at\) yahoo.com](mailto:Clarke.Walker@yahoo.com)

Member of the Princeton PC Users Group





President's Message

The last computer retailer in the area (CompUSA in Mt. Laurel, NJ) is closing. With the demise of Computer Shows it is getting harder to find parts and upgrades for our systems. There is still the Internet to do our shopping but in many cases we need to see the part to make sure it will fit our computer. Last December, Sol lamented the demise of the Computer Hobbyist. What do you think, are there Computer Hobbyists left? And where do they find the stuff for their machines?

In this club, we love gadgets. There may be other reasons for the Consumer Electronics Show, but it is the gadgets which attract our attention. Doug Dixon who attended this year's show will tell us what he found and what "must have" gadgets we need for this year.

- Clarke Walker



Link of the Month

End of life plans for popular Microsoft software:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/lifecycle/default.mspx>

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



Using Imaging Software For Backup

by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., [bwsail \(at\) yahoo.com](mailto:bwsail@yahoo.com)

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There are many hard drive backup programs on the market that tell you that they can make an "image" of your hard drive. This allows you to restore your programs and data in case of a hard drive crash. They also will transfer everything on your hard drive to a new drive. Among these backup programs are well-known names such as Symantec Ghost, Acronis True Image, R-Drive Image, Image for Windows, Paragon Drive Backup and a host of free imaging applications. In terms of making a complete backup of your hard drive (operating system, applications and data), they are very successful. However, what happens when your hard drive crashes or you decide you want a new computer? Will these applications solve the problem of restoring your applications and data quickly and easily? Let's look at the generic methods they use for these situations.

Basically each of these programs makes a "bit-map" copy of your hard drive that is usually compressed and may be encrypted. This, I'm sure, is a statement that needs some explanation. First, the words "bit-map." Everything stored on your hard drive is encoded in the binary computer language. This language is composed of 1's and 0's only. This limitation is imposed by the electromagnetic character of hard drives as well as the "pits and hills" of optical media. So a "bit" is one character, a one or a zero. A computer word is a "byte" which is composed of eight "bits." The imaging software is examining every bit on your hard drive and copying it to the backup media. In order to save space, the bit-map is compressed before it is written to the backup site. The method of compression varies with the software used. Sometimes, the compressed file may be written in a proprietary format that can be read only by the specific application that originated the backup. In other words, Ghost's image file can't be read by any program other than Ghost.

So now we have a bit-map image of our hard drive on whatever we chose for the backup media. In my case I use external hard drives. If I were to store the backup on a partition of my original drive and that drive failed - I would lose the backup.

So store it somewhere else if you ever expect to need it.

What does this image file contain? It has the entire contents of your hard drive. That means operating system files, including the Windows Registry, all of your software applications and all of your data. It also has all of the hardware driver information that Windows needs that relates to your hardware. That includes drivers for your motherboard and processor, network card, USB ports, printers, scanners, video cams, etc. This is a very important point, especially if you want to clone your drive to a new computer. More about that later.

Since an image file contains a complete copy of your hard drive it can be very useful in restoring individual files. It can also be used to restore an entire hard drive in case of a drive failure. There are several methods available for this process. Some image file programs allow you to create a bootable disk (floppy or CD-ROM). When the computer is booted from this disk, it will install the image file program and can then be used to restore all the files on the backup. This includes the operating system files. In other cases you have to first install the operating system and then the image file program before you can restore the rest of the files. In both cases, it is not necessary to reactivate Windows as changing the hard drive is not enough of a change to cause Windows to demand that you go through reactivation.

Microsoft instituted a copy protection process called "activation" with the release of Windows XP. This has been continued with Vista. The activation of Windows plays a very important role in any situation where hardware changes are made to your computer.

