



by *Hugh N. Ross*

Jim Anderson, a member of the Rockland County P C Users Group, described the OpenCD. This CD contains a selection of most popular open source software that will run on a machine using recent Windows operating

systems. He was accompanied by Hank Feinberg who described the PC Renew project that the Rockland P C Users Group supports. (ed. PC Renew is described in a separate article following on page 7.)

When the OpenCD is loaded, it starts it's own browser displaying a directory tree. The top level shows six categories: Design, Games, Internet, Multimedia, Productivity, and Utilities. When selected each of these opens a list of programs, including for each, a brief description of it's function and an install button. The Design node includes programs to support photo editing, graphics, publishing and web page design. The Internet node includes the popular Mozilla Firefox browser: Mozilla Thunderbird e-mail support and Mozilla Filezilla ftp programs. The productivity node includes Open Office, Notepad and a PDF file generator. This list is not complete. There are many other useful programs included in the OpenCD.

Jim then demonstrated the Open Office suite in detail. The Writer program can edit and save documents in many formats including MS doc format. The preferred format for the future is the 'Open document text' format. Many of the formats in use are proprietary and often not able to be displayed or edited in other programs. The 'Open Document Text' format is intended to allow all text processing programs to share documents and process them accurately. The tool bars and functions in the Writer program

look very much like those in MS Word. The results for most documents will be the same as with other word processors. Some complicated structures may show slight differences.

The Calc program is a spreadsheet program like MS Excel. It can open and work with and save in many spreadsheet formats and also other document formats. The toolbars and functions are arranged slightly differently from Excel but all the functions seem to be available. The Impress program is used to create slide show presentations. The slides can include a wide variety of text, pictures and animation. The Draw utility can be used to create diagrams and other custom art for inclusion in slides or documents.

In the design of the Open Office suite, considerable emphasis was placed on sharing data among the programs in the suite. Also, emphasis was placed on supporting a wide variety of data storage formats used by other programs.

The OpenCD contains a selection of very useful open source programs that can be used by anyone for personal or commercial activities. Jim brought and distributed copies of the OpenCD to the attendees. A copy of the OpenCD can be downloaded from 'www.theopencd.org'. The file is an ISO image file and should be burned to a CD. The individual programs may then be installed from the CD. The attendees were very impressed by Jim's presentation. □

DeMystifying the Windows Registry

Westchester PC Users Group's David Caesar-Dare's presentation will expose the secrets of that mysterious Windows file called the Registry.

He will help you understand why it is such a critical file in the operation of your computer system. The evolution of the Registry from the early days of Windows to the present as well as the Registry structure as implemented in Windows XP will be described. The relationship between the Registry and System Restore, Control Panel, TweakUI, and other applications will be discussed. Various tools provided by Microsoft and other software companies for viewing, backing up, modifying, and cleaning the Registry will be demonstrated as well as a safe procedure for using them. The main focus will be on the Registry as implemented in Windows XP. □

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Monthly Meetings

Scheduled the second Thursday of every month. Check www.mhcug.org for possible changes to general and SIG meetings. Local radio stations will be advised if a meeting is cancelled unexpectedly.

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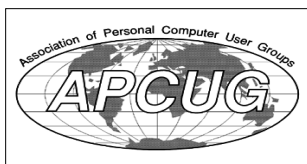
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* All area codes are 845 unless shown otherwise.

Website: www.mhcug.org

**Bits, Bytes 'N Kudos**

by Dick Kranz



Are you one of those people facing the doldrums of re-charging several electronic devices every day? Whirlpool

will be adding a docking device to several of their refrigerator/freezers models later this year to help free-up valuable kitchen counter space being consumed by today's electronic devices. A plug-and-play hub called the Centralpark Connection will be attached to the door. Devices such as cell phones, DVD/CD players and MP3 players can be connected and removed as needed. A play mode will enable users to hear their favorite programs or music.

Our May 10 sign-in and poll sheets with the question "Your Next Operating System: Linux (free) or Vista (\$\$\$)?" revealed that users may be headed off into different directions. 16 of the 45 attendees who signed in indicated Vista would be their next operating system of choice. 11 chose the free one, Linux. Nine people left the poll question blank, which might indicate indecision or that they will stay with the operating system they are now using. Six people definitely indicated they were yet undecided, while two were going to Macs (Macintosh) and one is already using Linux.

A previous poll sheet indicated many of our attendees were interested in learning more about Verizon FIOS. Many have questions as to availability, reliability and costs for level of service desired. We were given a Verizon contact for one of their people at the home show. A number of phone calls and e-mails to this contact only revealed that our request for a speaker landed on someone's desk in New York City. Perhaps one of our members interested in this topic would volunteer to follow through on this since our VP-Programs office is currently vacant.

Thursday, June 7 is the next date of our Board meeting to be held in conference room "B" where many of you attend our SIG (Special-interest Group) meetings. All members are invited to attend the 7 PM meeting to voice their concerns and observe how the board functions. □

Power Point for everyone.

