

April 2008 Volume 24 Number 4

# PPCUG NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE PRINCETON PC USERS GROUP

## The Birth of a Federal Agency

Bruce Waltuck

Monday, April 14, 2008

The availability of digital health records has become a concern for many of us. Recently, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services requested the design of a new organization to advance the implementation of these records.

The task fell to the Plexus Institute, a not-for-profit organization that was formed in 2001 by a small group of people from diverse backgrounds who shared a vision of discovering the most beneficial uses for the insights from complexity science. The Plexus group developed a virtual team and on-line environment to create an innovative design for a new federal agency.

Bruce Waltuck is an associate of the Plexus Institute, and a Senior member of the American Society for Quality. He has worked for more than 25 years in the field of organizational change. He holds a masters degree in Complexity, Chaos, and Creativity from the University of Western Sydney.

Mercer County's 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

April 25, 2008 .....	TCF Professional Seminars
April 26 & 27, 2008 -	Trenton Computer Festival
May 12, 2008 .....	tba
June 9, 2008 .....	tba
July 14, 2008 .....	tba
August 11, 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.

### Board Members

#### *President:*

Clarke Walker 609-883-5262

#### *Vice-President:*

Tom Carman 732-828-6055

#### *Secretary:*

vacant

#### *Treasurer:*

Judge Landis 609-737-2997

#### *Program Coordinator:*

Arnold Rosner 609-586-1011

#### *Members-At-Large:*

Al Axelrod 609-737-2827

Kim Goldenberg 609-631-9140

Vic Laurie 609-924-1220

Sol Libes 609-520-9024

### Chairpersons

#### *Hospitality:*

vacant 609-655-0923

#### *Member Records:*

Judge Landis 609-737-2997

#### *Newsletter Editor:*

Clarke Walker 609-883-5262

#### *Web Master:*

Joe Budelis 609-921-3867

### 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 April 2008 Meeting



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

Arnold Rosner gave the crowd an overview of the World Wide Web.

*Submitted by Clarke Walker*



Arnold Rosner by Clarke

## Pictures from the April Meeting

*by,*

**Member of the Princeton PC Users Group**

Unfortunately no one remembered to bring their camera!



## President's Message

On March 11 I had a chance to attend the Ewing SeniorNet's Windows Tips presentation. On this date David Shinkfield (also a member of the P PC UG) gave an informative talk about "Backing Up Your Window Computer" systems.

At this talk we also learned the secret that Joel May uses for protecting his flash drives from viruses—he boils them! Joel related how he was wondering how tough flash drives can be so he boiled one and it continues to work. Best to try this on April 1st.

These monthly session are open to the public. The next one is April 8, 2008 at 1:00 p.m. and will be on **"Video, Movies and TV on the Web"** by Sol Libes (also a P PC UG member). They had hoped to hold it in the Community Room of the new Ewing Senior and Community Center but because of delays at the new site Sol's presentation will be held upstairs at the Hollowbrook Center, 320 Hollowbrook Road, Ewing, NJ. For more info go to: [www.ewingsnet.com](http://www.ewingsnet.com).

*- Clarke Walker*



## Link of the Month

It is that time again:

<http://www.irs.gov>

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



## Treasurer's Report

Expense	2007 Totals	Summary	
Newsletter Printing	\$0.00	Bank Of America Checking Account	
Newsletter Postage	\$0.00	Opening Balance January 1, 2007	\$ 6,477.98
Hospitality	\$62.56	Closing Balance December 31, 2007	\$ 6,942.42
Capital Exp	\$0.00		
NJ Treasurer Report	\$25.00	<b>Difference</b>	<b>\$ 464.44</b>
TCF Parcel Pickup	\$0.00		
Insurance	\$69.00	<b>Summary</b>	
Post Office Box	\$68.00	Sun Checking Account	
Misc. Postage	\$41.00	Opening Balance January 1, 2007	\$ —
Misc. Exp	\$0.00	Closing Balance December 31, 2007	\$ 560.00
Misc. Printing	\$0.00		
APCUG Dues	\$50.00	<b>Total Difference</b>	<b>\$ 1,024.44</b>
Group Sponsor Dues	\$0.00		
Domain	\$9.75		
	<b>\$325.31</b>		

Income		
Dues	\$	1349.75
TCF Parcel Pickup	\$	-
		\$1349.75

**Income - Expenses \$ 1024.44**

*Submitted by Judge Landis*



## IRS Again Offers Free Online Tax Preparation and "e-Filing"

*by Ira Wilsker, [iwilsker \(at\) apcug.net](mailto:iwilsker@apcug.net)*

APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX; radio and Talk Show Host

