Seasons Greetings from MHCUG

November Main Meeting

Selling Online – How to and How Not to for Beginners

By Jeff Dowley

Our club was fortunate to host an informative and practical presentation by **Sandy Coulter**. Sandy brought a wide and deep set of experience in most of the online marketplaces that are common today. As a seller on eBay she has over 1100 positive feedback ratings. She also has experience in selling through Amazon.com and through CraigsList.org. All together her experience goes back many years, giving her a viewpoint on both what is current and what it was like through those years.

Sandy Coulter

Sandy's initial interaction with our group centered on the basics of online commerce. She listed the needed resources and explained what each resource was needed for. This went from the essentials of having an email account, various bank accounts, to the obvious, such as merchandise worth selling, and practical listings, such as camera equipment and how to make your photos and descriptions help close the sale.

Sandy polled the audience as to whether or not we expected online selling to be hard or easy. The answers were mixed even though most of the audience had little direct online selling experience. In her opinion, the market has become more competitive and yet more expensive to participate in today as compared to a few

years ago. There are more sellers, but the fees charged by eBay have still managed to go up, even in the face of this competition. Perhaps eBay needs more competition, and in fact we may be seeing a start of that by way of the Amazon.com seller's marketplace. Sandy even feels that Amazon may have the better atmosphere to deal in as a seller. The reasons behind this take a bit of experience to understand, but she feels the result is tangible, even if the differences are a little nuanced.

To help us understand better some of those differences and to help any beginners wanting a how-to, Sandy delivered a wide range of advice and outlined the steps needed to go from A to Z for each type of commerce site.

Starting with auction sales, the 800 pound gorilla named eBay was addressed first. Sandy pointed out the general Pro's of using eBay: a nationwide and worldwide reach, sales that close quickly (3-10 days) and generally a fair market value as the selling price. The Con's however have increased over the years: ever increasing fees for ever more itemized services, a large and increasing number of rules to follow, and the simple fact that occasional fraud becomes an everyday risk for sellers. Aside from these pro's and con's, there are a number of other considerations that need to be understood. The need to understand HTML ranges from minimal to advanced, depending on how you generate your listing, and if you use 3rd party sites to host content for your auction – examples of this are video clips, photos, and various tweaks to the look and feel of your sale page.

Earning and using positive eBay feedback for decision making is another aspect of eBay that can be easy to learn but hard to achieve. The rules for feedback changed significantly about 18 months ago and the change has not been universally lauded. Sandy explained the ins and outs of how important a feedback positive rating of over 99% can be, and how hard it can be to start out today and earn such a high rating. She feels that complete disclosure and highly detailed listings make all the difference to setting customers' expectations.

Lastly, for eBay, Sandy addressed all the little things that can add up to making your business a success once you have it up and running. In short, it's organization, organization, and organization. Being organized in the handling and storage of the auction items is important. Being organized in handling the email and payments is crucial. Also pointed out was that being an organized time-keeper can be the final make or break on profits versus effort expended.

Moving on to 'fixed price listings' commerce brought us to the current large name in this market – Amazon.com. Sandy explained her thoughts on the pros as being easy to list your items (with modest effort and less technical savvy required versus eBay), a large marketplace, and low/no listing fees. On the other hand, the sales fees are fixed and somewhat high (depends on item) and the overall rate of sales/turnover can be as slow as weeks or even months. She went on to detail some of Amazon's history and how that influences the kinds of items marketed. Also explained was the presence of the "A to Z Guarantee" and how that influences your seller's rating on Amazon. Overall, Sandy feels that Amazon offers something to both the individual and to businesses – a simple market for individuals and a complementary marketplace for businesses that may already have a bricks and mortar store.

The next type of online selling mentioned was online Classified ads. Currently this market is largely covered by Craigslist.org. With no costs to posting or replying to ads, the price is hard to

beat. That doesn't mean everything is simply straight forward, there are rules to learn here as well, and they are different rules than you would need for Amazon or eBay. Craigslist relies on email as the medium of communication, but it's at 'one step removed' distance to help you stay safe online. The step of removal is that the postings on Craigslist are usually done from a pseudo address that gets mail back to you without your own direct email being listed (unless you want it public). From there it's up to you to know how to conduct yourself safely and profitably. Naturally, Sandy had some very specific advice here and it followed common sense on how to avoid being scammed or stalked or the like.