The July meeting will feature Les Muldorf demonstrating how to use Power Point or Open Office Impress to put together a slide show. These programs, while seemingly complex and confusing, are really quite simple to use. Both the free open office and PowerPoint can be used to put together an interesting slide show, using fades, transitions and various backgrounds. Other alternative programs will be discussed, as will methods on how to organize your slides more effectively. □

On The Menu

Grouper 1



Grouper 2



Carribean Lobster

Photos by Les Muldorf

Special Interest Group News

Upgrade and Repair

by Ray Polivka

Spring has arrived and the outdoors was calling for work or pleasure. Consequently the meeting of the Upgrade and Repair Special Interest group gathered together only 15 folk and one large desktop PC. The PC problem did not appear on the surface to be a hardware problem. It's owner was trying to reinstall Windows XP. The installation would hang up since it was unable to find some software called I386. There was real frustration on the part of the owner. He had called both Microsoft and Dell. Both had given up on him. Someone suggested reformatting the hard drive. It was not acceptable. He did not want to lose 20 years of data on the hard drive. Somehow the system was looking to the hard drive for I386 that it could not find. Among the suggestions was to take out the old drive and install a new hard drive and create a working PC. A second suggestion was to put the error message on Google. Often others have had the same problem. Finally a phone call was made to a local respected trouble shooter. It was a long phone conversation. Several suggestions were made and tried where possible. Change the memory cards. Also check out the CD drive. It could also be a bad disk. Microsoft is reported to have a memory diagnostic program. Download it to a CD. Then run the memory diagnostics from this CD.

Someone reported that the Microsoft restore didn't work. He did it repeatedly. The question of whether he had run too many restores was discussed. One person reported that he had used "Go Back" on over thousands of files without a space shortage. One suggestion was to put the XP CD in the CD reader to do a restore. But put the CD in first and then select the restore option.

Another person reported his success in reinking some HP cartridges. He found that the HP cartridges he had for his printer came with only 5 ml of ink (and of course only a slightly lower price). He found a do-it-yourself inking kit at Office Depot for \$16.95/\$17.95. the kit claimed to contain up to 5 refills. The person who had purchased it said it worked fine and kept him in ink for quite awhile. (Editor note. I checked it out at Office Depot. The refill cartridges are designed for specific HP and Lexmark cartridges. There were none for other printers such as Canon and Epson.)

Another person reported having his laptop battery rebuilt. He sent his old battery in. In about a month it was returned to him with new cells in it. It cost \$69.00 plus \$10 for shipping.

On the 19th of April, the Ubuntu organization, (<http://www.ubuntu.com>), released their new Ubuntu 7.04 Feisty Fawn. This is a version of Linux. Lloyd Quick downloaded the five variations. He offered to make copies for anyone at the meeting. Several took advantage of his kind offer.

In using Outlook Express, one person reported that he could not open some files directly. He found if he saved first, then he could open the files. Apparently the file type could not be recognized. Again the suggestion was to put the system message he received on Google.

Dick Kranz showed off the Fujitsu C500 Tablet PC he had purchased. It was not a new machine but rather dated with only a 500 MHz processor. He was pleased with its portability and

that he could use Naturally speaking on it. He purchased it very reasonably from the Rockland Computer user Group.

Again this is a brief summary of the busy meeting. □

Technology Workshop

by Dick Kranz

Open-source software was the prime topic of our technology workshop in May. Since our Monday June 18 workshop will follow David Caesar-Dare's presentation on Thursday, June 14, it will be appropriate to continue discussions concerning his topic on Demystifying the windows registry. We would also ask any of you that have time to visit the web site in the news release included here below and report your findings to the group. IE: did you find the web site easy to maneuver? What are the pros and cons? Compare to other download sites? Percentage of freeware, trialware and payware?

Subject: PR: Topdownloads.net is a one-stop software klondike. Topdownloads Networks is pleased to announce the immediate availability of Topdownloads.net, a free software downloads site.

TOPDOWNLOADS.NET - A ONE-STOP SOFTWARE KLONDIKE

Paranaque, Philippines. - May 8, 2007: Topdownloads Networks has announced the immediate availability of Topdownloads.net, a free software download site. Offering over 315,536 downloads with more being added on a regular basis, Topdownloads.net makes the biggest one-stop downloads site on the internet. All applications are carefully tested for spyware and adware before being added to the Topdownloads index.

Topdownloads.net has a surprisingly large database of downloads, which is constantly been updated with new utilities and games. For the sake of convenience, all downloads are organized into categories, such as desktop enhancement apps, log-in/boot screens, skins, online games, Macintosh, fun index, new software releases, most popular software releases, etc. Guests can simply click through a category to see the listings of the software they are interested in, or make use of the search form on top of the front page to specify the keyword relevant to their interest. The search scope can be refined if the users specify the section and category for search. When the search is done, users are presented with an ordered list of applications that meet the search criteria. Each application record comes with a screenshot and brief information about the application, including its name, company, short description, OS, license type, size and rating. Once users find the application in which they are interested, Topdownloads.net provides a link to the page with a summary about the download and a direct link to the site that has this application available for purchase. The links are checked regularly, so there are no dead ones. Topdownloads.net is wonderful in that it offers visitors a large database of free downloads from around the internet on one easy-to-use site. Users will be amazed at the diversity of games, utilities and screensavers that the site offers. □

Q & A

by Hugh N. Ross

Q Does anyone have recommendations about which ISP to use if I get DSL service?

A You do not have a choice. Your ISP is the phone company. You should check to see if you are close enough to the telephone switching center to get DSL service. The maximum distance is approximately 4 miles.

Q Can I use my same e-mail addresses if I get DSL service.

A No. You can probably keep the left part of your address but the part after the '@' is the name of the DSL service.

Q How do I install the full service, voice, Internet and TV? Do I have to rewire my house?

A One member reported that when he contracted for the service a technician came to the house with test equipment. He replaced the wire from the pole to the house and some old wiring in the house. Booster amplifiers and most house wiring remained and worked properly.

Q I have a portable computer that would not boot until I connected an external power supply. It does not seem to charge up the battery. What might be wrong?

