

SAN FRANCISCO PERSONAL COMPUTER *eBLUE*  
USERS GROUP *NOTES*

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**July - August 2001**



## Who We Are, What We Do and How You Can Join the Fun!

The San Francisco PC Users Group, founded in 1982, serves as a regional volunteer forum for the exchange of ideas, industry insights and solutions to problems, etc. related to using personal computers having the Intel x86 or compatible processor.

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Annual membership in The San Francisco PC Users Group includes, among other benefits, monthly meetings, a one year subscription to *Blue Notes*, and Internet access. Cost: \$25 for individuals, \$30 for families and \$50 for businesses. E-mail our Membership Registrar, [membership@mail.sfpcug.org](mailto:membership@mail.sfpcug.org), or attend a monthly meeting (see details inside and calendar). An application form can be found on the last page of this issue. Once completed, mail it with your payment to the SFPCUG Membership Director, 3145 Geary Blvd., Box 284, San Francisco, CA 94118-3300

### Internet Services for All Members

Internet access is a major incentive for SFPCUG membership. Visit our web site: <http://www.sfpcug.org> where you will find, information about *Blue Notes*, the club's dial-up Internet services, activities of our various Special Interest Groups. etc. PPP accounts are available - e-mail: [help@mail.sfpcug.org](mailto:help@mail.sfpcug.org) or contact our WebMaster at [webmaster@mail.sfpcug.org](mailto:webmaster@mail.sfpcug.org) or 415-665-3599.

The Internet SIG offers access to a shared account for experimenting with Web technology, including CGI scripting. Contact the WebMaster for details.

### Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

Users gather in SIGs to explore and solve specific problems related to software and/or hardware. The Calendar will list dates and venues. If a SIG addressing your interest(s) does not exist, call 415-665-3599 or 415-346-2644 to organize one.

### Write a Review on New Software and it's Yours, Free!!

Vendors frequently offer new software or books to the SFPCUG so that an interested member can give it a test run and keep the product in exchange for a published review in *Blue Notes*. Our Product Review Coordinator can arrange to obtain software you want to review. Guidelines for reviews appear regularly in *Blue Notes*, or ask the Product Review Coordinator for a copy.

### Steering Committee Meetings

The SFPCUG Steering Committee Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month at the upstairs meeting room of Round Table Pizza on Geary Blvd. and 16th Ave.

The SFPCUG Steering Committee discusses issues of immediate importance to the Group and makes plans for future activities. Steering Committee meetings are open to all SFPCUG members. Any Group member having attended two of four preceding Steering Committee meetings is eligible to vote.

### General meetings

General meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month. Doors open at 6:15 PM for SIGs and the general meeting begins at 7PM and end by 9PM

First time guests are admitted free, repeat guests are asked for a donation of \$4.

Location: Meetings now take place in the auditorium of the Community College District Office, 33 Gough Street, (a half-block south of Market Street) San Francisco, CA There is ample free parking in front of the building. Civic Center BART and MUNI is ½ a block away.

The latest information on programs and location for upcoming general and steering committee meetings is available on our web site <http://www.sfpcug.org>. Always check for late breaking news.

## *Publication in Blue Notes*

Follow the structure of a previous article in *Blue Notes*.

- \* **Name/version of the subject program/book.** What does the program do and on what operating platform (s)? Does it satisfactorily fill a genuine need, e.g. task, entertainment, utility, etc.?
  - \* **Reviewer:** name and email address.  
**Name and reputation of the company distributing the product.** Available mail address and phone number(s)
  - \* **At A Glance:** A 1-to 4 rating (worst to best)
  - \* **Price:** MSRP, retail or street
  - \* **System Requirements:** (self-explanatory)
  - \* **Pros:** Ease of use, learning, etc? Documentation: comprehensive, intelligible? Support? Does it deliver as advertised? If a book, is the author's style smooth or challenging? Is the Index useful?
  - \* **Cons:** Shortfalls, if any
  - \* The body of your review
  - \* Graphics welcome and requested if possible
- When addressing technical, complex issues, endeavor to be as comprehensive and street-level clear as possible.**
- \* Use one space between sentences, two carriage returns at the end of each paragraph
  - \* Re-read your work carefully, objectively, checking word, sentence and logic flow to ensure you say precisely what you mean to say, clearly
  - \* Do not use indents or tabs
  - \* Spell-check your work

### **Procedure for submitting articles for publication.**

Save your article as a pure ASCII file with line breaks, and a .TXT extension. You may alternately save your files in Rich Text Format (.RTF extension) then send them to [bluenotes@mail.sfpcug.org](mailto:bluenotes@mail.sfpcug.org). Should special formatting be necessary, forward a hard copy to the Editor. Contact *Blue Notes* staff by e-mail, [bluenotes@mail.sfpcug.org](mailto:bluenotes@mail.sfpcug.org).

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## President's message



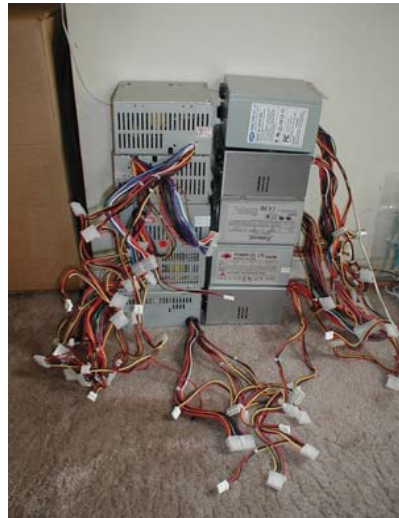
### Power Supplies, HDs, and Getting Older

In my living room there's a growing stack of power supplies, all dead. In a closet, on shelves in the basement, and a few tucked elsewhere, two in my truck, are power supplies, mostly failed and in need of disposal after a final check-out. The two in the truck are new, as are several others. Why? Because I'm finding that after two or three years the power supply in a computer may fail, and occasionally sooner.

Jeff Marchi says that with Dell and a few other major clone-makers "you don't have to worry about the power supplies". While I admit I've found relatively few Dells with failed power units, I have run into one or two, although the computers were at least three years old if I recall. The same applies to Compaq and other "majors." At the last auction I attended cabinets full of Compaq power supplies were auctioned off, as well as some from other manufacturers, which would lead to the conclusion that a major dotCOM felt that a hearty supply of power supplies was essential to their business.

For the last year or so the quality of power supplies has become an issue, along with the output watt rating. Gone are the days of being comfortable with a 200-250 watt p.s. Gone, too, are the low-cost units that will power the computer without a hitch. A \$10-20 p.s. will work OK with the older computers, though with caveats, but don't even think about one of them for a new gig Pentium or, especially, a gig+ AMD chip. Today some power supply manufacturers write on the box or unit that it is "AMD compliant." Generally the 300 watt SPI Sparkle Power International p.s. is a good one for AMD and Intel, but

these occasionally fail, too. While my p.s. junkyard does not include any SPI 300s, there are three SPI 235-250 watt units, which proves that they too can fail, top of the line or not. Recently I've been buying Enermax Ultra-Cool units, which have two fans, are AMD compliant, boast of "super low noise," and cost \$39 at the computer show for the 276 watt model. The 300s are another ten bucks or so, and the 400s are over \$60. Whether the 400s are needed is another question. SPI 300s also run \$40 or more. So if you're building a new computer, make sure the case is priced without a power supply. If the power supply is included and not a top brand, consider it a back-up unit or worthy of putting in an older computer. And as an aside: *if you're cheating* with a two-way outlet (ungrounded) to power your computer, go directly outside and take a long walk, asking yourself the whole way where you went wrong in life. There's no excuse for an ungrounded connection to a computer; a wire from the plumbing in the bathroom to a proper three-way outlet will solve this problem. All parts available at Ace Hardware or Home Depot.



While usually the effect of a dead power supply is just that the computer won't turn on, the results can be dire. On three occasions I've had a power supply go out and take the motherboard with it. Once the CPU was blown away as well. An electrician friend has told me that the current power problems in California are also threatening to computers. One friend had her motherboard blown exactly at the time her area was hit with a rolling blackout. One obvious suggestion is to get a UPS (uninterruptible power supply), which protects against electrical "sags" and "spikes," both of which can be very damaging. American Power Conversion is a popular and leading company for UPS units, and will be more than happy to put you on their "auction" and announcement list if you email them. But I've noticed that COSTCO has lots of UPS units at decent prices. Perhaps I overstate or am an alarmist, but I've concluded that a hundred bucks or so of prevention is worth the peace of mind, and if it saves you from replacing a motherboard or more, then it's cheap insurance as well.

There is a little the user can do to maintain and check out his/her computer's power supply. Not so easy to remember but easy to do, place your hand over the p.s. exhaust fan and verify that air is flowing out. Also, placing the hand on the case near the power supply is a good idea, to get a feel for what its normal temperature is. Keep doing so daily until quite comfortable with what is normal, and if it's ever "hot," turn it off pronto and take the next step.

Periodically inspect the power supply from the outside, especially the fan. If it appears full of dust and lint it's time to take more drastic steps. One possibility is to use a can of compressed air. Before hitting it with a blast of air, use a small stick or stirrer to make sure the fan isn't already partially frozen. Then blow out the power supply, focusing on the fan and verifying that it turns freely. If you have any real doubts about whether the unit is too dirty, removing it is easy. Disconnect all cables to the back of the case, remove the side of the case, and then remove the four screws that hold in the power supply. These are on the back of the case. Gently manipulate the power supply so that you can remove the four small screws that hold it together, usually on the top, and store these in a safe place. They are small and hard to replace if you drop one in the carpet, in a pants cuff, or some other mysterious place that small screws have a way of finding. Also notice how the top is fitted onto the power supply, usually with a little lip on two sides of the bottom, as this is the only safe way to replace the top. Without touching any of the electrical components inside (and thus avoiding a potential shock), blow out the unit, brush off any serious dirt, and if necessary, remove the fan (noting which direction is forward) and clean or replace it. Cleaning does not mean "oiling" the fan, which merely makes it collect more dirt, faster. Better to replace it if you've got this far. New fans are in the \$6-8 range at the computer show. Make sure to get one with ball-bearings. Roger's Systems sells these at the computer show, as do several others. Usually replacing a fan requires clipping and joining the existing red and black wires to the new fan's wires of the same-color. I always use a soldering iron for this, plus electricians' tape. Tiny crimp-connectors from Radio Shack would do the job as well, perhaps better. I keep several power supply fans on hand, and recommend that you purchase one as insurance. To

make a special trip to Central Computing or one of the other local vendors for a \$7 item would cost more than the item, not to mention the aggravation, so if your computer is two years old or older and you're at the computer show, you know what to do.

Same general topic, different component, CPU fans seem to fail after a year or two. If your computer begins to act flaky, especially freezing and shutting down unexpectedly, a first good guess is that the CPU fan has stopped. Again, the way to check this is to open the case and inspect the CPU fan. If there's dirt, blow it out and verify that the fan spins easily. Be very careful removing the fan, especially on the newer motherboards that mount the CPU directly to the board. There's a tiny ceramic nipple on one side of the CPU socket, and these break fairly easily. The newer fans are very tightly fitted to the socket, making their installation and removal all the tougher. I use a pair of strong, curved needle-nose pliers, a small screwdriver, and very gentle but firm pressure to manipulate the stainless-steel spring-latch into position. This will become very clear if you try to remove a flat-mounted CPU. Again, my advice is to purchase a spare from Roger's at the show. Another under \$10 expense that is good insurance.