### Websites:

- <http://www.irs.gov>
- <http://www.irs.gov/efile/article/0,,id=118986,00.html> - Free File page
- <http://www.irs.gov/efile/article/0,,id=118992,00.html> - Free File Instructions
- <http://www.irs.gov/efile/article/0,,id=118993,00.html> - Information
- <http://www.irs.gov/app/freeFile/jsp/index.jsp> - List of participating Companies
- [http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-efile/free\\_file\\_agreement.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-efile/free_file_agreement.pdf) - Free File Alliance Agreement
- <http://www.irs.gov/espanol/article/0,,id=163297,00.html> - Free File in Spanish

Whether we like it or not, April 15 is fast approaching. It does not matter if we are due a refund, or owe Uncle Sam a bundle of money, we still must complete our income tax forms and file them appropriately with the IRS. This is a task that very few enjoy, and many more do not relish. While preparing our tax returns becomes more complex and time consuming, the IRS has once again contracted with a number of tax services to prepare our taxes online for free, if we are eligible. According to the IRS, the goal of the free file program is to enable 70% of taxpayers (97 million people, according to the IRS) to take advantage of the free online service; for calendar year 2007 (taxes due April 15, 2008), the calculated ceiling on eligibility for the free service is an adjusted gross income (AGI) of \$54,000. In addition to preparing federal tax returns for those eligible, the providers will also “e-file” (electronically file) the returns at no charge to the taxpayer. It should be noted that the IRS does not charge for receiving e-filed returns, but does not currently accept e-filed returns directly from individuals without first going through a third party service, for which a fee may be charged. There is no e-file fee for taxes prepared by the free preparers who participate in the IRS free file program.

The free filing service was created in 2002, and renewed again in 2005, when the IRS created a public – private partnership called the “File Free Alliance, LLC” where the IRS contracted with several tax preparation companies to offer free online tax preparation and filing. The Free File Alliance evolved from a “President’s Management Agenda”, which created a series of 24 “e-government” initiatives designed to improve government to citizen electronic capabilities. Originally, the program was limited to 60% of taxpayers, but the 2005 contract expanded the eligibility to 70% of taxpayers. The current agreement between the IRS and the preparation companies expires in October, 2009. The income eligibility ceiling, currently at an AGI of \$54,000, is adjusted annually such that 70% of taxpayers will remain eligible. Members of the Free File Alliance must conform to strict IRS established security and privacy requirements which insure the sanctity of the free filing service.

According to the IRS, there are several advantages and reasons for using the free tax services provided. The IRS claims that users can get their refunds in as little as 10 days, if they opt for direct deposit. Unlike commercial tax preparation offices, the online services are available 24/7, and taxes can be completed and filed at any time of the day prior to April 15. The IRS also claims that the service is environmentally friendly, in that it saves mountains of paper. Users of the free online services will benefit through the automatic checks for accuracy, and will receive a confirmation within 48 hours that the return was received by the IRS.

Users of the free filing service must start at the IRS website, IRS.gov, and initially access the free tax services through the IRS website. Many of the companies that are a part of the Free File Alliance also offer paid commercial tax preparation services, and the only way to get the service for free is to initialize the process through the IRS website. The list of participating companies, 19 of them, includes such well known companies as H&R Block, and software companies such as TurboTax. It is the responsibility of the user to verify his eligibility both for the program (up to \$54,000 AGI), and for the Free Alliance partner selected, as many of the partners have additional eligibility requirements for the free service. The user can either browse the list of individual companies ([www.irs.gov/app/freeFile/jsp/index.jsp](http://www.irs.gov/app/freeFile/jsp/index.jsp)), or can use the button “Guide Me To A Company” to narrow down the choices of free tax preparers. Several of the companies, such as H&R Block’s “TaxCut Free File”, “TaxSimple Deluxe Version”, and “eSmart Tax by Liberty Tax Service” are available to anyone with an AGI of less than \$54,000, and who are also aged 50 or less. “TaxSlayer Free Returns” is available to anyone aged 25 to 68, or active military who meet the income requirements. “TurboTax Freedom Edition” is free to anyone with an AGI of less than \$30,000, or active duty military with an AGI of up to \$54,000. “Complete Tax” will do any age with an AGI of \$12,000 to \$54,000, while “Free TaxAct” will do anyone aged 19 to 54 who has an eligible AGI. Other free preparers have different eligibility requirements, including several that will prepare taxes for people for any age, but have geographic restrictions, in that they only prepare taxes for residents of specific states. Some of the preparers, such as “Online Tax Pros” specify that they also prepare taxes in Spanish. While not a requirement covered in the agreement with the IRS, many of the preparers listed will also prepare and file state income tax returns for residents of states that have a state income tax (Texas does not have a state income tax). While a few will prepare state income taxes for free, most have a nominal charge to prepare and e-file state taxes.