Another covered type of selling online was by way of having a web store selling items at fixed prices. Here was a marketplace that Sandy felt had definite high startup costs, if not in money then in time and marketing. Creating an online store complements a retail store in most cases, but they require real investment in marketing and advertising. One form of e-marketing is SEO, short for Search Engine Optimization. Most of us understand the benefit of showing up in the top search results, but few understand the black art behind the search engine that is putting your ad there.

Wrapping up her excellent presentation, Sandy mentioned some of the smaller names and marketplaces that compete with those mentioned here. All in all her effort was well organized, detailed, and thorough. The attendees of the meeting certainly benefited for all her hard work and loud applause tried to convey the true appreciation felt.□

Nominating committee report 11-12-09

President   Jeff Dowley
VP Programs   open
VP Activities   Dick Kranz
Secretary   open
Treasurer   Eli Cohen
Past President   Dan Sullivan

Director one year left expires end of 2010
      Ray Polivka
Director one year left expires end of 2010
      Ed Terpsta
Director one year left expires end of 2010
      Ron McDermott
Director one year left expires end of 2010
      open

Director two years left expires end of 2011
      Jim Peabody
Director two years left expires end of 2011
      open
Director two years left expires end of 2011
      Linda Ritch
Director two years left expires end of 2011
      Rolf Nijhus
Nominating Committee
Jim Warner III, Martin Feldberg, Lloyd Quick