If you're buying or own an AMD chip of over 500-600 MHZ, the CPU fans are especially important, and cost a little more. Generally cone-shaped with the fan in the middle, it is possible to replace the fan and not the whole unit. There are also "gold" and "platinum" fans, which refers to their color, and there's quite a lot of discussion on the Internet about which is best. If you plan to get an AMD chip, be sure to research this as well as the power supply issue.

## **Hard Drives**

Without going into several grizzly computer war stories, involving lost data that someone really didn't want to lose, a few words are in order regarding "old hard drives." Short and simple: the older the HD, the greater the risk of failure. Even simpler: back-up any file that's important to you, within minutes of closing it.

I think a hard drive is "old" after two years, and "ancient" after three. The MTBF (mean time between failure) statistics put out by the

manufacturers tend to assure us that their HDs will last for years, maybe decades, of "average" use. But then you have to wonder how they know that, since the tests to determine this are performed in a matter of days. My understanding is that they take dozens or hundreds of HDs, turn them all on, and look for a failure. Then they calculate based on the one that failed, and after how long, for that batch being tested. Ninety-nine of 100 work fine for a month, which gets called 100 months or eight years, and declared as a MTBF of 100 months. Of course none of them actually ran for 8 years, because that would take, well, 8 years. This is not a criticism of the manufacturers or their testing, but just an observation that I think any of us would be silly to count on eight years. Indeed, my experience is that after four to five years the hard drive is living on borrowed time, and you better not trust it with any important data. But then this goes for a new one as well, for other than mechanical failure can strike your hard drive. Viruses come to mind, along with power spikes/lags. Shoddy workmanship is possible though less likely, but I must say that two of my favorite brand, IBM, have failed in recent months after only weeks of use. So take care.

## Getting Older

Computers are electro-mechanical devices, and as such are subject to wear and degradation. Floppy drives often get dusty and fail. Sometimes the dust can be blown out, but often the best solution, especially if the FDD is two years or more old, is to replace it with a new one for \$12. I've found many CDs that don't work after two years. There is a CD cleaning kit, which includes a CD with a tiny brush on it that cleans the laser aperture, but decent CD drives are down to \$30-40, and a few acceptable drives are a little cheaper. Today even DVDs are running as low as \$50 for good brands, so perhaps the failed CD should be seen as a chance to upgrade. (Odds are you'll need software to play the DVD movie, however. CyberLink's products work well.) I've also talked about HDs, power supplies, and CPU fans. Anything that moves is subject to Mother Nature's mechanical rules, but the electronic components can fail, too, especially where heat is involved.

Time puts its stresses on computers in other ways, too. The other day I decided to do a thorough back-up of my Microsoft Outlook Express email and My Documents. The email came to 468 megabytes and close to 500 files. After adding My Documents and a handful of crucial .MDBs, the 650MB capacity of the back-up CD was full. There are many ways to back-up, but I've come to prefer burning important data onto a CD. Good internal burners run from \$100-150, though I've heard of a few that are under \$100, and my favorite, Plextor, tends to run closer to \$200. The procedure to burn a CD is as simple as basic file management. Open the program, typically Adobe *Easy Creator 4*, select the files at the top to be put on the CD, including from elsewhere on the LAN if you have more than one computer connected, and drag them below the horizontal line. A progress bar tells you how much space you've used and how much is free. External burners run from \$140 to over \$300. I recently bought a CenDyne from Frye's for \$190 less a mail-in rebate of \$50, which worked well in an older notebook's USB port. Not as fast as an internal model (4x write, 4x re-write, 8x read only), but it provides the notebook with a second CD as well as burns CDs in a perfectly acceptable manner. Other external models offer parallel and PCMCIA interfaces, some for as little as \$150. I've been told that the parallel interface is fine for the 4x/4x/8x speeds.

Another merciless source of files and potential problems comes from normal use of the Internet. The other day I was doing a virus scan when I discovered some 100,000 files in my C:\Windows\Temporary Internet Files folder. Even after cleaning out items prior to 12/31/00 there are some 84,000 left. I haven't decided which to prune yet, but my guess is that most of us in the club have many more files in this folder than we realize. It's not so much the space, but the time to scan for viruses, do a "thorough ScanDisk," defrag, and perform other computer maintenance that's the issue. Seems like computers are a little like people. They start off as spanking clean babies and quickly grow up and accumulate the baggage of age, which makes them cranky and slows them down. The nice thing about computers, though, is that periodically you can blow their brains out and start over, and be better off for doing so.

## Editor's note

Greetings!!! Welcome to the July/August Edition of *Blue Notes*. Wonder of wonders, yours truly won the door prize at the most recent General Meeting: a software offering called *JunkSpy*. It is a product that creates a subdirectory in your email client (Netscape or Microsoft Outlook, for example) and dumps all suspected junk mail and spam into it. For my purposes, I receive around 20 pieces of email daily. Of which, 20% is junk. This might be, I have yet to install it, a real beneficial addition to my computer.

In this edition of Blue Notes, we have syndicated articles from Dealsguy and the APCUG. We also have a review from Carol Lee and two articles from Ron Feiertag, a contributing editor to Blue Notes. Thanks Carol and Ron. Pierre Hahn found an article published in the Utah Computer Society on the subject of **Reveal Codes** for the WordPerfect aficionados in the crowd.

Finally there is mention of Padre Traughber's contribution to the general meeting of a multimedia event to show off our new Toshiba TLP 650 Projector.



During the past few months we have obtained a projector (we purchased it), a server and a laptop which were donations to the club.

I hope you enjoy this issue. If you wish to contact us, email [bluenotes@sfpcug.org](mailto:bluenotes@sfpcug.org).

## L'Ordinateur

### From a friend of a friend in Australia

A language instructor was explaining to her class that in French, Nouns unlike their English counterparts, are grammatically designated as masculine or feminine. "House," in French, is feminine- "la maison." "Pencil," in French, is masculine- "le crayon."

One puzzled student asked, "What gender is computer?" The teacher did not know, and the word wasn't in her French dictionary. So for fun she split the class into two groups appropriately enough, by gender and asked them to decide whether "computer" should be a masculine or feminine noun.

Both groups were required to give four reasons for their recommendation-

The men's group decided that computers should definitely be of the feminine gender ("la computer"), because: 1. No one but their creator understands their internal logic; 2. The native language they use to communicate with other computers is incomprehensible to everyone else; 3. Even the smallest mistakes are stored in long-term memory for possible later retrieval; and 4. As soon as you make a commitment to one, you find yourself spending half your pay check on accessories for it.

The women's group, however, concluded that computers should be masculine ("le computer"), because: 1. In order to get their attention, you have to turn them on; 2. They have a lot of data but they are still clue less; 3. They are supposed to help you solve problems, but half the time they ARE the problem; and 4. As soon as you commit to one, you realize that if you'd waited a little longer, you could have gotten a better model.



## From The DealsGuy for August, 2001

by Bob Click  
Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

### **\*Sorry 'bout That**

Last month I asked (sort of tongue-in-cheek) if you read the EULA when installing software. I received a few e-mails asking what that means. Knowing most of you don't read them, I should have explained it. "End User Licensing Agreement" is that long scrolling text that tells what you are agreeing to when you click on "I agree." I strongly urge you to read the EULA, especially when installing shareware. Some of them contain spyware which is usually spelled out DEEP in the EULA. Even some name brand software has included spyware in the past.

### **\*Strange**

I use a LinkSys router for my new DSL connection and network hub, which has advantages over just using the DSL modem. Their tech support took several days returning my first call. I've since called twice when my router wouldn't reconnect and waited it out again. Considering their tech support number is a FREE call, perhaps I shouldn't knock LinkSys too much. The last two calls were each returned the next day. I'm finally reconnected, but in a peculiar fashion. The guy eventually suggested I go start the other machine on my network, open the router's administrative page in that browser and click on "Connect." It eventually connected. Don't ask me why the first computer couldn't get it to reconnect, and LinkSys didn't know either. All I had to do then was reboot both machines for the new address to

be effective. Life was so simple before computers, but I didn't think so then.

### **\*IBM's Research Is Ahead Of Its Time**

When it comes to research, IBM is right on top of the most futuristic stuff. For example, one of their labs has experimented with technology for people to exchange information, such as business card data, during a handshake, using the body's faint electrical conductivity with the natural salinity of the hand. I hope they provide good control of that technology if they ever perfect it because I'd hate to shake hands with an attractive woman during a business conference and accidentally make my thoughts known. Although they would no doubt be complimentary, they might also divulge my 'business' strategy, right??

That and some other far out research has been temporarily shelved, but while Timex has introduced its "Internet Enabled" Wrist Watch, Xybernaut Corporation is rolling out its "wearable" computer, the Mobil Assistant V, actually produced by IBM. It weighs one pound and is worn on the belt. It offers a 500 MHz Celeron processor and 256 Mbytes of RAM. With a choice of internal hard drive configurations, it's capable of using Windows, Linux and other OSs. Uses a headpiece or a wrist-worn flat screen for viewing. All this for a mere \$3995. Think they would give us a discount? Nahhhh!

### **\*Be Different When You Sign Off**

I received e-mail from Walter Belt of Alamo PC Organization asking a question and was fascinated by his signature; an animated pen writing his name. I asked how he did it and he said he wasn't that good. However, he exposed me to a world I was completely unaware of -- all kinds of animated signatures. It's worth a peek, if for no other reason than your curiosity.

Some people won't be happy with an animated gif running on their machine that started without their permission, which is the case with these animated signatures. On the other hand, many may be unaware of it as I was, so I thought I would pass along just one of Walter's



sources. I won't insert any into this column, just a URL to visit. Even though I'm fascinated with all this, I decided to remain a bystander.

You'll be fascinated when you visit the following URL: [<http://members.home.com/rblwood/signature.html>]. Russ's Web site offers many free names, but others must be bought. I e-mailed Russ about a discount for the column and he said most of them are free, but would offer a 50% discount to a limited amount of people who needed signatures that aren't free by mentioning Bob Click.

Next month, I'll have more URLs to obtain free animated signatures, so if you have a source, send it to me. This might make a good topic for your graphics SIG.

### **\*How About Another Clipboard Enhancement**

I received this announcement. It's not free like the last clipboard, but I'm passing it on because it sounds very good. Here's the memo:

"Dear Valued MemTurbo Customer: we're writing to let you know about a special offer we are extending to MemTurbo customers. We are currently offering our flagship product, ClipTrakker, at a 71% discount to people who have purchased MemTurbo from us. Normally retailing for \$34.85, you can add ClipTrakker to your utility chest for only \$9.95! To obtain the special \$9.95 offer (a \$24.90 savings), please visit this link: [My readers get this deal, even if you don't have MemTurbo]

[<http://store.yahoo.com/sharewareonline/clipforregme.html>].