A Check the connection from the charger to the computer. It may be dirty or bent. Also, if the battery does not charge up in a few hours of connection, it may need to be replaced.

Q While using my computer, I saw a puff of smoke. I opened the cover and saw that one of the fans was not running. There was a lot of dust in the machine. I replaced the fan and later saw a flash and the machine stopped. I had to replace the power supply. Is there any mechanism to warn me before the machine gets in trouble?

A The problems you describe are all probable caused by overheating. It is important to thoroughly clean a machine once in a while. Use a vacuum machine and a soft brush or air jet. You must remove the fan assembly from the processor chip and clean the heat sink. Most fans assemblies have latches that can be released. If the heat sink is removed from the processor chip, you should put some fresh heat sink grease on the heat sink when reassembling the unit.

Q I am using Mozilla Thunderbird. How do I move my address book to another computer?

A The best way is to export the address book to a file and then take the file to the other computer and import it into the address book on that machine. ☐

MHCUG Website

There have been suggestions that the MHCUG website could be improved. I am happy to consider proposed changes. One way to get ideas is to note any site that you visit that looks especially nice or is particularly easy to use. Please send the complete URL for such sites to me to give me ideas. Thanks, Hugh N. Ross, webmaster.

Issues of the microCHIP are available on line. Please be sure we have your correct e-mail address so you can be notified when the new edition is available on line.

Special Interest Groups

Special Interest Groups are for people with common computer interests—novice through expert.

Call group leader to verify schedule.

Upgrade/Repair

Leader: Dan Sullivan

Tel: 229-0241

e-mail: dansull@optonline.net

Schedule: 4th Mon. 7:00 PM

Location: Business Development Center Conf. Room B

Technology Workshop

Leader: Dick Kranz

Tel: 297-1813, 896-7376 or

265-4169 or e-mail:

president@mhcug.org

Schedule: 3rd Monday, 7:00 PM

Location: Business Development Center Conf. Room B

Digital Photography

Leaders:

Dan Sullivan

Tel: 229-0241

e-mail: dansull@optonline.net

Jim Warner

Tel: 297-3175

jhwiii@optonline.net

Schedule: 4th Thurs. 7:00 PM

Location: Business Development Center Conf. Room B

Ulster Computing Workshop

(formerly HVPCC)

Leader: Robert Morales

e-mail: 4bobmorales@earthlink.net

Schedule: 3rd Thurs. 7:00 PM

Location: Ulster Comm College Hasbrouck Bldg. Room 219

Interested in starting a Special Interest Group?

contact Neal Christensen

All submissions for the Microchip must be in the hands of the editors by the Thursday following the General Meeting. Any articles or information received after that date will be held for the following month's publication. Send submissions to editor@mhcug.org

“TUT” – The Ultimate Troubleshooter

by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, *The Examiner*,
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WEBSITE: <http://www.answersthatwork.com>

According to a British website, “Answers That Work” (www.answersthatwork.com), 65% of problems on PCs, such as lockups, crashes, blue screens of death, and poor performance are due to causes other than the commonly suspected culprits. Many people erroneously blame malware such as viruses or spyware for the problems on their computers, and some go to extreme measures to attempt to resolve these problems. Unbeknownst to the users of computers with the symptoms above, the problems they are experiencing are not due to the possible presence of malware, but to background tasks that are loaded and running mostly from the software the users have installed on their computers. A solution to improve performance by giving the user easy and informed control over the tasks running on the computer is a \$29 program called “The Ultimate Troubleshooter”, commonly known in industry circles by its acronym, “TUT”. TUT is a compilation of solutions learned based on over 20 years experience trouble shooting computers.

For the past four years I have diagnosed my computers using TUT, and have been able to tweak them and maximize performance based on the recommendations made possible by the software. One of the functions integral in TUT is its “PC Tuning” service which uses its extensive database of tasks that may be running on a PC, and the degree of necessity of that task. As I type this, I have 45 tasks running on my computer, and TUT displays each of the tasks running and explains the functionality in understandable terms. Each task can be managed by the user such that only necessary tasks are running, which will free up system resources resulting in improved performance. Each of the running tasks is labeled by status (unknown, user's choice, multiple possibilities, OK, and Not OK), task name, CPU usage of each task, memory being used, manufacturers' description, and other technical information is displayed. Right clicking on a task will allow the user to terminate the task, suspend the task, or get additional information about the task.

Many users are plagued with slow booting of their machines when turned on and subsequent impaired performance. The primary cause of this malady is too many or unnecessary programs loaded when the computer is booted. The startup sequence becomes bloated as software is installed, as many programs want to be automatically loaded every time the computer is started, and this can degrade performance. TUT contains one of the most comprehensive startup managers available. The “Startups” function of TUT displays each program that is loaded when booted, regardless of whether the program is loaded from the startup file, registry or other source. Each program is labeled by status, startup name, launch command, manufacturer, description, and startup source. The status indicator shows if the programs are necessary and OK (green), user's choice (yellow), dangerous or otherwise unnecessary (red), or unknown (no color tag). By removing any red tagged

startup items (which may also be viruses or spyware) dangerous and otherwise useless items will not be loaded at the next boot. The user's choice (yellow) items can be reviewed and selected or deselected by the user by simply utilizing a checkbox. Unchecking an item will prevent it from loading at next boot. Stopping unnecessary items from loading at boot will improve performance and speed the boot performance.

The “Services” tab shows the internal workings of the operating system and other programs that are running at the moment. Right clicking on a running service allows the user to control the service by stopping it, and control the loading and execution of the service item at startup. The traditional red – yellow – green indicator on each service clearly indicates the degree of functionality, necessity, and safety of each running service.