Upcoming December Main Meeting - Mark Hoops,CONSUMER FRAUD SPEAKER

Mark T. Hoops, the Sr. Consumer Frauds Representative of the Poughkeepsie regional office of the New York State office of the Attorney General will speak at the Mid-Hudson Computer User Group open public meeting 7:30 p.m. December 10 in the Hudson room at Mercury Grand Hotel, 2170 South Rd., Route 9, town of Poughkeepsie, NY. See map on next page.
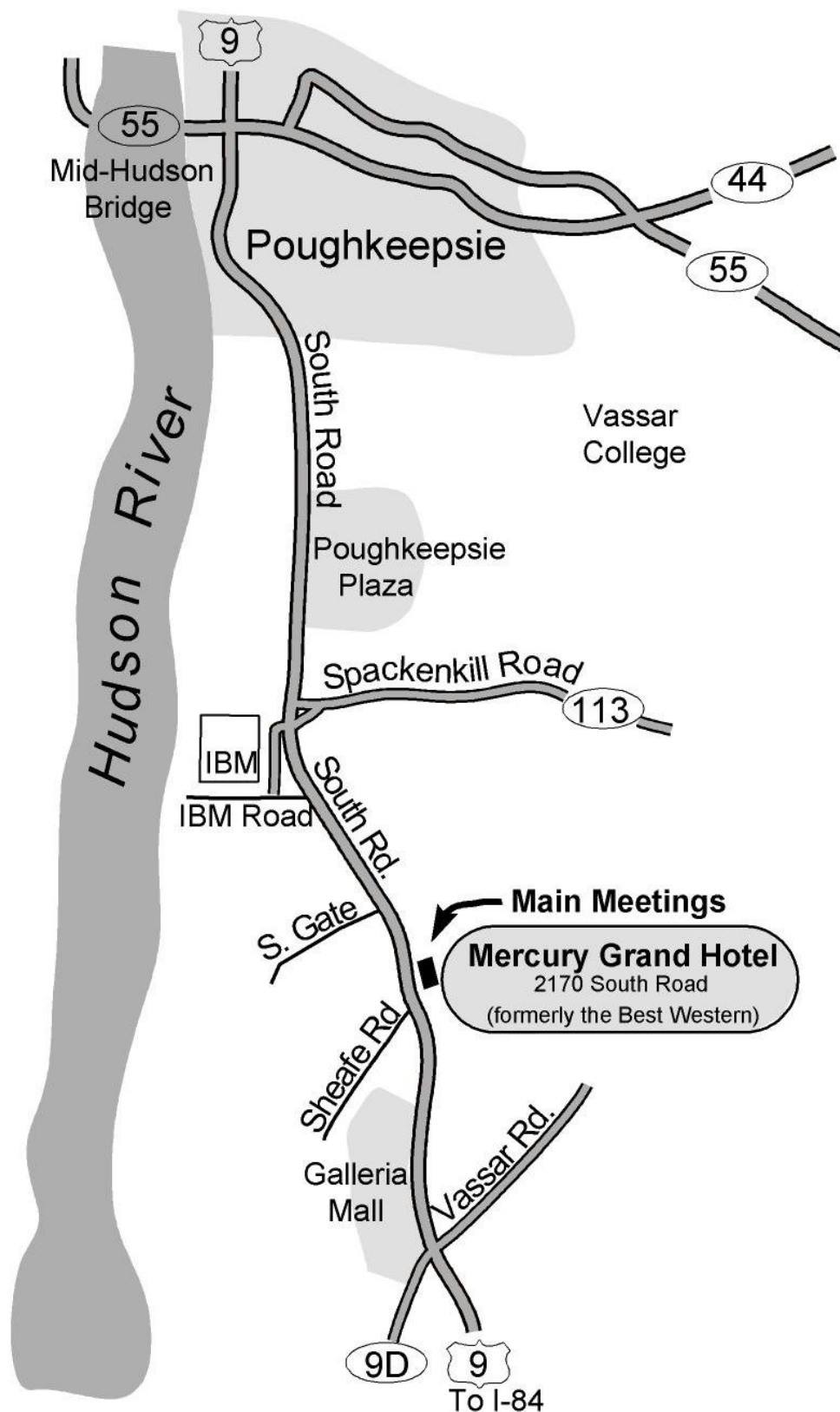
Mark is a highly skilled, yet amiable speaker, possessing an uncanny ability to address an audience of super computer geeks, to one with little or no computer knowledge at all. Given his job, Mark has kept abreast of the many ways that scam artists take advantage of the unwitting consumer. His talks have run the gamut from identity theft to online predators and every conceivable scam in between. Mark will update us on the latest consumer fraud activities that he has been involved with. Mark's ability to liven up an audience with tear-laughing interaction does in no way take away from the seriousness of his message. This is one speaker you'll not want to miss!

Mid-Hudson Computer User Group is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit educational organization and welcomes the public to attend this meeting. There is no admission charge. Further information concerning this event, or membership details may be obtained by contacting Dick Kranz at 845 896-7376 or go to www.mhcug.org.

All submissions for the Micro-chip 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 issue. email editor (at) mhcug.org

MHCUG MAIN MEETING LOCATION

Main Meetings

Mercury Grand Hotel
2170 South Road
(formerly the Best Western)

Map created with OCAD software. Courtesy of Orienteering Unlimited.
(914) 248-5957   www.orienteeringunlimited.com

Technology Workshop
By Harry Elder
Our November meeting was at the Guardian Storage facility. Once again we had a full room, signifying a lot of interest. There's always room for one more – you. Please join us. Bring any computer related question, or share something with us. It's far more interesting than staying home on Google.

Fred Miller led off. He asked if you can run APL in a desktop environment. APL is 'A Programming Language' that is superlative in advanced mathematics.   The short answer is yes, as told to me by our resident APL expert Ray Polivka, who couldn't attend this meeting. Fred contacted Ray afterwards. He also emailed me about an open source version of APL he found at www.nars2000.org.

Fred also wanted to know how to remove or delete a corrupted Ubuntu partition on his hard drive. The group's consensus is to run a Linux utility 'GParted', which is bundled with most Linux distros, such as Ubuntu. It can be run from the live CD.

Tom Townsend showed us an interesting gooseneck flashlight. It apparently uses an LED light, and three small button batteries. He found it at Ocean State Job Lot for $3.99, and says he has seen them for as low as $2.99 at Price Chopper.