"ClipTrakker is the must-have clipboard enhancement/replacement: It automatically tracks every piece of data that goes on the clipboard for later use. Generates graphical thumbnails for each clipboard snapshot. Supports complex OLE data types natively, not just text or pictures. Single-keystroke quickpaste into active application. Includes scrapbook-style-tabbed pages for organizing clipboard snapshots, in-place editing of clipboard, multi-format export capability. Very easy to use and extremely powerful!

"Remember that URL, password, picture or piece of text that you had yesterday or last week and wish you still had? You might not, but ClipTrakker will! Want to jot a note but don't want the hassle of running a program, saving to a file, etc? ClipTrakker has a complete editor built right in that you can use to compose new notes or to edit the contents of the clipboard. For more information about ClipTrakker, please visit this link: [<http://www.memturbo.com/entry/cliptrakker-for-memturbo.htm>]. ClipTrakker is one of those applications that once you've used; you'll wonder how you ever lived without.

"ClipTrakker supports Windows 95, Windows 98, Windows Me, Windows NT 4.0, and Windows 2000. It requires at least a Pentium 90 or faster processor and 8M of RAM."

### **\*Get The Real Poop About Your Food Recipe**

I received this from Ohio Distinctive Software (its for PC or Mac) and thought you should know about "Recipe Analyzer." Here's their description:

"Recipe Analyzer is your solution for determining the nutritional content of virtually any recipe. Simply enter the ingredients and Recipe Analyzer computes the number of calories and the amount of fat, protein, carbohydrates, cholesterol, sodium, fiber, calcium, iron, vitamin A and vitamin C. It even calculates the percentage of calories from fat versus protein versus carbohydrates. It converts kilojoules to calories, plus it contains useful tables of nutritional information.

"In addition, it saves your recipes to specific books for easy classification and retrieval, and even enables posting recipes to a Web page. Recipe Analyzer includes both a primary and secondary database for easy and expanded search capabilities for several thousand food ingredients, plus it allows you to add your own ingredients (if you can find any that we haven't included).

"This CD is just \$5.00 + \$2.50 S&H (only \$2.50 S&H for two CDs to same address); limit two CDs per customer. Mail a request with your name, address, phone number and the number of CDs, plus a check for

the correct amount to Ohio Distinctive Software, 6500 Fiesta Drive, P.O. Box 349900, Columbus, Ohio 43235. Phone 1-614-459-0453."

### **\*From Mac To PC, Yup, You Heard Correctly**

Most user groups received this message from Sue Nail, but I think it can be repeated. Since I'm an incredibly lazy typist, I'll simply pass it on.

"MacDrive enables Windows users to read Mac disks from a PC -- once installed on your PC, you can open, edit and save Mac files on floppies, Zips, Jaz, CD-ROMs and hard drives. You can even format Mac disks from Windows! We'd like to make a special offer to all user groups. MacDrive normally sells for \$49.95, but user group members can download it at

[\[http://www.digitalriver.com/Mediafour/Usergroups\]](http://www.digitalriver.com/Mediafour/Usergroups) for only \$29.95! For more company information, go to [\[www.mediafour.com\]](http://www.mediafour.com)."

That's it for this month. Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [\[Bobclick@mindspring.com\]](mailto:Bobclick@mindspring.com). Visit my Web site at [\[http://www.dealsguy.com\]](http://www.dealsguy.com) for past columns. Also, I keep adding interesting articles (taken from user group newsletters) to my "Articles of Interest" page for viewing or downloading.

## **Trash to Cash-Online**

**By Donna Barnes-Roberts  
Pasadena IBM Users Group**

### **Here's how to turn your excess stuff into greenbacks**

Ready to get rid of that unsightly IMSAI computer you use for a foot rest? How about that pot that says Roseville on the bottom, the one you can't stand? Well, with a few keystrokes, you can make someone else happy, unclutter your closet, and stuff a few bucks into your pocket.

How? With the Internet. It's not a multilevel marketing scheme and definitely not illegal. It's called EBAY. You simply list your item on their auction site, let people bid on it, and send it after the high bidder pays for it.

I have sold everything from machine tool brochures, WW-II throat microphones, dishes, dress patterns, slide rules, broken dolls, stereo equipment. The guideline is-if you can ship it, you can probably sell it. In fact, I've seen cars listed and even heard of houses listed, so I'm sure you can sell just about anything of value on ebay. The only however? Not everything is worth offering on ebay.

If you are unsure whether or not your treasure is really trash, just search ebay's completed auctions for similar items that have been offered in the last month. If it was offered for \$2.00 and nobody bid on it, figure it really is trash and not treasure. And note that heavy stuff is not usually a good idea for ebay. Remember that you will have to package this and convince the post office to carry it someplace else. They do have limits.

To become an ebay tycoon, all you need is an Internet account, a computer, and a way of uploading pictures of your stuff to the Internet. (Pictures are optional but highly recommended.) When your item sells, you just e-mail the buyer with your address so he or she can send you your money, and send them the merchandise after the check clears. Most buyers are prompt and polite. Some are not. Kinda like life.

Once you decide to list an item with ebay, head to their site at [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com) and click on the sellers link. This page walks you through the process of listing your item. Ebay charges start at \$.25 to list each item, depending on how high you set the starting bid. They also charge a small percentage of the final selling price if it sells. You can also set a reserve, so that you don't have to sell the item until the bidding gets to a price that you set that is hidden from the bidders.

Need Some Stuff? After you have sold your stuff and have extra money (and some new found room in your home), how about buying someone else's good stuff they just listed on ebay?

Not surprisingly, most users get started on ebay as a buyer, and the depth of the offerings are truly outstanding. If you are looking for anything from the commonplace to the esoteric, you'll probably find it for sale on ebay. It is world's attic for sale, and there are always surprises.

Auctions usually take a week, so there is plenty of time to place your bid, and you can watch the bidding escalate as time passes. Usually there is a flurry of bidding just before the auction closes, and things sometimes get crazy at the end. Or ebay crashes. Kinda like life.

While ebay is not the only auction house online, it is the most diverse. For instance, Butterfield and Butterfield has online auctions for fine art and antiques, and Egghead is there for computers and software. These sites actually sell and ship merchandise they own or have on consignment, so you know who your seller really is. For reliable merchandise and product guarantees, these can be a great idea, but for

the young business of selling anything online, give me the rag-tag wild west of ebay anyday!

Artist Donna Barnes-Roberts has essays on art, examples of her paintings, links to art-related sites, art clubs in the Pasadena, area, and a little humor, at: [www.barnesroberts.com/art/](http://www.barnesroberts.com/art/). You can reach her at [donna@barnesroberts.com](mailto:donna@barnesroberts.com). §

## *e-Bay? I Love It!*

**By Becky White  
Pasadena IBM Users Group**

I have been using e-Bay to sell our antiques for about a month now. And I LOVE IT!

With e-Bay, you are using them as a vehicle to sell or buy stuff, but the deals are worked out between the seller and the buyer directly. E-Bay charges a very moderate listing fee for each item listed and a moderate percentage of the item sold, ONLY IF IT SELLS. If an item does not sell, you are only responsible for the listing fee, which is from \$0.25 to \$2.00, based on your starting value or your reserve price.

Did Your Item Sell Quickly? E-Bay asks you to set a specified period of time for each item listed.

The choices are 3 days, 5 days, or 7 days. You may be able to ask for a few more days, but most people go with the 3, 5, or 7-day scenario. So, if you get any bids, items will sell as quickly as you choose.

Did it Sell for the Amount Asked? When listing an item, you (the seller) define the opening bid required, so that no one can bid below your requested opening price. In addition, there is an option to set a "reserve" price for each item, which sets a minimum bid that you are

willing to accept. Unless an item is especially valuable, most people do not use the reserve option. For some reason, it turns people off!?

**Do You Get Paid Right Away?** Since e-Bay is only a conduit, the money changes hands directly between the seller and the buyer. When an auction closes, the buyer and seller have three days to Email each other. Email addresses are supplied by e-Bay. The seller tells the buyer how much shipping and insurance will be and what the total due is. In most transactions, the buyer pays shipping and insurance up front.

When the seller receives the check, then the item can be shipped, however, most sellers wait 10 days or so until the checks clear the bank. A seller can request specific types of payments, like only money orders (safe to ship next day) or visa or checks or COD or whatever works for the seller. The seller then packs and ships the item.

**Any Hassles...Or was it Fun?** I have had a blast selling and buying stuff this way! I have made many Email friends and even have an Email pal in England, because of some of the deals I have made. Many of the people are incredibly friendly and personable! All, so far, have been good about paying on time and pretty good about communicating through Email. A few times, I have had dealings with people who are not accustomed to using Email and they “forget” to check their mail. When they realize that they need to read their mail, then the money comes quickly.

Over all, I have LOVED every part of my e-Bay experience with the possible exception of having to pack the darn stuff and take it to the post office! Stan helps out in that area a lot.

Becky White is known as “whitebear” on e-Bay. §

## **Irish Luck Rules!**

**by Judy Lococo, APCUG**

I have often told anyone within earshot that I'm not all that smart, but I'm soooo lucky! Now I have to believe my own hype, it seems.

I have recently switched from Outlook Express to Outlook, because I need it to synchronize with a Pocket PC that I received for a birthday present. It's not all that different & I can export contact information, calendars, tasks, notes, etc. into the hand-held device. But there are a few things that are different, so I must admit that I'm not as proficient with Outlook as I probably should be.

I received a copy of the Homepage virus/worm/whatever the thing is, from a friend who had just sent me a message. She sometimes sends a link to a website, so I wasn't all that concerned. I did notice that it had a .vb? extension on it, but who am I to argue with Microsoft? Besides, I had the latest, greatest Norton AntiVirus & Firewall on my machine, so I was safe, right? Yeah, right...

Of course I wanted to see the website she had sent me, so I clicked on the attachment. It took a moment for me to pick my chin up off the keyboard, as this was not the usual type of thing she sent. Close, though.. <vbg> But I still had not grasped the significance of what had just happened, as there had been absolutely nothing mentioned about it in all the tech news media, or any of the antiviral email notifications I routinely receive from Panda Software, etc. I closed Internet Explorer, and now the lucky part of this article comes into play.

I was through with the email replies <whew> so I decided to get some "real" work done. I asked Outlook to close, & it asked me if I was certain this was what I wanted to do, since I still had messages in my outbox. That was definitely odd, as I was certain I had already sent out

all my replies. But it was possible that the ISP server was being temperamental, so I checked my outbox. There were over 100 messages in there, all with attachments, and I knew then that I'd been had. Before Outlook could throw these out to all my kith & kin, I deleted them, and then went searching for information on this nasty little beast. I could find nothing about a Homepage virus on Symantec's website. I was finally able to find a generic article about Visual Basic Script generators that were used to inflict mayhem on unsuspecting computer users.

Fortunately, Homepage was more or less benign, except for possibly embarrassing you badly. However, all of you, who receive email from me, thank your lucky stars I'm Irish! You could be trying to explain to your religious leader why you went to that pornographic web page?? And I'd swear I had absolutely nothing to do with it...