The “Housekeeping” function of TUT allows the user to selectively clean junk files from the hard drive, freeing up disk space. Housekeeping also runs a PC health check to determine the operating condition of the computer. Freeing up drive space and ceasing unnecessary tasks contributes to stability, another key ingredient of overall system performance.

For both informational and maintenance purposes, it is often useful to know precisely what hardware and software is in and on the computer. “System Info” displays comprehensive information about the machine and its software. The “System Summary” displays detailed information about the motherboard, BIOS, CPU, graphics card, operating system, memory, disc drives, and other information. Detailed information about components is often necessary for maintenance and update purposes, and TUT provides that information. Details are also provided about the cache memory, comm ports, drives, environmental variables, graphics card and settings, and many other computer components. Installed software is also listed in detail, along with a very helpful adjunct; TUT also displays an internet “Help Link” for more information from the software publisher, and as a resource for updates and upgrades. Other hardware and software information is listed as well.

For those who want to know about websites and other internet information, TUT offers several utilities, including the identification and display of the computers IP address (TCP/IP configuration, MAC address, etc.), name server lookup, ping, trace route (shows the path that internet connections follow over the internet) and “whois” (displays the registered owner of a website).

One nice service provided by TUT is the frequent updates of its database, as well as periodic updates of the software itself. As I type this, I am using TUT version 4.21, which is an update from the recently released version 4.0.

TUT version 4 works on Windows 2000, XP, Win2003, and 32 bit versions of Vista. For the bargain price of \$29, I found that TUT is an indispensable utility for diagnosing computer problems and improving PC performance. Its full name, “The Ultimate Troubleshooter” is a well earned moniker, and I strongly recommend it. A free demo version is available to download from www.answersthatwork.com so users can examine the product prior to purchase.

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The Tornado – A Review

by Sharon Walbran, Editor, *The Digital Viking*, Twin Cities PCUG, MN

www.tpc.org

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Obtained from APCUG with the author's permission for publication by APCUG member groups.

Transferring files to a new computer is a task that's become common with people replacing their computers every few years or so. A product that can make the transfer of files and settings less painful is "The Tornado" from Data Drive Thru, available online at www.datadrivethru.com

The lightweight device which fits in the palm of your hand houses two USB cables. One cable is connected to the old computer; the other USB cable is connected to the new computer. No software needs to be installed if the computer running the software has Windows XP installed. When the USB cables are connected, built-in software automatically starts up, displaying a split screen with the folders and files on the old computer in one half of the screen and



the folders and files from the other computer in the other half of the screen. Copying files from one computer to the other involves dragging the files from one half of the screen to the destination folder in the other half. The computer you are using for the transfer is identified as "This Computer"; the other as "Other Computer."

Transfer of files can be made from computers running versions of Windows back to Windows 98. If both computers are running Windows 98, the company provides drivers for Windows 98. What makes this device particularly attractive is the speed of transfer. The company claims a transfer rate of 25 MB per second and my experience confirms the speed.

The span when the USB cables are fully extended is just 4 feet, but that can be expanded by using a USB extension cable. However, as a result of the limited range, the device works best when computers are placed in close proximity to each other.

No mention is made on Data Drive Thru's website as to whether this is one of the transfer devices approved by Microsoft for transfer of files and settings from Windows XP computers to computers running Microsoft Vista.

The current price is about \$60 but discounts have sometimes been offered to user groups. The company also offers the Eraser product which is touted as removing all data from a hard drive

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The Best, and the Worst

May 2007

Collected by Pim Borman, Webmaster, SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc.

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Since the original publication of this article Google has changed it's main Web page. The "more" button is now on the menu bar and the drop-down menu does not list all the features described in this article, although they are still available. The easiest way to find all the Google services is to do a Google search on "google." It yields more than 40 direct references to Google offshoots.-

Pim B.

Google – The Rest of the Story

If you only use Google the way I do, using keywords to **search the Web**, you're like the polar bear walking on top of an iceberg, ignorant of all that's underneath. As scientists are finding out in the Antarctic, there is an awful lot to be learned from drilling down into the ice below, and there is a lot to be learned by drilling down in the Google menus. Go to www.google.com, click on *more...* and in the pop-up window click on *even more...* and you'll find a page full of links to Google offshoots. I'll just list some of them here, as space permits, but you may want to go see for yourself.

Google News (news.google.com) presents a current news update worth being bookmarked for a quick check on what's going on in the world. **Google Finance** (finance.google.com/finance) has all the latest financial news. **Google Alerts** (www.google.com/alerts) sends email updates on the topics of your choice. Monitor a developing news story, get the latest on a celebrity or event, or keep tabs on your favorite sports teams. This site is still in beta.

Froogle (froogle.google.com) is the place to go for online shopping. If you like to browse through catalogs, go to **Google Catalogs** (catalogs.google.com). Find local businesses as well as directions for getting somewhere with **Google Maps** (maps.google.com/maps). Use **Google Checkout** (google.checkout.com) to set up a Google account with which you can order from many participating stores and be protected against online fraud.