Tom also had a question – "Where is the free version of AVG 9.0?" The club reports that free AVG is still available, but getting harder to find. Naturally, AVG would like to direct you to their premium products. I Google'd 'free AVG 9.0 antivirus download' , then clicked on the first listed entry, which took me to http://free.avg.com/us-en/download-avg-anti-virus-free-edition.   There is a link for the free version at the bottom of the page; the next page has a CNET link which will get you the free download.

Chuck Wolfe reported some virus or mal-ware issues. Viruses and malware manifest themselves in countless ways, notably poor system performance, blocked access to programs and utilities, and curious pop-ups. Lately, however, the trend has been for malware to completely hide itself, and show no usual signs of machine corruption. Chuck had a missing 'dll' reported – 'kunuzai.dll'. I Google'd and found this was reported as malware. The group recommended that Chuck unregister this item.   Changing the registry is not for the faint of heart. If you're uncomfortable with this, get help. Also remember to create a restore point.   Go to: Start -> All Programs -> Accessories -> System Tools -> System Restore.

Alex Kurylo wanted to know if Microsoft Office 2000 or 2003 will work in Windows 7.   Most likely Office 2003 will run on Windows 7.   However, Office 2000 may be a problem. I saw an online Computer World article that Microsoft ended support for Office 2000 this past summer. Even if Office 2000 will run on Windows 7, there will be no more security updates for Office 2000.

Have you been to a computer fair recently? While computer fairs were the rage of the 90's, Charlie Patterson says that they are still around. In our area, there's one in Middletown, NY, on December 19. See http://www.tri-statefairs.com/.

Bob Morales would like to see 'XP mode' in Windows 7 demonstrated. Jeff Dowley says that he has Windows 7 on his laptop. Jeff agreed to look into demonstrating XP mode in a future meeting.

Bob found a way to transfer large files, up to five GB, for free.   You simply upload them to this cloud service: www.yourfilelink.com/get.php?fid=516620.   Then send the link that the website sends you after the upload is complete to the receiver, and they can download the file.

MHCUG club president Dan Sullivan couldn't attend our meeting, but he asked Jeff Dowley to tell us about the latest version of FreeNAS 0.7. NAS is Network Attached Storage, meaning that a PC on the network has storage – usually a hard drive that is available to all others on the network. In short, it's a backup solution, where backup hard drive space is available network-wide.   FreeNAS runs on free BSD 7.2 (Linux). There are some good videos on both FreeNAS and on FreeBSD, easily found on YouTube.

Both Bill Marr and his wife use a USB thumb drives to manage their shared passwords. Bill told us that a dilemma he faces is how to keep the thumb drives in sync. If Bill makes changes on his thumb drive, and his wife makes different changes on the other, how do they bring them together? The solution offered was a free Microsoft utility called SyncToy. In Microsoft's own words, "SyncToy 2.1 is a free application that synchronizes files and folders between locations. Typical uses include sharing files, such as photos, with other computers and creating backup copies of files and folders." http://www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?displaylang=en&FamilyID=c26efa36-98e0-4ee9-a7c5-98d0592d8c52

Bill also asked about migrating to Windows 7 - should he upgrade or do a clean install? An upgrade will keep all of your existing applications and personal data. To do a clean install, back up all of your personal files and program data, and your settings. Be sure to have media to re-install your applications, or be able to download new versions. Then re-install your applications. Finally, import your backed-up personal data and settings.   You may also have to install new drivers for your hardware to run under Windows 7.   This is a simplified description. If you're at all unsure, get reputable help.

Dick Kranz polled members to see which antivirus programs we're using. Most of us are using free AVG. Jeff Dowley prefers Kaspersky, which isn't free. Jeff claims that free antivirus just isn't as effective as Kaspersky. All you need is one bad infection, and headaches far outweighing 'free' begin. Jeff says that you can get free, or nearly free offerings of Kaspersky at various times with sales and rebates.