## Random Access -

April 2001  
Bruce Preston, Moderator

Members who are unable to attend the General Meeting may submit questions to [askdacs@aol.com](mailto:askdacs@aol.com) --they will be presented at the meeting, and the response(s) will be placed in the Random Access column.

**Q.** (askdacs) I have been using Windows 98 on my 700MHz Pentium w/ 128MB of RAM. Periodically I receive an error message noting that my memory resources have dropped to too low a level. This is detected by First Aid 97 software. It reports that GDI resources

are below 20%, User resources are below 20%, System resources are below 20%, and Free Memory below 2%. What levels should I set for triggers, and what should I do?

**A.** The consensus was to stop using First Aid 97--it has problems, and it consumes the very resources that it is complaining about. If you want to check to see where things are, just use the System Monitor that comes within Windows 95, 98, Me, NT and 2K. We don't recommend running it all the time, but rather as a check tool.

**Q.** (askdacs) In Win 98, my mouse has a tendency to freeze up for about five or six seconds. This is usually a minor inconvenience, but if I am using a sound-editing program (CoolEdit) to record music to a CD from a DAT it drops the music. I have to start recording at the beginning again.

**A.** The first question was "Does he have a fast enough processor for conversion and burning?" We don't know. We will assume that you do. The next thing to check is to make sure that DMA (Direct Memory Access) is activated for the devices (hard disk and CDRW) involved. This means the devices need not bother the CPU for memory to device transfer. Lastly, it was recommended that you SCANDISK, then DEFRAG, then establish a very large fixed size swap file rather than the default dynamic swap file managed by Windows. The swap file size is controlled in Control Panel / System / Performance. Lastly, you might try slowing the write speed of the CDRW down from 16X if that is what you are trying to burn at.

**Q.** In Windows 2000 I do the shutdown request, it shuts down, but then it powers up on its own. What's going on?

**A.** Some motherboards support "Wake On Lan" and/or "Wake On Modem" which permit activity on the network card or the modem to wake the machine up. If you don't want this feature, you have to go into the BIOS and disable it. Follow up revealed that you have a cable modem--and even though you have a firewall, yes, even an innocuous 'ping' will tickle the Wake On Lan capability.

**Q.** I am running Windows 98 and System Tools reveals that the Kernel usage is high even though I am not really doing anything. Should Kernel usage be high when the machine is idle?

**A.** No. It should be down under 5%. We suggest that you go get STARTSTOP, a completely free download from <http://www.tfi-technology.com/startstop.htm> and install it. It will give you the opportunity to control what gets started at boot time. Not to scare you, but if you are on a cable modem or a DSL line, you may want to check to make sure that you haven't been hit by the "Bymer Internet Worm" which uses "spare" CPU cycles to try to break a coded message by brute-force calculations--it works its way into machines through the internet and then tries to solve a puzzle posed by an encryption vendor. If your anti-virus signature files are up to date, it should have found it.

**Q.** Everything I read tells me that having TEMP files can really slow your machine down. Why do they exist, and why don't they disappear? Why isn't there an automatic way to get rid of them?

**A.** Anything that is in your TEMP directory (C:\TEMP or C:\WINDOWS\TEMP) should be fair game for deletion immediately after booting. If you look at the creation date of a file in the temp folders, and the date and time is earlier than when you booted the machine--the file may be deleted. Files are often left there after doing

an install, or if a program is shut down abnormally. Once you start an application, such as a word processor, it will create temporary files, and may hold them 'open' which means that you can't (and shouldn't!) delete them until the application closes.

**Q.** Is anyone using the AT&T internet service at \$4.95/month? Comments?

**A.** Several people reported that it is just fine--if you can stand the advertising. You get 150 hours/month, six email addresses, and 60MB of space. You can't get rid of the advertising; it is controlled by the dial-up connection for the service. If you get rid of the dial-up connection, or use a different dial-up connection, you can't get in.

**Q.** I have an IBM Aptiva with Windows 98. Should I leave it on when I am not using it, or just turn off the screen, or use the "suspend mode" option?

**A.** There have been problems with "suspend mode" where it won't start up properly, perhaps because the hard drive doesn't come up to ready speed in time to reload the suspend image. We suggest that you leave the machine on all day, but turn it off when it is not going to be used for a long time, such as overnight. There are certain stresses put on the hard disk, the power supply and circuit boards when you start them up from a 'cold' state--enough that it is probably more cost and energy efficient to leave it on and idle. If your monitor has an energy saving feature that blanks the screen (rather than just activate a screen saver), then use it.

**Q.** Is there any place where I can get a monitor repaired? Is it worth it?

**A.** There had been a place in Brookfield that did it, but we haven't seen him lately. There is also a company that shows up at some of the local 'computer fairs' that sells refurbished displays, but we haven't seen him much lately either. That's probably because the price for displays has come down so much that it just doesn't make economic sense to repair them when they go bad. An exception is that you can sometimes find 'new' refurbished units--these are displays that were returned to the vendors immediately after being sold and repaired. They can not be sold as new, and are thus sold at a deep discount. You can sometimes find these on the internet, or at the occasional computer fair.

**Q.** The keypad portion of my IBM desktop machine's keyboard will not let me reliably type the '0' key when I am in a DOS application. This causes a real problem when we are putting in costs. For Windows applications there has never been a problem. It is not a USB keyboard. Any suggestions?

**A.** The idea that we could come up with is that perhaps you have inadvertently loaded a keyboard macro program in your DOS environment--such as the old SideKick, or Lightning applications--with these you can assign a sequence of characters to an arbitrary key and use it to emit one or more characters. This can even be done with the ANSI.SYS driver.

**Dear Tech Support:** Last year I upgraded from Girlfriend 7.0 to Wife 1.0 and noticed that the new program began unexpected child processing that took up a lot of new space and valuable resources. No mention of this phenomenon was included in the product brochure. In addition, Wife 1.0 installs itself into all other programs and Launches during system initialization, where it monitors all other system activity. Applications such as Poker Night 10.3, Drunken Boys Night 2.5 and Saturday Football 5.0 no longer run, crashing the system

whenever selected. I cannot seem to keep wife 1.0 in the background while attempting to run some of my other favorite applications. I am thinking about going back to Girlfriend 7.0, but the uninstall does not work on this program. Can you please help me !!!??? Thanks,

A TROUBLED USER -----

**Dear TROUBLED USER:** This is a very common problem men complain about, but is mostly due to a primary misconception. Many people upgrade from Girlfriend 7.0 to Wife 1.0 with the idea that Wife 1.0 is merely a UTILITIES & ENTERTAINMENT program. Wife 1.0 is an OPERATING SYSTEM and designed by its creator to run everything. It is unlikely you would be able to purge Wife 1.0 and still convert back to Girlfriend 7.0. Hidden operating files within your system would cause Girlfriend 7.0 to emulate Wife 1.0 so nothing is gained. It is Impossible to uninstall, delete, or purge the program files from the system once installed. You cannot go back to Girlfriend 7.0 because Wife 1.0 is not designed to do this. Some have tried to install Girlfriend 8.0 or Wife 2.0 but end up with more problems than the original system. Look in your manual under "Warnings-Alimony/Child support". I recommend you keep Wife 1.0 and deal with the situation. Suggest installing background application program C:\YES DEAR to alleviate software augmentation. Having installed Wife 1.0 myself, I might also suggest you read the entire section regarding General Partnership Faults (GPFs). You must assume all responsibility for faults and problems that might occur, regardless of their cause. The best course of action will be to enter the command C:\APOLOGIZE. In any case avoid excessive use of C:\YES DEAR because ultimately you may have to give the APOLOGIZE Command before the operating system will return to normal. The system will run smoothly as long as you take the blame for all the GPFs. Wife 1.0 is a great program, but very high-maintenance. Consider buying additional software to improve the performance of Wife 1.0. I recommend Flowers 3.1 and Diamonds 2K. Do not, under any circumstances install Secretary with Short Skirt 3.3.

This is not a supported application for Wife 1.0 and is likely to cause irreversible damage to the operating system. Best of Luck, Tech Support

Bruce Preston is president of West Mountain Systems, a consultancy in Ridgefield, CT, specializing in database applications. Members may send queries to Bruce at [askdacs@aol.com](mailto:askdacs@aol.com). Responses will be published in the next issue of dacs.doc

## TREK ThumbDrive

Reviewed by M. K. Carol Lee

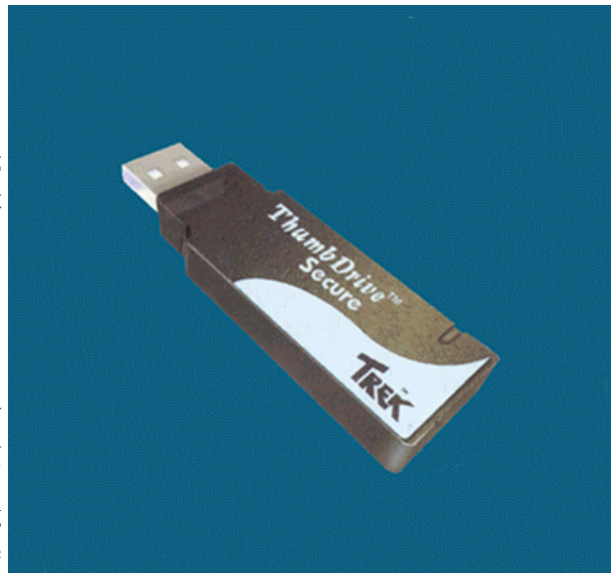
Trekstor USA, Inc.  
2630 Castello Way  
Santa Clara, CA 95051  
[www.thumbdrive.com](http://www.thumbdrive.com)

At A Glance Rating: \*\*\* Price: \$49.95 for 8MB version System Requirements: Pentium 100 MHz or better computer with USB Ports, Microsoft Windows 98 or higher.

Pro: Cute and tiny storage device.

Con: Pricey.

ThumbDrive is a removable storage device with a self-contained USB interface for desktop and notebooks computers about the size of a thumb [57 mm (L) x 17 mm (W) x 10 mm (H)] and weighing about 30 grams. It comes in a variety of storage capacities from 8 to 512 MB.



The device is easy to install and use. When I plugged it into my computer's USB port, the green indicator light on the device came on and Windows' plug and play wizard detected that I had added a new USB device. Prompted by the Windows' wizard, I installed the drivers for the device that were provided on a floppy disk. Once the drivers were installed, the device became another disk drive in my computer system. The only snag I discovered in using it with my work computer, which is networked to over 10 network drives, was that upon reboot the computer did not recognize the device unless I unplugged it from and replugged it back to the USB port. Only when I manually specified an unused drive letter for the device was Windows able to see it after a reboot. I did not run into any problems using the device on my home desktop or laptop, which are not networked to multiple drives. File transfers were relatively quick compared to that of a floppy disk. The green indicator light on the device flashes to indicate when data is accessed or transferred.

The device includes a cap for the USB interface when it is not in use. I predict that I will most likely lose this cap over time just as I have a tendency to lose caps off of pens. I would recommend that the case be redesigned such that it can slide over the USB interface when it is not in use rather than to use a cap (similar to that of a retractable pen). In addition, I would recommend the addition of a key chain ring so that the device can be attached to keys or a key chain. Because this device is so small, it could easily be misplaced.