If you have a brand name system that you did not have to activate it only means that the manufacturer pre-activated it for you. In the activation process, a small file is placed on your hard drive, and sent to Microsoft, that contains the information related to these ten items:

- Display Adapter
- SCSI Adapter
- IDE Adapter (effectively the motherboard)
- Network Adapter (NIC) and its MAC Address
- RAM Amount Range (i.e., 0-64mb, 64-128mb, etc.)
- Processor Type
- Processor Serial Number
- Hard Drive Device
- Hard Drive Volume Serial Number (VSN)
- CD-ROM / CD-RW / DVD-ROM

This file contains a number based on the identification of the first item in every category. The file also contains the complete product key for your Windows installation. Every time your computer boots, this hardware is checked to determine if any changes have occurred. You can make changes to your hardware. However, "substantial" changes will result in a notice that you have to reactivate Windows.

The XPInfo software, whose name is shown at the top of Figure 1, can read your activation file and compare it to the reported hardware. The report for my computer shows that none of the hardware has changed since the last activation. Also, in the figure you will notice that there are eight checked items out of ten. Should the figure drop below seven unchanged or never installed items, Windows would have to be reactivated. The interesting point is that the NIC or internet card carries three votes. Changing this card to a motherboard with a built-in NIC might put you on the way to reactivating Windows.

Suppose that you decide to move your hard drive to a new computer or you want to "clone" your old drive to a new drive in a new computer. Your hardware will have made a substantial change and it will be necessary for you reactivate Windows. But that is not the only catch in this situation. If you restore the entire image file to the new computer or simply clone the hard drive, the Windows Registry from your old computer will not have the correct hardware information. It may or may not boot. If it does boot you will receive warning after warning that files are missing. There will also be requests for driver disks for the new hardware. So when you move to a new computer, the only files in your image backup that can be



used without difficulty are the data files. Even the applications that were running successfully on your old computer will really have to be reinstalled on the new computer. This is because the Registry not only stores hardware information, it also has all the information on the location of all files required to run your applications. Although you might think that the .exe file is all that is needed to run an application, you would be surprised at the number of subsidiary files that are required. Sometime, do a search of your computer for files with a .dll suffix. These are the library files that are required by applications running under Windows. These files are also shared by many different applications at the same time. There are hundreds of library files on any Windows computer. They make up a large part of the more than 2 GB of files in the Windows folder.

As long as you use the image file backup to restore files or hard drives in your original computer, it will work beautifully. The problems arise when you want to upgrade to a new system. Then, the image file is less useful.

*Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years.



How to use Google Street Views to see...

by Linda Gonse, [editor \(at\) orcopug.org](mailto:editor@orcopug.org)

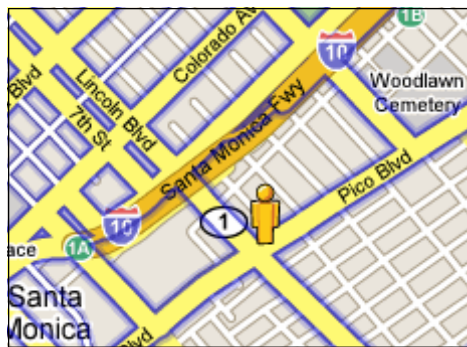
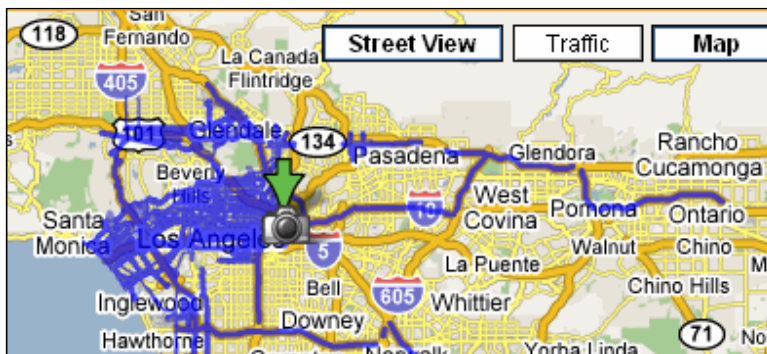
Editor and Webmaster, Orange County IBM PC Users' Group, CA, www.orcopug.org

Beyond the curiosity of the new panoramic on-the-road reality shots, Google's detailed Street Views give you a feel for really being where you want to go. Although only a handful of large cities are represented in these views, it's still likely you will want to look for destinations in them occasionally.