Search a variety of printed matter with **Book Search** (books.google.com), covering the full text of books, although many publishers refuse Google permission to put the content of their books online. Scholarly publications are available in **Google Scholar** (scholar.google.com), but many of the publications at best only provide an abstract to non-subscribers. Sometimes you may be able to get access to the complete articles through the Web site of your local library, such as the Evansville-Vanderburgh Public Library. Over 7 million US Patents can be searched with **Google Patent Search** (www.google.com/patents)

Google Images (images.google.com) lets you search for images that include a title, description, or keywords. To come

up with descriptions for unlabeled images Google uses an online game, **Google Image Labeler** (images.google.com/imagelabeler). Two separate contestants are shown a picture and asked to come up with descriptive labels. For each label they provide in common they earn points. It is an addictive game with the benefit that the resulting winning labels are accurate descriptions of the image.

For general searches use the **Google Directory** (www.google.com/dirhp) that organizes the Web by topic into categories. And if you have a problem locating stuff on your own computer drives, **Google Desktop** (desktop.google.com) will help you find it.

Other Features. Google has been extending its services beyond searching. **GMail** (mail.google.com) offers online email accounts with many features and very large mail storage areas (several gigabytes as of this writing). **Docs and Spreadsheets** (docs.google.com) offers an online word processor and spreadsheet program that facilitates project cooperation between groups of persons. Additional cooperative programs are **Calendar** (www.google.com/calendar), to organize your schedule and share events with friends, and **Groups** (groups.google.com) to create mailing lists and discussion groups.

With **Talk** (www.google.com/talk) you can IM and call your friends through your computer. You can also use **Blogger** (www.blogger.com) to create a shared online diary. **Picasa** (picasa.google.com) lets you edit, organize and share your photos with others, while **YouTube** (www.youtube.com) lets you watch, upload and share videos.

Google Earth (earth.google.com) is in a category of its own. It lets you roam all over the earth and zoom in on specific areas of interest.

If you want to know what else Google may come up with visit **Google Labs** (labs.google.com) for a preview.

Rebates With Manners?

I recently purchased a copy of Adobe Photoshop Elements. It came with a \$20 upgrade rebate offer for which almost any photo editing program, including Picasa2, passed muster. I sent in the box tab with a Xerox copy of my old MS PhotoDraw disc and the invoice. To my surprise I received an email, several days later, acknowledging receipt of my submission. A week later I received a notice that "Your rebate check was mailed on 09-Apr-2007. Please allow at least 30 days for delivery." So far, so surprisingly good. I received the check on April 25, not bad for, maybe, surface mail from India.

Super Internet Creation?

Many newspapers carried an Associated Press article by Anick Jesdanun, dated April 14, 2007, about movements afoot to create a new and improved Internet from scratch to replace the current one. As the article states, "...many believe a clean slate approach is the only way to truly address security, mobility and other challenges..." For some time this has been the dream of university researchers trying out new concepts, but now "Industry is playing a bigger role this time, and law enforcement is bound to make its needs for wiretapping known. " Sounds ominous.

The National Science Foundation is sponsoring several projects toward the goal of establishing an experimental network known as the Global Environment for Network Innovations, or GENI. Major universities are involved, as well as the Defense Department. The European Union has its own independent efforts

underway.

The current Internet and its World Wide Web superstructure, with all its shortcomings, is a truly wonderful achievement. Twenty years ago no one in his wildest dreams could have foreseen the worldwide scope and the extent to which it has become an integral part of our civilization. It demonstrates how natural evolution can achieve the unthinkable. And that should now be replaced by a politically correct product, created by committees of programmers and approved by international governments and "industry"? Lord help us. Let's stick with evolution.

(If you want to read the original article use Google to search for "Jesdanun Associated Press". Thanks to Linda Gonse, editor of the Orange County PCUG, for bringing the article to my attention).

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PC Renew

by Hugh N. Ross

Hank Feinberg, a member of the Rockland P C Users Group, told us about the 'PC Renew' project that the Rockland group supports. A group of about 30 members refurbish and test discarded PC's and donate them to people and groups that would otherwise not have access to computers. They realized that over 150 tons of electronic equipment was being discarded by businesses, schools and local government organizations each year. They contacted the county authorities and arranged a central storage location for the electronic waste. They then regularly inspected the waste and recover any equipment that could be used as systems or parts. They contacted Microsoft Corp. and became a 'Microsoft Authorized Refurbisher'. This allows them to install and deliver a system with a legal copy of Windows XP and Windows Office at very low cost. They have refurbished over 2000 systems. In one case, they created a computer cafe in a low-income housing project. It contained 20 workstations (without hard disks) and one server. This provided the residents access to the internet and other computer functions.

For more information or to donate equipment, visit their web site 'www.pcrenew.org'. ☐

Info, Info Everywhere, and Not a Thought to Think

by Vinny La Bash, Columnist, Sarasota PCUG, Florida
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Many people think that the internet is the greatest thing since sliced whatchamacallit or the worst abomination that's ever been inflicted upon the human race. As usual the truth lies somewhere in-between. There is no doubt that the internet is a great source of seemingly limitless information, and the information found there tends to fall into three general categories:

1. Information which is totally useless. Did you know that the average cloud weighs 300,000 pounds? Neither did I, but that's the sort of thing you are most likely to get on the internet unless you are careful.

2. Information which is useful, but not at the moment. I invariably discover a great tax deduction I didn't know about on April 16th. It's too late for this year, and I will probably either forget about it next year or misfile the thing where I can't find it.

3. Information which is useful now. This is extraordinarily rare, comparable to finding eyebrows on eggs, but we all get lucky occasionally.

The data you find in the first category is not only safe to ignore, it's essential to your sanity to ignore it. The third category usually takes care of itself. Simply use it for whatever purpose you have in mind and you're done. The second category is the one that requires a good degree of sound management to avoid wasting time, and that is the problem.