Although pricey, the device would be extremely useful for mobile users needing to transfer data from one computer to another without having to lug floppies or zip drives around. According to the manufacturer, data can be stored in the ThumbDrive for approximately ten years, and the device should be able to withstand



vibration and operate under extremes of humidity, magnetic fields and extreme temperatures.

(Editor - I thought SNEAKER net was gone!)

## Reveal Codes

**By James Alexander**  
**Utah Computer Society Magazine - July 2001**

In 1997, I had a VB script program, another user had created and made freeware so that MS-Word users could enjoy most of the advantages of the WP Reveal Codes feature. Sadly, I have not been able to find the script code. If I do find the script I will post it via the WEB site <http://www.ucs.org/>. However, I was aware of a commercial product which was announced in 2000, and due to be available July 2001, that will provide the true functionality of Reveal Codes for MS-Word. Here is a blurb about Crosseyes, and then following the best of how to make do for free simulators that can be used in MS-Word 95 onward. The ability to edit is not available with these work-arounds.

CrossEyes Reveals Code for MS-Word from Levit & James

<http://www.levitjames.com>

LAWYERS forced to migrate from Corel's WordPerfect to Microsoft Word can stop whining about the lack of reveal codes in Word, with the release of CrossEyes, from Levit & James. An interface for Word that reveals the underlying code structure, it allows users to see all the coding that affects the formatting of text, says the Leesburg, VA., company. The coding appears in a window at the bottom of a

document, clearly showing all the formatting that defines how a Word document behaves, says L&J.

The company also debuted Stylizer, an editing tool that allows Word users to reformat documents, with application of styles. It also allows automation of routine formatting tasks. Leesburg, VA, June 15, 2001 - Levit & James, Inc., has released the beta of its new CrossEyes product. CrossEyes is the first software utility which will "reveal the codes" in Word. The beta will be available at the firm's web site, in June. Release 1.0 will be available for sale in July 2001. "CrossEyes solves the biggest complaint of Word users: figuring out what features in Word have been used to format text. Unlike WordPerfect, which has a reveal codes feature, Word does not provide a native feature where a typist can see all of the codes and formatting options used to format text, in-line with the text. CrossEyes provides this capability, and a number of other editing and navigation tools, that simplify the use of Word."

When a typist clicks on the CrossEyes button in Word, a window is created at the bottom of the Word document, which shows all formatting information, in-line with the text. Each of the formatting options in the Word object model, such as character formatting, paragraph formatting, section breaks, etc., is shown in a different color. In addition, a typist can view table information, such as the cell address and all forms of field codes, each in their own color. CrossEyes shows each formatting option the way it is stored in Word. For example, paragraph information, such as a style, is shown next to the paragraph mark character, both in the same color. Information associated with sections, such as columns or page margins, are shown with the section break.

CrossEyes will support all recent versions of Word, starting with Word 97.

Single unit pricing starts at \$100. Discounts are available for large orders and site licenses.

<http://www.levitjames.com/crosseyes3.htm>

## Simulate Reveal Codes in Word

The closest you can get to the reveal codes is to display the complete formatting information that Word is applying to a character or paragraph. You can do this by following these steps:

Press Shift+F1. (In Word 6 or Word 95 you can also click on the toolbar tool that shows a mouse pointer with a question mark. In Word 97 you can choose What's This? from the Help menu.) This causes the mouse pointer to change to an arrow with a question mark beside it.

Point to the character or paragraph in question and click the mouse button.

When you do this, Word displays a "balloon" that looks like the dialog balloons used in some cartoons. The balloon contains detailed information about the formatting of the character you pointed to, as well as the paragraph in which the character appears. You now have two options:

Click on a different character to see more formatting information.

Press Esc to make the balloons go away and return the mouse pointer to normal.

Word 2000 Concepts explain why there is no Native Word Reveal Codes for WordPerfect Users

Editing and formatting text - Unlike the formatting codes used in WordPerfect, Word applies formatting directly to text, so text in a Word document displays exactly as it prints.

Correcting mistakes - Word users can correct formatting errors by using the Undo command (Edit menu), or they can troubleshoot problems by displaying a description of the formatting applied to selected text.

Editing and Formatting Text - Word 2000 follows a paragraph based formatting model, which associates formatting properties with objects.

In Word, paragraph formats apply to the entire paragraph. A Formatting guide/template is applied directly to the text. If text is cut and pasted in a new location, its attributes move with it. Character formatting, such as bold, italic, and underline, is attached to the text characters to which it is applied. Paragraph formatting, such as indentation and tab stop locations, is stored in a nonprinting paragraph mark ( ¶ ) at the end of each paragraph. Whereas WordPerfect uses templates also, the templates can be amended or altered without conflict, which is where Reveal Codes provide very finite control over what is or is not formatted.

## Working with Paragraphs in Word

When a user presses ENTER, Word automatically inserts a paragraph mark and applies the current formats to the next paragraph. If a user deletes a paragraph mark, the text merges with the next paragraph in the document and takes on its paragraph formatting.

Tip To display paragraph marks, tab stops, and other nonprinting characters, click the Show/Hide button (Standard toolbar).

## Displaying Formatting Information in Word

Word users can find formatting information in the following locations.

To find this Word 2000 formatting information Use this command

Character formatting - Formatting toolbar (View menu, Toolbars submenu) or Font dialog box (Format menu)

Paragraph formatting - Formatting toolbar or Paragraph dialog box (Format menu)

Nonprinting characters - Show/Hide button (Standard toolbar)

Page as it appears when printed - Page Layout (View menu)

All formatting at cursor location - What's This? (Help menu) In MS-Word - Reveal Formats is a graphical way to troubleshoot document formatting, similar to using reveal codes in WordPerfect. In Word, clicking the What's This? command (Help menu) and then

clicking in a document opens a window describing the formatting at the cursor location.

Similar to Find & Replace, die-hard WordPerfect« users (who wouldn't mind switching to Word except you'd miss the reveal codes feature), Word has a feature you might be able to get used to. It's sort of a combination of features - Paragraph and formatting ON/OFF and the Find Formatting Codes. To turn on the show formatting, click on the paragraph button M on the Standard toolbar. This feature will display where you have pressed return, where you have pressed space bar and where you have inserted manual page breaks. The Find feature has an option for choosing the codes you want to locate. Open the Edit menu, choose Find, click the More button, then click the Special button. Locate the code or formatting option you want to find and choose it from the list. You can delete the codes as you find them, if necessary.

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## Connecting Your PC to Your Stereo

By Bruce Fries  
author of *The MP3 and Internet Audio*

If you've taken the time to put your music collection on your computer, you'll probably want to listen to it through a good stereo system. Even if your stereo isn't in the same room as your computer, there are several options for connecting the two, including direct analog cabling, USB Audio devices, wireless audio transmitters, and network audio receivers.

The most basic concept of connecting audio equipment is that inputs must always be connected to outputs. Sometimes you will still get sound if you mistakenly connect a sound card output to an output of a stereo receiver. When in doubt, connect the sound card output to the CD jack on your stereo-it's always an input.

Connect high-level (also called line-level) outputs to high-level inputs, and connect low-level outputs (such as a microphone) to low-level (Mic) inputs. Do not use the receiver's phono input jack because this is designed for a very low-level signal and has a special equalization circuit. Avoid using the sound card's headphone or microphone jack to connect to other equipment unless you have no other choice.

Most consumer sound cards have 1/8" mini phone jacks. A mono jack is used for the microphone input, and stereo jacks are used for the line-in, line-out and headphone. Better sound cards may have separate RCA jacks for the left and right channels. These are the same kind of jacks found on most home stereo systems. High-end sound cards may also have connectors for digital inputs and outputs.

The simplest connection between a computer and a stereo system is to run a cable directly from the sound card's line output to a line input of your stereo. To record from your stereo system to your computer, connect a cable from a line-out (or record) jack on your receiver to the line-in jack on your sound card.

If your sound card's line output is an 1/8" stereo mini-phone jack, you'll need an adapter cable (male 1/8" stereo mini-phone to dual male RCA). These cables can be purchased from most consumer electronics stores, such as Radio Shack, Best Buy and Fry's Electronics.

USB audio devices perform the basic functions of a sound card, but outside of the PC, and are less likely to pick up noise from the PC's electronics. USB audio devices can be used for both recording and playback and are a good solution for notebook computer users who want higher quality sound.

The Roland UA-30 ([www.edirol.com](http://www.edirol.com)) is a flexible USB audio device that supports both Macs and PCs. The UA-30 works great and includes just about every type of input and output connector you might possibly need.

Wireless audio devices can transmit a stereo audio signal up to 300 feet. These devices typically include a transmitter and a receiver with standard RCA line-level input and output jacks. Wireless audio devices provide more flexibility than hard cabled connections, but are much more prone to interference compared to other types of connections.

The MP3 Anywhere Digital Audio Sender by X10 ([www.X10.com](http://www.X10.com)) is a good wireless audio device for most users. It sells for under \$100 and uses the 2.4 GHz spectrum to reduce interference and provide a high quality connection. The MP3 Anywhere also includes a remote control and software, which allow you to control most popular player programs.

The ideal way to transmit audio from your PC throughout your house is by streaming the audio from your PC via a network. A network audio connection eliminates the loss of high frequencies, interference and hum typical of analog cable and wireless connections.

The Rio Receiver ([www.riohome.com](http://www.riohome.com)) is a very capable network audio device that allows you to access individual songs and playlists from your PC anywhere you have a telephone or network jack. The Rio has an LCD interface that displays song title, artist name and other information, and also includes a remote control.

Whatever your choice of PC to stereo connection, you will be able to use your computer as a digital jukebox and take full advantage of the latest digital music technologies to play high-quality music anywhere in your house.

For more information on connecting your PC to your stereo, pick up a copy of The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook (\$19.95) from

[www.TeamComBooks.com](http://www.TeamComBooks.com)

or read it online for free at [www.MP3Handbook.com](http://www.MP3Handbook.com).

Bruce Fries is a writer, technology consultant and entrepreneur who lives in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is an associate of the Audio Engineering Society and the founder of TeamCom Books, a customer-focused publishing company that combines the best of traditional print publishing with new media, such as e-books and the Internet.

### Getting Started With Internet Music

By Bruce Fries - author of The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook

This article provides an overview of what you need to record and play music on your computer and how to get music from the Internet.

Introduction New audio compression technologies, such as MP3, allow you to use your computer as a digital jukebox that can hold thousands of CD-quality songs. You can quickly find and play any song with a click of a mouse and never have to worry about tapes wearing out or records getting scratched. Instead of spending hours making tapes or programming a CD changer, you can compile customized playlists in minutes.

Audio compression also makes it practical to download music from the Internet, where you can access thousands of songs from artists all over the world. With MP3, you can download a four-minute song in less than 15 minutes (with a 33.6 kbps modem), compared to more than 3 hours for the same song in CD audio format. Now you can sample a wide variety of music from the comfort of your home and find some great music from independent artists you might not otherwise be exposed to.