If you aren't familiar with Street Views, go to Google.com and click on Maps, a link at the top of the screen. Type in a location of a street or a city. If one of the boxes at the top of the map shown says "Street View," click on it.

A map looking like a plate of blue spaghetti shows where panoramic shots were taken. (Figure 1.)

Zoom in to see streets outlined in blue. (Figure 2.) A "person" icon (that's you) is facing in the direction you are heading. You can move the icon to wherever you wish to go, or simply double-click on one of the blue-lined streets.



You can enlarge a panoramic shot to full screen, so you don't have to squint to see into a little peek-a-boo window.

Other handy features allow you to zoom in and out, and to "drive" along a street or freeway by clicking on an arrow with your mouse. You can look in all four directions, of course, and the names of the streets and the routes are superimposed on the photos. (Figure 3.) You can even email the view to family or friends.

In the meantime, a different type of map searcher is ignoring the privacy controversy caused by Google Street View's high-quality, crystal-clear, panoramic photos, and are magnifying certain side-of-the-road scenes they find and sharing them online!

What they've found falls into categories, which include actual lawbreaking or crimes in progress, people doing ordinary things that seem extraordinary when you know that people worldwide will be seeing them; surreal sights caused by the panoramic camera being halted or later photo-stitching in an editing program; visual commentaries about places and people; and

street views divulging the homes of the famous, or landmark homes and places. Map searchers uploaded these mini-slices of life to www.streetviewr.com.

Check out the maps and see what you can find. Maybe you'll even see yourself in one of the shots!



Vista Backup and Shadow Copy



by Lynn Page, [newsletter \(at\) crug.com](mailto:newsletter@crug.com)

Editor, Crystal River Users Group, Florida, www.crug.com

Windows Vista helps easily back up computer settings, files, and applications. The new Windows Backup feature provides more choices for storing backed information. You can choose to back up to CD-ROM, DVD-ROM, external hard disk, another internal hard disk, or to another computer or server connected to your network. Automated scheduling allows for backup when and where you choose. Just use a wizard to schedule when and where you want to backup. If a disaster strikes and you need to recover a wizard helps select the files or folders to restore and prompts you for restore media. Then it restores the selected files.

Accidental file deletion or modification is a common cause of data loss. Windows Vista includes Volume Shadow Copy to help protect data. Shadow Copy automatically creates point in time copies of files as you work, so you can quickly retrieve versions of a document you accidentally deleted.

Shadow Copy

Shadow Copy is one of Vista's new features. It is available with Vista Ultimate, Business and Enterprise editions. Windows uses Shadow Copy to store copies of files and folders. With Shadow Copy, you can go back to an earlier version of a document or restore entire folders.

If you ever accidentally deleted or saved over a file you know how easy it is to lose data. Accidental file deletion or modification is a common cause of data loss. Windows Vista includes a useful innovation to help you protect your data: Shadow Copy. It automatically creates point in time copies of files as you work, so you can quickly retrieve versions you may have accidentally deleted. Shadow copy is turned on by default in Windows Vista and creates copies of files that have changed on a scheduled basis. Only incremental changes are saved, so little disk space is used.

To access shadow copy, right click a file or folder and select "Restore previous versions." Preview each file in a read-only version to determine which file to restore. To restore it drag the file to a folder, or select it and click "Restore" to restore it to its original location.

Shadow Copy archives the current version of your files when a restore point is created. So if you delete your restore points, you lose the saved copies of a file. All the copies are stored on the computer's hard drive. So think of Shadow Copy as a version restorer for emergency use not a backup utility.

Windows Backup and Restore Center

The file backup and restore features in Windows Vista make it easy to keep data safe from user error, hardware failure, and other problems. The Windows Backup and Restore Center provides a single place to manage backup and restore features.