World wide productivity could double overnight if the internet would only send us the information we need at the right time. We spend too much time refining our Google searches, investigating blogs, experimenting with RSS feeds or mucking around our own data bases. One piece of missing information has the potential to make the best presentation look like the product of a misinformed dolt.

Is having the information you need when you need it nothing more than a World Wide Web fantasy? Perhaps not. Did you know that you can set a reminder email for future delivery in Outlook? Here's how to do it:

1. Open Outlook (obviously).
2. Select the email to forward.
3. Click on the **Forward** button.
4. Click on the **Options...** button.
5. Put a check in the **Do not deliver before** box.
6. Select the date of delivery.
7. Click **Close**.

Don't set a delivery date to a point where you are unlikely to have your present computer unless you are in a corporate network where the systems administrator can make the proper adjustments. Even then, be realistic.

Send yourself notes about meetings shortly before you need them. Include information not only about the subject of the meeting, but about the people attending with you. Your colleagues will think you're a certified genius.

All kinds of things can be done with Outlook and its future

delivery capabilities. The usual subjects such as birthdays, anniversaries, and recurring meetings suggest themselves. Investors can send themselves reminders that an option they own is about to expire or to watch for that important dividend payment. Almost any kind of regular to-do item lends itself to this task. Get that tax form in the mail by April 15th. Do you really need a reminder for that?

What do you do if you don't have Outlook? Neither Yahoo, Hotmail nor Outlook Express offers this feature, but there is a web site that can help. Go to www.futureme.org and create your email for future delivery. This site is well suited for information you won't need for months if not years. Of course, delivery depends on the web site still being in existence when you need it, and it doesn't handle attachments. If you can live with those limitations, go for it.

People talk a lot about traffic congestion, but unlike the weather, you can do something about it. If you commute regularly to work take a peek at www.traffic.com. The site will send you real-time traffic maps, road condition alerts and jam alerts. This site is great for road warriors or anyone who drives over regular routes.

Do you suffer from springtime allergies? Then take a trip to www.weather.com to have pollen, weather, and other alerts delivered directly to your desktop. Not everything has to be delivered by email.

Cutting down on information overload is the best reason for using these tools. Avoiding data until you need it will free you from the drudgery of sifting through piles of irrelevant information to find the one item you need, and best of all, you won't worry about being unprepared when an unexpected deadline suddenly looms up before you.

Use information efficiently and you will become respected, admired, and the opposite sex will seek you out. When people inevitably accuse you of having a perfect memory, tell them you have a photogenic mind.

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Shipwreck, by Les Muldorf

Thoughts on Upgrading PC Hardware and Software

by Dick Maybach, Columnist, Brookdale Computer User Group (BCUG) Brookdale, NJ

www.bcug.org

[n2nd\(at\)att.net](mailto:n2nd(at)att.net)

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I can think of three valid reasons for upgrading a PC: (1) to try something new, (2) to improve performance, and (3) to solve a problem. Trying something new means you are treating your PC as a hobby. In this case you don't really need to upgrade, but you want to. Just bear in mind that there are risks, which means that you may get more adventure than you planned on. Improving performance is difficult to justify, unless your system is very old. Almost any system will do just fine surfing the net, word processing, balancing your checkbook, etc. Upgrading your hardware will often provide no discernable speed-up, because the speed is really limited by your typing speed or Internet connection. Upgrading your software may actually slow things down, because newer software has more features and requires more computer resources. This leaves problem solving. Your hard disk may be full; your motherboard may have only old, slow version 1 USB ports; or your bank may require a recent version of Quicken for on-line banking.

You shouldn't upgrade to Windows Vista unless you replace the PC, and even then you may have problems. A friend of mine bought a new Dell PC with Vista and found his old printer wouldn't work and he could no longer access the Internet. Operating system designers can't possibly test every combination of hardware and software. As a result, they concentrate on new components, since most operating system sales are for new computers, and there may be problems with older peripherals and software.

You should back up all your files before you make any system change, no matter how trivial. And any time you open your system case, you should use a grounding strap to avoid damaging components with static electricity. This is especially important during the approaching winter months, when the humidity in your house is low.

Let's look at the easy upgrades first. Adding RAM is usually not difficult; just plug it in and look at your CMOS screen to be sure the PC has recognized it. (Of course you must use the correct chips. Check your PC manual.) You can usually add new peripherals, such a CD-ROM, DVD, or a second hard disk drive without problems, although if you have already filled all of the available ATA slots, you will have to add a second disk controller. Take your system to a reliable shop if you have doubts about your abilities. Replacing a hard disk is somewhat more difficult, because you must transfer all your software to the new unit, which requires disk copying software. You can't just copy your files with Windows Explorer.

More adventuresome is installing a new motherboard. Be aware that upgrading your motherboard may not result in a noticeable performance improvement unless you also upgrade your hard disk and/or your video controller. If your current motherboard is very old, you must also upgrade its case and

power supply. Changing the video controller or monitor is also not too hard. Most monitors are plug-and-play so Windows should automatically recognize your new monitor.

When you buy new peripherals, be sure you get any drivers they need. Many PC manufacturers don't include a complete Windows, but strip off all the drivers except for the equipment they sell you. If necessary, download any missing drivers from the Internet before you change your hardware.

An alternative to an upgrade is a complete new system, and the vendor will insure that all the software and hardware plays well together. This leaves your old system intact so you can transfer your files without risk of losing anything.

Regardless of your approach, you must also choose where and what to buy. *Where* is a choice between mail order and a local dealer. *What* is a choice between name brand and commodity hardware.