Music on the Internet On the Internet, you'll find music in the form of files that can be downloaded to your computer; music that you can listen to as it's "streamed" over the Internet (similar to the way you

listen to AM and FM radio), and physical media, such as records, tapes and CDs, that you can purchase and have shipped to you.

Downloadable music is simply music in the form of a computer file (usually MP3 or WMA format) that you can download from a Web site to your computer. Downloadable music can be played on your computer, a portable digital audio player like the Rio 800, or newer CD players the Rio Volt ([www.riohome.com](http://www.riohome.com)).

Streaming audio enables you to listen to digital music without having to wait for the entire file to download. Streaming audio is used by many online music stores to play short clips from songs so you can listen to samples before they you the record or CD. To listen to streaming audio, you need a sound card and an internet connection.

Digital Audio Formats MP3 (technically, MPEG Audio Layer-III) is a standard format for compressing digital audio. MP3 squeezes audio files to about one tenth of their original size, while maintaining close to CD quality.

RealAudio was the first widely used system for streaming audio and video over the Internet. It is a proprietary format, but it is used by many online music stores for sample clips of songs, and by many Internet radio sites.

WAV is the default format for digital audio on Windows PCs. WAV files usually contain PCM format audio, which means they are uncompressed and take up a lot of space (10MB/minute for CD quality audio).

Windows Media Audio (WMA) is a proprietary format developed by Microsoft. WMA is supported by most full-featured player programs and by many portable players

Internet Radio Internet radio is a form of streaming audio, usually in Real Audio or Windows Media Audio format. MP3 can also be streamed, but is more commonly used as a downloadable format. Spinner ([www.Spinner.com](http://www.Spinner.com)) provides a nice tuner interface with access to dozens of stations and programmable presets. Sites like

Live365.com and Radio.Sonicnet.com allow you to set up a personal radio station, which you customize by selecting the artists and the types of music you want to hear.

Hardware Requirements To listen to music on your PC, you need a sound card. To play MP3 files you need at least a Pentium PC (133mHz or faster recommended) or a PowerPC Macintosh. A CD Recordable (CR-R or CD-RW) drive is recommended for recording audio (Redbook format) or MP3 (data format) CDs.

You will need plenty of RAM, lots of free disk space, and a modem to download songs or listen to music streamed over the Internet. To convert your existing CDs into MP3 files, you'll need a CD-ROM drive that is capable of digital audio extraction (DAE)-commonly called ripping.

Software Requirements To play MP3 files, you need a player program or a portable player that supports MP3. The latest versions of the Windows and Mac operating systems come with built-in players, but you'll be better off using an all-in-one program like MusicMatch Jukebox ([www.musicmatch.com](http://www.musicmatch.com)) because it has more features and is easier to use, even for non-technical users

MusicMatch Jukebox includes everything you need to create, organize and play MP3 files. MusicMatch supports ripping from CDs, analog recording from records and tapes, and burning MP3 files directly to a CD. MusicMatch also automatically organizes you MP3 files into separate folders by artist, album, genre and other categories.

To listen to Internet radio you need a program that supports streaming audio. At the very least, you should install the latest versions of the RealPlayer ([www.real.com](http://www.real.com)), Windows Media Player ([www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia](http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia)) and a full-featured audio player, such as MusicMatch Jukebox. These programs will allow you to listen to the majority of Internet radio sites.

Downloading Music To obtain songs in MP3 format, you can download them from the Internet, create them from prerecorded music

or obtain pre-made MP3 CDs. Web sites like MP3.com and EMusic.com offer thousands of downloadable songs in MP3 format. Many of these songs are free, and those that aren't usually cost only a dollar or so.

Napster ([www.napster.com](http://www.napster.com)) is an MP3 file sharing service that maintains a central directory of shared MP3 files that exist on individual user's computers. Users search by song title or artist name and Napster displays links to matching files on the computers of other users. Each link lists the file's resolution and size, and the speed of the user's Internet connection. The first user then selects and downloads the MP3 file directly from the other user's computer.

**Creating Your Own MP3 Files** To create MP3 files from records or tapes you'll need to record them in real-time, using a sound card. You should use a good stand-alone recording program like Cool Edit 2000 ([www.cooledit.com](http://www.cooledit.com)), since the sound recording applications that come with most computers are fairly limited. Cool Edit also has a nice audio clean-up plug-in that can remove clicks, pops and hiss from the sound before you convert it to MP3 or burn it to a CD.

When you record using Cool Edit, the song will end up as an uncompressed WAV (pronounced wave). The advantage of a WAV file is that you have the option of editing it to adjust the volume or trim off unwanted silence before it is converted to MP3 or burned to a CD. MusicMatch can also record from analog sources like records and tapes, but lacks the advanced editing features of Cool Edit.

WAV files can be recorded directly to an Audio CD or converted to MP3 files. The process of creating an MP3 file is called encoding. Encoding compresses the audio by removing sounds that most people can't hear. The size and sound quality of the MP3 file is a function of the bit-rate used-the higher the bit-rate, the larger the file and the better the sound quality.

To create MP3 files from an audio CD, the best method is to bypass the sound card and rip the audio directly to your hard disk. Ripping is

better than recording through a sound card because it results in a perfect copy without added noise or distortion. Because it is a digital process, ripping is also much faster than recording. For example, a system with a fast CD-ROM drive can rip a four-minute song in less than 30 seconds. Recording the same song through a sound card will always take at least four minutes.

Most audio CDs do not contain information, such as artist names and album and song titles. To save you from having to enter this information manually, programs, such as MusicMatch, can automatically get this information from the CDDB ([www.cddb.com](http://www.cddb.com)) and use it to automatically name the files.

**Organizing Your Music** Now that you've downloaded or created MP3 files, you need a way to organize them. MP3 files can be organized in one big folder that contains all files, or they can be grouped in separate directories with similar music. It's up to you to decide which method to use, although if you have more than a few hundred songs you should organize them in separate directories.

Playlists are optional text files that contain the name and location of each audio file. Each playlist is like a tape with unlimited capacity, where songs can be added, deleted or moved around without the need to re-record the tape. Playlists can be created and read by text editors and programs like MusicMatch.

**Playing Your Music** You can play songs from Windows Explorer or Mac Finder by double-clicking on them. If your system is set up properly, this should automatically launch the player software (if it's not already running). You can also play individual songs by launching the player and using its "File Open" function.

If you have created playlists, you can load one into MusicMatch, set the "repeat" mode on, and sit back and enjoy hours of continuous music. You can use the player controls to jump forward or backwards in the list, and you can click on individual songs to play them out of

order. MusicMatch's playlist manager allows you to add, delete and change the order of songs and even save the playlist to a new file.

Recording Your Own CDs CD recordable drives (CD-R and CD-RW) can be used to record create music CDs with compilations of songs from different albums and to back up data from your computer's hard disk. CDs are usually recorded in either audio or data formats.

Audio format CDs have the advantage of being playable in most CD players, though the capacity is limited to 74 minutes of music (approximately 18 four-minute songs). MP3 files are just data files as far as a CD recorder is concerned, so you will need to record them to a data format CD.

With MP3 files, you can record more than 12 hours (about 200 songs) of high-quality music on a single CD, in less than 20 minutes with a 4X CD-R drive. You can also use MusicMatch Jukebox to uncompress MP3 files and record the music to an audio format CD.

For More Information For more information on recording and playing music on your computer, pick up a copy of The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook (\$19.95) from [www.TeamComBooks.com](http://www.TeamComBooks.com) or read it online for free at [www.MP3Handbook.com](http://www.MP3Handbook.com) .

Bruce Fries is a writer, technology consultant and entrepreneur who lives in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is an associate of the Audio Engineering Society and the founder of TeamCom Books, a customer-focused publishing company that combines the best of traditional print publishing with new media, such as e-books and the Internet.

Vinyl LP to Audio CD or MP3 Files

By Bruce Fries - author of The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook.

With a good sound recording and editing program you can take those old scratchy LPs and 78s record them through your sound card, filter out all those clicks and pops, and then burn the music to an audio CD or store it as an MP3 file. The following process also works for

recording audio from other external sources, such as cassette tapes and microphones.

Use a program like CoolEdit 2000 ([www.cooledit.com](http://www.cooledit.com)) for the PC or Peak ([www.bias-inc.com](http://www.bias-inc.com)) for the Mac. Demo versions of both programs can be downloaded for free.

Connect Your PC to Your Stereo: The first step is to connect an adapter cable from the tape out (or record) jack of your stereo receiver to the line input of your sound card. These cables can be purchased from most consumer electronics stores, such as Radio Shack, Best Buy and Fry's Electronics. Newer turntables with line-out jacks can be connected directly to the sound card.

Set the Sampling Rate and Resolution: The next step is to create a new file in the sound editing program. If you intend to create an audio CD, you must choose a sample rate of 44,100, two channels (stereo) and a resolution of 16 bits. This will create a file that takes up approximately 10MB of space for every minute recorded, so you will need plenty of free disk space. For voice or music to be embedded in a Web page, you can use a lower sample rate, a single channel and 8 bit resolution to create a much smaller file.

Set the Recording Level: Now play part of the track and use the Volume Control program to set your recording levels. In Windows, the first screen of the Volume Control program is for playback levels. To get to the Recording Level screen, choose Properties from the Options menu and select the checkbox for Recording. Make sure the checkbox for the Line-In volume control is also selected. Click OK and the Record Level screen will appear.

Set the Monitor Record Level option in your recording program to On, and, as the track plays, adjust the adjust the slider for Line-In so the level meter shows a strong signal, but not so strong as any peaks cause the meter to go into the red area.

Record the Audio: Lift the stylus and queue up the beginning of the track. Click the Record button in your recording program and then

lower the needle. Make sure no other programs are running while you record. When the track is finished, click the Stop button and lift the stylus.

**Remove Clicks, Pops or Hiss:** Play back the track to hear how it sounds. Trim off any silence at the beginning and ends of the track. If you have an audio clean-up plug, use it to automatically remove any clicks, pops and hiss. If you don't have an audio clean-up plug-in, you can zoom in to each click or pop, select an adjacent cycle of the waveform at the zero crossing points, copy it to the clipboard, and then paste it over the cycle that contains the click. Listen to the track again and run the hiss removal if necessary.

**Normalize the Volume:** Normalize the track to adjust the volume up or down so that all tracks will play at a similar level. A value of 97% usually works well if your software normalizes by peak level. More advanced programs, such as CoolEdit Pro, can normalize by average levels, which is much more accurate. At this point, you may want to add a fade-in or fade-out. Some CD recording programs, such as Nero ([www.nero.com](http://www.nero.com)) can automatically crossfade tracks as the CD is recorded.

**Save to a WAV or MP3 File:** If you intend to record the track to an audio CD, save it to a PCM format WAV file (PC) or an AIFF file (Mac). Save the file to MP3 format if you want to play it from your computer or on a portable player.

**Record an Audio CD:** Now you can use a CD-Recordable drive to create a Red Book audio CD that can be played in most CD players. Avoid using CD-RW media because it will not be compatible with most CD players.

It pays to experiment with a short clip before you record and clean-up an entire album. Find out which settings work best for different types of recordings and write these down for future reference.