Thanks to all club members for a great meeting. Please join us at our next MHCUG Technology Workshop on the third Monday, December 21, in Conference room "A23B" at Guardian Storage Business Development Center, 3 Neptune Rd. Town of Poughkeepsie. Contact Technology Workshop leader Dick Kranz for additional information.

From the President

By Dan Sullivan, President MHCUG

As I write this we haven't seen any snow yet, here in Hyde Park. But I know it will be arriving soon and having just had a full set of new tires installed, I'm almost ready for December and the coming Winter.

So what sort of new and or different PC applications are you going to be working on to keep your PC warm for the cold dark days and evenings ahead? I've bought three programs ready to go on my next computer and have down loaded some of the latest Open Source and free software to try which should keep me out of my wife's hair in the coming days.

Returning to the theme of things to keep us involved in MHCUG and our PC's, what topics would you like to see/hear presented at our General and at our Special Interest Groups (SIG's) meetings? To keep the club ACTIVE, interesting, and to help meet one of the purposes listed in

(Continued from page 7)

our by-laws of education, we need input from more than just those of us on the Board of Directors and Officers. Perhaps the key work here is ACTIVE! I'm sure that several of our members and visitors have thought more than once "I wonder why they don't ...... ? Well, Here I am asking for the words that can help us answer these questions.

New ideas and new blood are the life line of any organization. The Nominating Committee has presented a proposed slate of candidates for the BOARD. Their proposal appears elsewhere in this microCHIP. Notice that I said proposed. Nominations can be made by email now and from the floor during the business part of the General Meeting December 10. The full listing will then be presented and must be voted on at the meeting to meet the rules of our by-laws. So get ACTIVE and help our club survive and grow! Dan

Upcoming December Meetings

Second Thursday, December 10, MHCUG General Meeting 6:30 p.m. at Mercury Grand Hotel (formerly Best Western)

Monday, December 21, Guardian Storage - Technology Workshop 7:00 p.m.

Third Thursday, December17, Ulster Computing Workshop 7:00 p.m. Town of Esopus Library

Fourth Monday, December 28, Board of Directors 5:30 p.m. Guardian Storage Building

Fourth Monday, December 28, Upgrade and Repair 7:00 p.m. Guardian Storage Building

Digital Media is cancelled in December.

Mid-Hudson Computer User Group, Inc.

PO Box 1962

Poughkeepsie, NY 12601-0962

Officers

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VP (Activ): Linda Ritch 489-7802

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Ron McDermott 561-0564

Ed Terpstra 462-4441

Bob Morales 246-4244

Standing Committees

WebSite: Jerry Clark

Database: Dan Sullivan 229-0241

Publicity: Edward Morzen 849-1231

SIG Chair: Jack Marsella 632-1478

Membership: Open

Monthly Meetings - Scheduled the second Thursday of every month. Check **www.mhcug.org** for possible changes to gen-eral and SIG meetings. Local radio stations will be advised if a meeting is cancelled unexpect-edly.

microCHIP staff

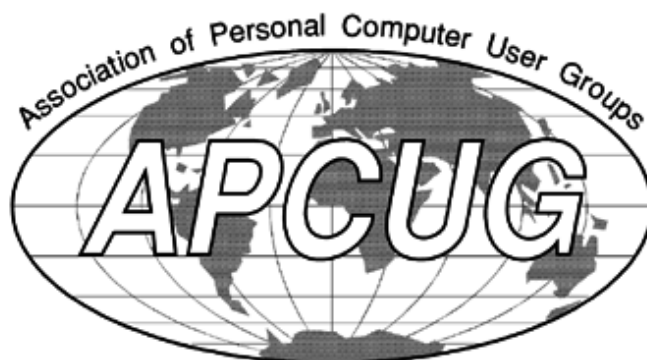Harry Elder, Editor, e-mail: editor (at) mhcug.org

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- **All area codes are 845 unless shown otherwise.**

- **Website: www.mhcug.org**

The MHCUG is a non-profit 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 (required) _____

I am enclosing a check for ‰ 1 ‰ 2 ‰ 3 yrs

(Students renew yearly)

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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 _____