Automatic Backup

Automatic File Backup is available in most editions of Windows Vista (not included in Starter and has only basic functionality in Home Basic edition). It aids in keeping data files safe by backing them up. Windows Complete PC Backup is available

in the Business, Ultimate, and Enterprise editions. It performs a complete, image-based backup of the entire computer.

Scheduled and Network Backup

Two features in Automatic Backup are the ability to do a scheduled backup and the ability to back up files to a network location. (Available in all editions of Windows Vista except for Home Basic.)

With Automatic Backup, you can back up files to an external hard drive, secondary hard drive, writable CD or DVD, or to a network location. File Backup Scheduling Wizard lets you schedule when to backup. Then Windows Vista will automatically make backups on the schedule you set.

Backups are incremental so they require only a small amount of disk space. If only a small part of a file changes (one slide in a presentation), only that portion gets tracked and saved.

Recovery

Windows Vista makes the recovery process a snap. A recovery wizard helps select the files or folders to restore and prompts you for the backup storage medium used. Then it restores the files or folders.

Windows Complete PC Backup and Restore

Available in Windows Vista Business, Ultimate, and Enterprise editions, Windows Complete PC Backup and Restore is a comprehensive, image-based backup tool in case you need to recover your entire system.

While file restore is useful for file loss and data corruption, Windows Complete PC Backup and Restore is useful for disaster recovery when your computer malfunctions. It helps create complete computer backups. Then in the event of a serious system issue or data loss, Windows Complete PC Backup and Restore can restore your entire computer environment, including the operating system, installed programs, user settings, and data files.

Restore your computer back to its original state or onto another computer. Windows Complete PC Backup and Restore can be initiated from Windows Vista or from the Windows Vista installation CD. So even if the computer can't start up normally from the hard disk it can be restored.

System Restore

System Restore allows a computer to be restored to an earlier state without losing data. This is ideal if the computer is not operating well because of a configuration change, a problem with an application, or the introduction of viruses or unwanted software. Restoring to an earlier point, before the computer began displaying problems, may resolve the problems. System Restore automatically creates identifiable restore points. Or you can manually create restore points at any time.



So You Have a New Digital Camera

*by Robert M. Mayo, [bobmayo1\(at\)cox.net](mailto:bobmayo1(at)cox.net)
Cajun Clickers Computer Club, LA, www.clickers.org*

If you were lucky enough to get a new camera for Christmas, congratulations! However, along with this jewel, I'm sure you also got a complicated user's manual. I hate 'em! But cheer up; all the mystery will soon go out of that book.

When I bought my first digital camera, I felt lost. I had never worked from menus before, and they seemed so overly complicated. However, after a couple of dozen shots of my refrigerator, washing machine, and the cats, I began to feel comfortable with my new toy. And now, it seems intuitive; I can make changes in the settings without mental effort. In fact, I don't know how I ever got along without the wonderful features this camera has! So the point is: play with it; check out all of the menu options in the privacy of your home so you won't have technical problems later. Following directions in the manual, you're not going to hurt it!

* * * * *

Between photo sessions, it's best not to leave your rechargeable batteries on the charger. Many chargers provide a trickle that's excessive over a period of time, and this will degrade the cells.

* * * * *

In what we laughingly call "the good ol' days," we had a choice of films to use in our cameras. That was wonderful! There were so many films for color pictures available, as well as the still popular black-and-white shots. And within those two groups, there were fast (ISO 400) Kodak Tri-X films for B&W news (action and nighttime) pictures, as well as slower (ISO 25) Kodachrome film for beautiful, fine-grained slides. If you were happy with black-and-white prints, there was very fine grained Panatomic-X (ISO 32) that could produce great enlargements. There was a film for everything! But what if you had the Panatomic-X in your camera, and six frames hadn't been used yet; and you wanted to shoot a night baseball game under floodlights? You could remove the unfinished film from the camera, or you could bang away at the kids in order to finish the roll. Cheez! What a waste! Plus, you had to obtain a roll of the faster film, too. But with your digital camera, you have all of those "films" in the camera at the same time -- color or B&W-- with a choice of ISO values to be selected as you need them, regardless of the number of shots you've already made. If only they had done this years ago!



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