Many of these old 78s and LPs are irreplaceable, so it pays to preserve them in a digital format. If you ever have recorded a cassette or

reel-to-reel tape, you should be comfortable with this process and delighted with the ability to improve the quality of the audio.

For more information on recording from vinyl LPs to audio CDs or MP3 files, pick up a copy of *The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook* (\$19.95) from [www.TeamComBooks.com](http://www.TeamComBooks.com) or read it online for free at [www.MP3Handbook.com](http://www.MP3Handbook.com).

Bruce Fries is a writer, technology consultant and entrepreneur who lives in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is an associate of the Audio Engineering Society and the founder of TeamCom Books, a customer-focused publishing company that combines the best of traditional print publishing with new media, such as e-books and the Internet.

## Learning about Broadband

by Ron Feiertag

On May 16, 2001 about two hundred people converged at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco California for the Convergence 2001 Conference. In other words, we met to learn more about the present and future of technology's impact on information and entertainment, with an emphasis on broadband. The timeliness of this topic was underscored by the recent announcement that movie stars Ben Affleck, Matt Damon and a couple of other people formed a film/television/Internet venture called LivePlanet. Convergence 2001 was a two day event organized by the Carmel Group, a company that holds conferences, does consulting, and publishes newsletters.

Anyone with a computer and a modem can get a considerable amount of entertainment from the Internet with the use of those devices. This



is much more and much better entertainment than was available years ago, even if the same equipment we have today would have been available then, because more content is being created all of the time. Even better results are possible if you obtain faster Internet access with more bandwidth than the dial up service that most people use. Broadband is a buzzword that refers to faster Internet access than is available by using a modem. Technically, Broadband refers to the simultaneous transmission of voice, data, and video signals over a communications network.

The benefits of Broadband to computer users are superior quality video images, reduced download time, and reduced waiting for web pages to appear. This appeals to the desire to have information and entertainment faster, better, and easier. The benefits to companies that deliver Broadband are that users pay more money for Broadband, they are less likely to cancel their service because it would mean returning to poorer quality service, and they are more valuable to advertisers because they are more likely to buy what advertisers sell. This is because the advertisements on the users' screens are more persuasive than static advertisements.

The "Delivery Debate" panel discussion at Convergence 2001 explored the four different ways that someone could obtain Broadband service for his home or business. The panel engaged in this debate included one representative from a company associated with each of these four methods that I am listing here from most popular to least popular, based on the current number of subscribers: cable, DSL (Digital Subscriber Line), satellite, and wireless. A benefit of cable is that it is already attached to many televisions. A drawback is that a lot of its infrastructure is old. DSL is a viable solution for many customers but it often takes several visits to successfully install this service, it is distance limited, and there are regulatory issues that restrict the companies providing this service. Satellite has no distance limitations: it can cover the entire country (making it especially attractive in rural areas), but its cost is sometimes higher than some alternatives in those areas where they compete head to head. Wireless is especially good

when mobility is needed, and it can be deployed relatively easily, but the quality of service currently available is often a problem. The panel's consensus was that if the movie studios all decide on one means of delivering video on demand, then that method will probably be the winner. Otherwise, just like on television, the survivor will be whoever forms the best alliances.

Everything said at this conference was in the context of the business downturn that saw the bursting of the stock market's Internet bubble where many companies of the future discovered that they lacked the cash flow to be able to have a future. One or two years ago a technology company with a promising idea and a lot of people visiting its web site could attract enormous stock market valuations. Investor sentiment later turned against companies that were not profitable enough, and stock prices plunged. One speaker pointed out that the bright side of the business downturn is that the managers and engineers that companies need to succeed are now available to be hired. Another speaker said "This is my karma, my company is going through series C fundraising and here I am stuck on a panel with four venture capitalists."

Only about six million homes in the United States currently have Broadband access and thirty percent of all houses in the United States with Broadband were said to be concentrated in the top five markets. During one panel's question and answer session, someone spoke about the need to educate the consumer and asked "How can we get the message out?" After the speaker gave his answer, they called on me and I suggested a different solution. I briefly told them about computer user groups and mentioned that companies could get the word out to user group leaders during APCUG meetings at Comdex in Las Vegas in November. After that session ended, the person who was leading it came over to me and thanked me for providing this helpful information.

We saw some examples of Broadband programing. For example, IBeam Broadcasting showed a service of theirs called Activecast. This

consisted of video in one large window, text from a program such as PowerPoint in another large window, and a box where you could type in your questions for interactivity. This is available today without Broadband, using streaming video for the video feed, but Broadband provides better video quality. A viewer tuning in to Canal+ would see one dozen windows. Each window had a different type of Broadband content including movies, music videos, television, and video games. Spiderdance creates content over the Internet that is tightly integrated with television shows. They are already doing this for narrowband because that is what most viewers have, but they will develop content for Broadband. Intertainer is working on a video on demand service. They showed us a sample commercial from DeBeers. Female viewers were invited to design their own diamond engagement rings and were told jokingly that the software that would enable them to design their own perfect husband is not available yet.

This conference also included discussions about streaming media. Streaming video is already available to customers whether or not they have Broadband. One application was a webcast on Oscar Night where people visiting the oscars.com web site could see and hear Oscar winners being interviewed in the press room shortly after each of them won their awards. A future application of streaming media will be distance learning.

Free copies of the June 2001 issue of eCompany magazine were made available to every participant of this conference. I found it to be very well written and well worth reading. One noteworthy article had the title "Where the Hell is my DSL?" and the subtitle "If everyone wants its product, why is the DSL business such a mess? Here's why - and what you can do about it". (Note: eCompany magazine is being "relaunched" in August 2001 as Business 2.0 magazine.)

I noticed that at the end of each break, as a signal that another panel discussion was about to begin, they would play the first few notes of Bon Jovi's record "It's My Life". During one break I mentioned to the man who was running this conference that he said at its beginning

"Our people are instructed to say 'Yes' to you today, to try to make what you want to happen happen." My request was that they play the entire Bon Jovi song "It's My Life" at the very end of the conference. He agreed enthusiastically. Then I listened to additional panel discussions that I already described above, and eventually the last speaker had spoken. As this conference ended, I was pleased to hear Bon Jovi's record because I knew I found a way to end my article and because it is such a great song.

## **Adventures in Computing**

**by Ron Feiertag**

I am almost certain that you will be fascinated by this entire column, but in case I lose you at some point, be sure to read the end of this article because that is where I am including information about upcoming computer shows.

I will begin this tale of my adventures in computing with a confession of an uncharacteristically absentminded mistake that I recently made, and I will share with you the lessons that can be learned from it. I managed to delete some important files from the Windows directory of my computer. To gain more space I wanted to delete files from a disk in A drive, I thought I was in A drive, and when I typed "del d\*.\*" I happened to be in the Windows directory of C drive. Oops. I could not copy the files from a Windows disk because the only backup disk I had for this operating system would rewrite the entire hard drive, restoring it to the condition that it was in on the day that I first bought this computer. Because I had a lot of programs and data that I did not want to lose, restoring my hard drive as it originally had been was

something I wanted to avoid if at all possible. My computer originally came with software that would, from time to time, save everything so that I could restore it as it had been at a much more recent date, perhaps losing a few days of data instead of years of data. The problem was that after awhile it was taking up too much of my hard drive's space, so I purposely deleted those files many months ago.

To find out which files I deleted by mistake and whether they were essential, I used a lifeline and phoned a friend from the San Francisco PC Users Group. He is David Hyman of Ask That Nice Man ([www.nman.com](http://www.nman.com)) and he often leads the Random Access questions and answer sessions at our user group's general meetings. He was in, he had time to help, and he had a computer with the same operating system that I use: Windows 98. By going to his Windows directory and typing `dir d*.*` he was able to tell me which files I deleted by mistake. It turned out that some of those files were very important but it was late in the evening and I knew what I was going to do about it in the morning, so I thanked him for his help without taking any more of his time. Even though the original warranty period for my computer had elapsed long ago, I still had years to go on my service contract. I thought I would just go to the store where I purchased the service contract and they would quickly fix what needed to be fixed and I would be back home very soon with my computer just as good as new. It did not exactly work out that way. Before leaving for the store, I took the precaution of backing up all of the data files that I had.

I went to the service department of CompUSA and they looked at my service contract and original invoice and agreed that they were still valid. I was told that if I wanted my computer to go to the head of the line, I would have to pay an extra fee. It was more than I planned to spend but I said it was no problem. I also said I wanted to be present when they worked on my computer and I asked when they believed they would complete their work on my computer. Although it was still morning, I was told that they would start work on my computer that afternoon and there was no way that the work on it would be

completed that same day, even with my paying an extra fee, and they said that I could not be present while they did their work. I tried to see if there was some way that they could accommodate my needs but they insisted that I could not be present, the fee would have to be paid, and the computer would not be ready before closing time. This was not acceptable to me, so I left. The next place I tried was a computer store named Compu-Data which was also in downtown San Francisco. Even though I did not buy my computer there, even though I wanted to have the computer back in working order quickly, and even though I insisted that I would have to be present to watch their work if they wanted my business, they agreed. I paid them a reasonable amount of money and they remedied the problem within one hour. They even cleaned the machine for the same low fee. I checked and found that the files that had been missing were now present and everything was working as I hoped it would be. Compu-Data did excellent work and I was back at home using my computer much sooner than it would have taken for CompUSA to even begin to work on it. I then went to CompUSA's web site and explained why I was unhappy with my experience in their store, using a lot of the same language that I used earlier in this paragraph. Weeks have gone by since then, and I never had a return message from CompUSA, so I remain disappointed with both their in-store and their online customer service.

One of the lessons that I learned from this is an old one: back up your files frequently. Another lesson was a lot less obvious: protect your data in anticipation of a repair. In other words, have passwords on your files and encrypt your data. When computer repair people insisted one morning that they would have to keep a computer overnight to do what turned out to be a one hour repair job, you don't have to be overly suspicious to realize that they could be tempted to read and copy whatever they wanted from your computer. If you have account numbers or information about investments or similar sensitive information there, these are not the types of things that you would want shared with strangers, including computer repair people. This is one reason to choose to be present during any repair and to use

passwords and encryption for your data beforehand in order to increase the confidentiality of your data when a repair will one day be needed. There are two rules for using passwords safely. First, make your passwords easy for you to remember but hard for someone else to guess. Second, if you write a password down, do not keep it near your computer.

On another subject, yesterday I was watching when KQED television's show "This Week in Northern California" reported that a State legislator recently said that no one cares about financial privacy. Soon afterwards he received three thousand e-mail messages and that caused him to vote in favor of this reform legislation. If you feel strongly about something, e-mail can be an effective way to make your views known.

Finally, there are four upcoming computer shows that will be of interest to many of you. The first three will be at San Francisco's Moscone Center.