Once the taxes are prepared and completed online through one of the free providers, the returns are electronically checked for accuracy, and then e-filed directly with the IRS. The preparer will receive an electronic confirmation from the IRS that the return was received, and forward that confirmation to the taxpayer, typically within 48 hours of filing. If the taxpayer is due a federal refund, and selects direct deposit, the refund is deposited to the taxpayer’s specified account in as little as 10 days.

The IRS is to be commended for coordinating this service, available to nearly 100 million taxpayers. One improvement to the service that I would like to see is to allow those of us who prepare our taxes ourselves with commercial software, to be able to upload our returns directly to the IRS without having to go through a third party. That would be a great service to the millions of us who choose not to use, or who are not eligible for, the free filing programs, but would like the convenience of e-filing without sending our personal and private information to a third party.

For the eligible 70% of taxpayers who can utilize the free service, there are few good reasons not to use the service. The price can not be beat.



## Photoshop Lightroom: a Review

by Tom Ekvall, [Tekval \(at\) new.rr.com](mailto:Tekval@new.rr.com)

Newsletter editor and “Creative Imaging” columnist, Northeast Wisconsin PCUG, [webpages.charter.net/newpcug/](http://webpages.charter.net/newpcug/)

Do you like to shoot plenty of pictures with your digital camera?

If you are like me, storing and organizing them is always a chore so that you can find the right picture when you need it.

Enter Adobe Photoshop Lightroom – the new kid on the block for handling your digital workflow. Designed specifically for professional photographers, Lightroom is equally fantastic and impressive for any photo enthusiast.

Lightroom is not designed to replace Adobe Photoshop or Photoshop Elements. However, It is the perfect complement to the programs, and for some who do not care for doing layers, may become the only product they need for digital imaging tasks.

While Photoshop is designed as a general-purposed tool to handle a variety of creative digital imaging tasks, Lightroom has only one focus—providing photographers with an effective, streamlined way to manage their photos, process them, and deliver a final product whether a print or web gallery.

The product incorporates many features I enjoy in Photoshop CS3, such as the state of the art black and white adjustment techniques and being able to edit JPEG and TIFF files in a non-destructive manner.

In fact, everything you do in Lightroom is handled in a non-destructive manner, so that .jpg images do not diminish in quality over time as editing changes are made. I like the way Lightroom lays out the photo editing tools on the workspace so that everything is at hand. Edits can be undone in the future and new changes made without having to create separate files for each change. Information is stored in a separate file associated with the image. The information is there in a Managed Photos folder whether you import the images into Lightroom's library or leave them in the original location.

Lightroom in fact is a cataloger of your photos, with the user having the choice where to store the images. It will even recognize pictures on removable drives or external hard drives as part of the catalog, something most browsers will not do. I chose to store my pictures in their original location for now.

When you start up Lightroom, you will notice a sleek, black interface with photos in the workspace depicted as slides.

The concept behind Lightroom is to provide a simplified workflow setup from shoot to finish with five modules identified on the top right hand section of the screen: Library, Develop, Slideshow, Print, and Web. Each module has a set of panels with pre-set information on the right hand side, task information on the left hand side, photo displays in the center and a filmstrip on the bottom of photos being reviewed. The filmstrip shows all in a particular folder, not just those opened up.

The **Library** is where photos are imported and cataloged with the ability to add keyword information, rate the photo on importance, and even mark it for rejection before a final deletion. It also includes Quick Develop controls that let you make simple edits with push button controls rather than sliders. Photos can be viewed in tandem to facilitate selecting, comparing, and ranking (stars and colors) photos for later processing.

The **Develop** module is where you do the non-destructive processing of photos including those in the .raw format. Whether you are in the library looking at a set of photos or in the Develop module, a histogram of the picture selected is always visible. This helps in evaluating which picture to keep or edit for printing.