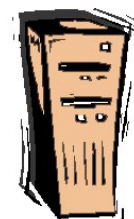
The choice between mail order and local dealer depends on how much experience and time you have. The low profit margins in PC hardware mean that both component manufacturers and system assemblers spend little time on testing. Dead-on-arrival hardware and infant mortalities are common. When this happens you are entirely dependent on the company that sold it to you. If you purchase from a mail-order firm, you must either troubleshoot any problems yourself or ship the entire system back to the seller, while a good local dealer can often make repairs in a few hours. You are trading off convenience for cost, because using mail order can often save you a few dollars.

Name brand hardware costs more than its commodity equivalent. The difference is between Sound Blaster and "Sound Blaster equivalent". I favor name brands. You can be sure that every vendor of software that uses sound has tested its products with Sound Blaster cards, but it is impossible for a small manufacturer to test its sound card with every program.

The less you pay for a system, the more likely it is to contain commodity parts. System manufacturers and assemblers usually purchase components on an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) basis, and most parts sold at computer shows are OEM. The cost of these is less because the dealer relieves the manufacturer from all customer support. This means that the component manufacturer often won't even talk to the end purchaser. Your only warranty is from the seller, and you must select him or her with care.

Finally, schedule any upgrade when you have some time. Plan on taking a weekend for simple jobs and more for complex ones. I've found that I need a couple of weeks (not full time of course) to get my PC fully functional after reinstalling an operating system for example.

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Minutes of the Mid-Hudson Computer User Group Board of Directors

May 3, 2007 MHCUG

by Jim Walsh

At 7:03 PM the monthly MHCUG Board of Directors meeting, scheduled for 7 PM in Conference Room B of the Guardian Center at 3 Neptune Road, Poughkeepsie, was called to order by President Dick Kranz.

Officers and Board members in attendance were: Eli Cohen, Peter Dowley, Dick Kranz, Les Muldorf, Rolf Nijhuis, Jim Peabody, Linda Ritch, Hugh Ross, Dan Sullivan and Jim Walsh.

Since a majority of the attendees had not yet reviewed the Minutes of the previous meeting, voting on their approval was deferred to the next meeting.

Eli Cohen, Treasurer, reported the MHCUG finances as follows:

Monthly Income/Expenses - 4/1/2007 to 4/30/2007

INCOME

Interest Income \$ 25.16

Membership Dues \$ 350.00

TOTAL INCOME \$375.16

EXPENSES

Internet

ISP \$ 40.00

Best Western

Wireless \$ 25.00

Meetings

Board \$ 30.00

SIGs \$ 90.00

General Member \$ 150.00

TOTAL EXPENSES \$335.00

OVERALL TOTAL \$ 40.16

NET WORTH as of 4/30/2007

Cash and Bank Accounts

HVFCU CD's \$6458.52

HVFCU S1 Savings \$ 900.46

HVFCU S9 Checking \$1074.15

TOTAL Cash and Bank \$8433.13

TOTAL ASSETS \$8433.13

LIABILITIES \$.00

OVERALL TOTAL \$8433.13

A motion to accept the Treasurer's Report as written was made by Les Muldorf, seconded by Hugh Ross, and unanimously approved by the Board.

Hugh Ross stated that he had completed the Federal Income Tax return for the MHCUG and had submitted it. The Board thanked Hugh for his efforts.

The Ulster Community College agreement for the Ulster Community Workshop meeting place, under review by Dick Kranz and Bob Morales, will also be reviewed by Eli Cohen. Upon completion of the review, the agreement will be submitted to UCC to renew the meeting place for that SIG.

Dick Kranz, acting for VP/Programs, confirmed the Open Office presentation by the presenters from the Rockland PC User Group (RPCUG).

For the latest MHCUG news
visit our Website:
www.mhcug.org

Better, Secure, Dependable Web Solutions
For your Internet presence
BSD WEB SOLUTIONS

BSD Web Solutions, Inc.
One Civic Center Plaza Suite 500
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603
Telephone: 845.485.4818
www.bsdsolutions.com/

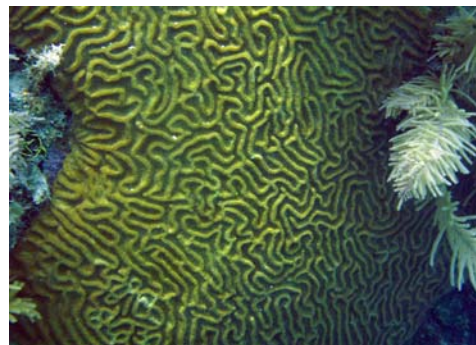
All SIG groups continue to be well attended and have no problems to report.

Dick Kranz recognized the efforts of Ed Morzen, Publicity, for delivering the Public Announcements of MHCUG meetings to the media in a timely manner.

Hugh Ross, WebSite, in response to his request for someone to act as backup for maintaining the MHCUG website, received an offer from Jim Peabody. Anyone else interested in learning the ins and outs of managing a website is also encouraged to contact Hugh Ross.

Under unfinished business, Eli Cohen and Peter Dowley agreed to co-chair the committee to conduct an MHCUG member picnic. They will report at the next meeting.

At 8:23 Peter Dowley moved that the meeting be adjourned. Hugh Ross seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved. □



Brain Coral, by Les Muldorf

Help Line

Having a problem? Volunteers have offered to field member's questions by phone. Please limit calls to the hours listed below. Days means 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Evenings means 6 to 9:30 p.m. Be considerate of the volunteer you're calling, remember this is a free service. If you'd like to have your name added to the list, call or e-mail the editor, or see us at the next meeting.