LinuxWorld Expo takes place from August 28th through August 30th. Web2001 occurs from September 5th through September 7th. Seybold is in town from September 25th through September 27th. Comdex will be in Las Vegas, Nevada from November 12th through November 16th. Those of us who attend these expos can hear keynote speakers that include Linus Torvalds at LinuxWorld, The WELL's Stewart Brand at Web2001, Adobe's Bruce Chizen at Seybold, and Microsoft's Bill Gates at Comdex. In each case there will also be conferences. Information about all of these events can be found at these web sites:

<http://www.linuxworldexpo.com>

<http://www.web2001show.com>

<http://www.seyboldseminars.com>

<http://www.comdex.com>

## General Meeting News

At a recent club General Meeting, one of our members, Dadre Traugher presented a slide show. Two or three things- new things precipitated the pre meeting event. First of all, Dadre came up with the idea to produce a slide show of marine life. These slides came from an

underwater shoot by Dadre and company. Secondly, SFpcUG acquired a projector, a Toshiba TLP-650, 1100 lumens and XGA (native resolution of 1024 x 768 with a max of 1600x1200). Thirdly, Club President had the idea to set aside a few minutes before the General Meeting to do something with our new projector.

Dadre reports the projector was not tweaked for maximum "cool" presentation. She remarked that the side show may be repeated at an upcoming meeting. Stay tuned.

There are openings for 15 minute slide shows or streaming videos to be presented before the General Meeting - maybe not "My Summer Vacation" <grin>. E-mail Butler Crittenden, [president@sfpug.org](mailto:president@sfpug.org) for details and permissions.



**CORYNACTIS**

## MINUTES - APRIL - MAY- JUNE

**The San Francisco PC Users Group Steering Committee** meeting of **April 3, 2001**, was held at Round Table Pizza, 16th and Geary.

**Present** were Butler Crittenden, Judy Gaer, Harold Charns, Pierre Hahn, Don Oclassen, David Ross, Lee Most, Raven Most, Ron Feiertag, and Cynthia Cravens.

The meeting was called to order at 19:08, chaired by club president Butler Crittenden. A guest, Cynthia Cravens, talked about a course sponsored by the Jewish Vocational Services to train people to be Cisco Certified Network Associates. Butler will announce it at the next meeting. The minutes of the March 2001 meeting were distributed. A motion was made and seconded that they be approved as submitted. The minutes were approved.

**The Treasurer's report** – The Treasurers report noted 3-4 new members and 22 members who paid their dues. Thank you to Joseph for sending out notices to help us bring in such a good number of members. Thanks to this we have an excellent balance. Motion to approve was made, seconded and passed. The Treasurer's report was approved.

**The Vice-President's report** was that the Cow Palace computer show Tech Bench is a great place to learn and may have brought in some new members.

**The President's report** – Butler is still planning to have a phone-bank evening at his home at some undisclosed time in the future. He also mentioned that the election slate is not written yet. He asked the current officers if they would all be willing to serve another term. All but the secretary were obliging. The secretary was dragged kicking and screaming to agree to serve if no one else would. Butler mentioned that our biggest need was someone to check-in people in at the meeting.

**The Webmaster's report** – The Webmaster was not present. There was some discussion of a UPS for the club server and what is required in the event of a rolling blackout. Butler said he would talk to Joseph about the details on the shutdown and restart requirements.

**The Membership Committee** – See treasurer's report.

**The Blue Notes Editors'** report was that Pierre was called out of town suddenly and Blue Notes was not sent out until yesterday. In the future Ron Feiertag agreed to help proof Blue Notes, contribute articles or a column, and make suggestions. He will be credited as Contributing Editor for his work.

**The Product Review report** was that there is currently nothing new to report. Product is available and Carol Lee continues to review, along with a few others.

**The Program Chair report** is that Zone Alarm is invited for the next meeting but hasn't yet confirmed. LearnIt! or Aladdin (StuffIt) are also possibilities. May will be Macromedia (web tools). June is Microsoft Office XP. July or August may be Adobe. Butler had an interesting conversation with Richard re the dynamics of user groups. Dadre Traugher and Jeff Marchi did a terrific job at the March meeting, for which the Steering Committee thanks them on behalf of the club.

**Old Business** – Elections are coming up (see President's Report). Dave Hart volunteered to serve in some capacity.

**New Business** – It was decided to postpone discussing relocating the server.

After a motion that the meeting be adjourned was made, seconded, and passed, with no abstentions, Butler adjourned the meeting at 20:08 hours.

**Respectfully submitted, Judy Gaer, Secretary**

**The San Francisco PC Users Group Steering Committee** meeting of **May 1, 2001**, was held at Round Table Pizza, 16th and Geary.

**Present** were Butler Crittenden, Judy Gaer, Harold Charns, Pierre Hahn, Don Oclassen, David Ross, Lee Most, Raven Most, and Ron Feiertag, Tom McLoughlin, Douglas Lym.

The meeting was called to order at 19:12, chaired by club president Butler Crittenden. The minutes of the April 2001 meeting were distributed. It was suggested that kicking-and-screaming secretary be deleted from the signature. A motion was made and seconded that they be approved as corrected. The minutes were approved.

**The Treasurer's report** – The Treasurers report noted 3 new members and 7 members who paid their dues. Therefore the club continues in good financial health. Motion to approve was made, seconded and passed. The Treasurer's report was approved.

**The Vice-President's report** was that the Cow Palace computer show Tech Bench is a great place to learn. Butler's guess is that we have gotten about 6 new members from the last several shows.

**The President's report** – Butler is questioning whether a phone bank evening at his house would be worth the time it takes. Maybe email would be faster. He mentioned that the current officers were reelected at the last meeting including the kicking-and-screaming secretary. Butler asked if it was OK to bill the club for some of the price of a toner cartridge for the printing he does for the computer show. This was approved by those present. Butler asked if it is OK to let people from the Golden Gate Computer Club attend our meetings for free as a courtesy, since they have our members this courtesy. The answer was "yes." Butler noted that Random Access is becoming more important at meetings. It was suggested that maybe we set up a Saturday afternoon hardware meeting at Butlers once a month. David Ross suggested we post brochures in computer stores we frequent.

**The Webmaster's report** – The Webmaster was not present. Pierre will continue to call Pacific Bell re possibilities.

**The Membership Committee** – See treasurer's report

**The Blue Notes Editors'** report was that they are aiming for Blue Notes to be out 5/15. Pierre will be gone 5/14-5/30. Butler promises to get his column in on time. **The Product Review report** was that there is currently nothing new to report. Product is available and Carol continues to review.

**The Program Chair report** is that Zone Alarm is invited but has not responded. Harold will check with them and Macromedia. May will be Macromedia (technically but we are not sure yet). June is Microsoft Office XP. July is Rollin White, Sundial/Junk spy, SPAM software/service. August is Sebastian Frey, Web Development Tools Evangelist, 4D, Inc. September - Adobe? (Pierre); October is Aladdin Systems (StuffIt); November is open and December is the Holiday auction and party.

**Old Business** – Butler noted any of us could go to Comdex representing the group. We especially need front desk help at meetings. BC needs more support.

**New Business** – There was some discussion of the cost of electricity to run the servers. The question of DSL at the community college was brought up. We need first to determine if there is a LAN already. Butler will check on that. We also need a projector.

After a motion that the meeting be adjourned was made, seconded, and passed, with no abstentions, Butler adjourned the meeting at 10:05 hours.

**Respectfully submitted, Judy Gaer, Secretary ;)**

**The San Francisco PC Users Group Steering Committee** meeting of **June 5, 2001**, was held at Round Table Pizza, 16th and Geary.

**Present** were Butler Crittenden, Judy Gaer, Harold Charns, Pierre Hahn, Don Oclassen, David Ross, Lee Most, Raven Most, Ron Feiertag, Tom McLoughlin, and David Caldwell. The meeting was called to order at 19:12, chaired by club president Butler Crittenden. The minutes of the May 2001 meeting were distributed. After the television was turned off, a motion was made and seconded that the May minutes be approved as corrected. The minutes were approved.

**The President's report** – Butler suggested now that we have a projector that we should show something interesting on it prior to the beginning of meetings. It was also suggested that Harold investigate insurance to cover the server and projector.

**The Webmaster's report** – The webmaster was not present. Lee asked whether we need to put mail.sfpcug in email addresses. Pierre said the .mail part may left out and have the mail reach the username. Ron suggested putting the next club presenter further forward in the web site, more visible on the home page. He also suggested beefing up the program page. Butler suggested a committee of Ron, Harold, Butler and David Ross to meet the fourth Tuesday of this month at Butler's to discuss what we want on the website. He also suggested we ask members by email what they would like to have on the website, and Butler will evaluate the suggestions and announce them when appropriate.

**The Membership Committee** – Harold has the club's membership in an Access database. He sends copies of updates to Joseph for email addresses for web access. We have about 125 paid members. It was suggested that we have a sign-in sheet, including indication of overdue memberships.

**The Blue Notes Editors'** report was that they are getting started on the next issue. It was suggested they compile an index of the table of contents of previous issues, to make finding past articles easier.

**The Product Review report** was that Carol Lee received products and reviewed one in 24 hours.

**The Program Chair report** is that June is Microsoft Office XP. July is Rollin White, Sundial/Junkspy and SPAM software/service. August is Sebastian Frey; Web Development tools Evangelist, 4D, Inc. September is filled, and Butler will report the vendor later. October is Aladdin systems (StuffIt); November is Bob Schneider on websites; and December is the holiday auction and party.

**Old Business** – It was noted that Kathleen O'Connor gave a good presentation at Windows Office XP. BC needs more support.

**New Business** – It was mentioned that we had a new server donated from Tom McLoughlin's landlord. Pierre, Butler, and Tom will evaluate its worth so we can send a thank-you to him.

After a motion that the meeting be adjourned was made, seconded, and passed, with no abstentions, Butler adjourned the meeting at 19:53 hours.

Respectfully submitted, | Judy Gaer, ( Secretary (

**AUGUST 2001**

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**SEPTEMBER 2001**

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30						

**OCTOBER 2001**

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28	29	30	31			

**First Tuesday: Steering Committee meeting**  
**Upstairs meeting room of Round Table Pizza, Geary Blvd and 16th Ave 7PM**

**Second Tuesday: General questions about Windows and hardware, and minor hardware installations.**  
**2040 Ellis, 3 houses west of Divisadero, 7-9PM (confirm 415-346-9321 or 415-346-2644)**

**Third Tuesday: General Meeting, The auditorium of the Community College District Office,**  
**33 Gough Street, (a half-block south of Market Street) San Francisco, CA**  
**doors open at 6; SIGs at 6:15; Snacks & beverages 6:15 - 7; 7 p.m. meeting;**

**CHECK OUR WEB SITE FOR LATEST INFORMATION: [www.sfpcug.org](http://www.sfpcug.org)**



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**San Francisco PC Users Group  
Application/Renewal/Address Change**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please type or print legibly.)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Work phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

FAX phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check: \_\_ Renewal member # \_\_\_\_\_      \_\_ New Member

Check type of membership:

please send your check to:

- Individual      \$25
- Family          \$30
- Business        \$50
- Outside US     \$25

SF PC Users Group  
Attn: Membership Director  
3145 Geary Blvd, Box 284  
San Francisco, CA 94118-3300

Please be patient it may take up to 3 weeks to enable the account

Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Please do not mail cash.)