The **Slideshow** provides a way to review photos or show them to someone else in an interesting format with the film strip of all the photos still showing on the bottom part of the screen.

The *Print* module provides all the choices for printing while the *Web* provides a tool for enabling the pictures to be viewed on the web either in html or in flash formats.

I love the way Lightroom is laid out on the screen as you can see from the accompanying image. Everything is so simple to use and user-friendly.

I also love the Color Adjustment sliders that adjust both the primary and secondary color ranges (all eight colors) with regard to the hue, saturation and luminance (HSL) characteristics of the image as well as the tonal controls including a new Tone Curve feature. Both allow you to make adjustments directly in the targeted photo.

Lightroom can probably handle most of my image-editing needs. However, there is still definitely a place for Photoshop CS3 for those things which Lightroom cannot do.

What Lightroom cannot do is apply layers, masks, and selective editing to a photo nor will it allow you to do compositing and montages. It is not a “fix it” program when extensive retouching is necessary, nor does it have filters and brushes to create artistic effects, something I love to do. .Lightroom also does not work with video, which is no big deal to me.

Lightroom does provide for exporting the photo to Photoshop, Photoshop Elements or other image editing programs so that further work can be done to the photo.

Lightroom sells through Adobe ([www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)) for \$299. A 30-day fully functional tryout version is available for downloading from their web site.

*Final thought.* This is definitely a must-have program for those who want to manage their photos and process them in a non-destructive manner. To me what sets this apart from other organizers/digital asset management programs is the quality and depth of the photo-editing tools. It is obvious the program draws upon the experience of Adobe staff in developing image-editing products such as Photoshop, Bridge, and Camera Raw.

The system requirements include Microsoft Vista or Windows XP, 768 MB of RAM (1 GB recommended) and a Pentium 4 processor. I installed the software on an Acer laptop running Vista with Pentium 4 dual-core processors (1.60 GHz speed), and 2 GB of RAM. No installation problems. There are a number of books out on the market to help you learn more about the software. The one I use is Photoshop Lightroom for Digital Photographers Only by Ron Sheppard. I like it for its simplicity in presenting information in an easy-to-understand format. There are a number of other great books out there.



## It's Not Just Entertainment Any More

by Gene Komaromi, [genek6 \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:genek6@gmail.com)

Member of the Computer Club of Green Valley, Arizona, <http://gvcc.apcug.org/>

In the past, we've commonly thought of computer games, especially those played on game machine platforms, as pure entertainment. Times have changed and many games have become educational as well as physical training devices.

Learning has become fun for both kids and adults. Here's some information that will keep you ahead of the digital gaming curve.

DS - Handheld Games for Senior Citizens Nintendo has a hot selling hand held video game machine called the “DS” for “Double Screen.” The device opens with two visible screens, one is a display screen and the other is a “Touch Screen” which serves as the controller interface. The DS has a series of games designed with “older” users in mind. They are Brain Age, Big Brain Academy and Flash Focus.

All three have been recommended by AARP, and Brain Age has been shown to improve mental performance in independent tests. Brain Age and Big Brain Academy have a series of games, practice exercises and tests that are designed to improve and evaluate cognitive skills, and best of all “they're fun.” They chart and graph improvement and will keep records for several individuals.

Have you ever had a problem with that vision test on your driver's license exam? Then Flash Focus was made for you. It too has games and exercises, but instead of improving your brain they improve your eyes.

### Wii Want to Play

The hottest new gaming console is the Wii, another product from Nintendo that has games designed for the older kids, real older kids. The game controller is a little motion sensitive device that straps on the user's wrist. Participants interact with the game by moving their arms.

In the Detroit area, aerobic classes and movies have been replaced by Wii in many senior citizen centers. "Bowling" seems to be one of the most popular games. I've played it, and yes, it's exactly like the real thing. The motion of your arm, as you approach a virtual bowling alley, allows you to curve the ball and add some spin. Wii bowling leagues are springing up all over the country. Nintendo is about to release an exercise program for the Wii that uses a floor pad as a controller.



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***All unattributed articles are solely the fault of the editor.***

***This and previous Princeton PC User Group Newsletters can be found at:***

**<http://www.ppcug-nj.org/newsltr.html>**



# Remaining Meeting Dates in 2008

May 12	September 8
June 9	October 6
July 14	November 10
August 11	December 8

**Membership Renewal**

**Please** remember to renew your membership. If you can not attend the meeting please send the form found on our web site and payment to our post office box.

Thanks!



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