Need help on a subject and there's no name listed for it here? Try contacting one of the SIG leaders or post a message on our Website FORUM. Simply go to www.mhcug.org and click on the "Forum" menu item, then follow instructions. Answers will be returned to you by e-mail, as well as being accessible via the Website.

Program	Name	Phone #	E-mail	Time
Access (MS)	Eli Cohen	897-5921	mhcug@yahoo.com	(e)
APL (all flavors)	Ray Polivka	462-2698	polivka@acm.org	(d e)
CAD	Fred Krasselt	565-5622	krasselt@aol.com	(d e)
Database	Hugh Ross	462-3309	byewise@optonline.net	(d e)
FlightSoft	Clark Zeaman	814-663-0538	zeamanc@juno.com	(d e)
Internet	Art Scott	849-1378	artscotti@gmail.com	(d)
Lotus 123 Macros	Ralph Pollard	462-3389	ralphpollard@verizon.net	(e)
Lotus for DOS	Bill Rogers	452-9104	—	(e)
MS Office	Bryan Rifenburgh	590-0092	MCPPro20@yahoo.com	(d e)
Paradox 4.5	Jim Warner III	297-3175	jhwiii@optonline.net	(d e)
Partition Magic	Dan Sullivan	229-0241	dansull@optonline.net	(d e)
PC/AT Hardware	Phil Van Itallie	462-3924	pvanitallie@yahoo.com	(e)
Personal Finances	John Bickford	435-8615	johnbick@us.ibm.com	(d)
SAS	Ralph Pollard	462-3389	ralphpollard@verizon.net	(e)
Symphony 3.1	Jim Warner III	297-3175	jhwiii@optonline.net	(d e)

Please help us to keep the **Help Line** current by advising us about changes. If you have particular knowledge or expertise about a program or product, please ask to be listed here.

All members of the MHCUG are encouraged to take photographs of any club activity for publication in the MicroChip. Now that we are in a digital format on the web, photographs can be displayed in glorious color or stunning black and white. In addition, we would also like you to exhibit your photographic skills and submit photos of the beautiful Hudson Valley. Here is an easy way to get your name in print. Please forward any pictures to lesm1@optonline.net. Give me your name and the title or subject of your pictures so I don't have to make anything up.

Wanted New Members



**Bounty Hunters
Needed**

**Sponsor a
new member**

**Get a 3-month
membership
extension**

For each new member you bring in you receive a three month extension on your current membership. Ask the new member to name you as sponsor on their application.

New Appl. Renewal Addr. Change

The MHCUG is a nonprofit educational organization which promotes activities encouraging the use of computers by its members. The MHCUG encourages professionalism and the development of technical skills.

A **Member** may be anyone with an interest in computers who supports the purpose of the MHCUG.

A **Student Member** must be under 25 years of age and attending an educational institution full-time.

If new applicant or renewal, please check one:

Member: dues: \$35 per year

Student: dues: \$15 per year

Full-time ID (reqr'd) _____

I am enclosing a check for 1 2 3 yrs (Students renew yearly)

Check No. _____

Mid-Hudson Computer User Group, Inc.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City State Zip: _____

Telephone: () _____

E-mail: _____

Would you like an e-mail reminder of upcoming meetings? Yes No

How did you hear about us? _____

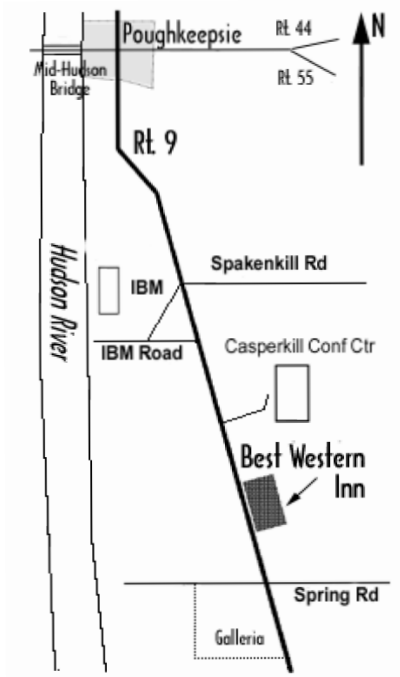
If sponsored by a member, please provide name: _____

Dues Amount _____ Additional Contribution Amount _____ Total _____

Make check (on US bank only) payable to:
Mid-Hudson Computer User Group

Send form and check to: Attn Treasurer
Mid-Hudson Computer User Group
PO Box 1962
Poughkeepsie NY 12601-0962

How to find us on the night of the meeting



👉 **Our Next Program** 👈

Where: Best Western Inn & Conference Center
Rt. 9, Poughkeepsie

When: June 14th, 2007

6:30 – 7:00 Q&A Session: Questions from the floor

7:00 – 7:30 Regular Business Meeting

7:30 – 9:00 Program

Program: DeMystifying the Registry. David Caesar-Dare's presentation will expose the secrets of that mysterious Windows file called the Registry.

Coming Events June 2007

Thursday June 7th, MHCUG Board meeting

7:00 p.m. at Guardian Storage Building

Thursday June 14th, MHCUG General Meeting

6:30 p.m. at Best Western Inn and Conference Center

Monday June 18th, Technology Workshop

7:00 p.m. at Ulster Community College

Thursday June 21st, Ulster Computing Workshop

7:00 p.m. at Ulster Community College

Monday June 25th, Upgrade and Repair

7:00 p.m. at Guardian Storage Building

Thursday June 28th, Digital Photography SIG

7:00 p.m. at Guardian Storage Building