

SCUG



REPORT

Sarnia Computer User's Group

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www.scug.ca

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January 2006

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS) page 5.

Digital Photography

The next meeting of this SIG will be February 1, 7:00 P.M.

Pierre Houle
Group Leader
digitalsig@scug.ca

Genealogy Group

The next Genealogy SIG meeting will be Jan. 31. 7:00 p.m.

Val Conway
Group Leader
genealogy@scug.ca

Windows Computer

Next meeting on Feb. 16, 7 p.m.

Pierre Houle
Group Leader
windows@scug.ca

Linux Computer

Next mtg. Feb 14, 7pm

Rick Elnor
Group Leader
linux@scug.ca

General Meeting

Next meeting on Feb. 22, 7 p.m.

We welcome all guests - Please come out, check us out, share and learn about computers.

For Club Information:
Email: president@scug.ca

Check out the SCUG website:
www.scug.ca

Meeting places are listed on the last page.

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A Newbie to SCUG

Microsoft has opened up their articles to user groups. APCUG rep, Judy Taylour announced that we will be getting certain articles sent from APCUG to reprint in SCUG Report. See pages 2 and 8 for more.

No win for SCUG in the APCUG Website and Newsletter contest. Also, SCUG has a new APCUG Advisor. See page 6.

Reprint Policy

SCUG reviews and articles in this paper fall under these reprint guidelines: Permission is given to Computer User Groups to reprint, unaltered, non-copyrighted material, with credit to the author and SCUG Report. Please send an email to editor@scug.ca when reprinting SCUG textual matter.



**PRESIDENT'S
PERSPECTIVE**
by Dorothy Alexander

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OF YOU

How many of you made New Year's resolutions and have broken them already? This tradition seems to be fading 'into the woodwork' as fewer and fewer people take the time to make resolutions. Let us all hope that 2006 will see PEACE on this earth, fewer natural tragedies and new exciting technology in the computer field.

The media tells us that this past Christmas was the year of the digital camera. People were either upgrading or purchasing one for the first time. Did any of you buy any new gadgets that sounded like a great value - "After Rebate"? Everywhere from a great price to FREE! Most are legitimate but require some work. Some are never claimed. Some say you will have to wait 6 to 10 weeks for your rebate. Some are a problem to complete with fine print that is often not read. A few are outright scams!

Fortunately one local store tended to the instant rebates right at purchase. Then if there is a mail-in rebate you can go online and complete an "easy" rebate. They suggest that you photocopy all documents, UPC, receipt, etc. so that you can follow up on it should there be any problems. By doing the "easy" rebate it cuts down your waiting time. Why can't all of the stores do this? Some actually count on you not sending in your rebates, that is why! So gather up your receipts and start processing them!

This evening Iain Smy will be showing us all the various facets of GOOGLE. It is no longer just a search engine!

Please join us next month and bring a friend, as the COMPUTER NERDS will be our guest speakers.

Editor's Korner
Send Letters to: editor@scug.ca



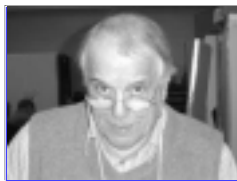
Greg West - Editor

Well, we finally got the bad news: SCUG did not win in the recent APCUG's Website and Newsletter contest amongst member user groups. At this point we do not know why we did not win, but APCUG says they are sending out evaluations to all clubs that participated. APCUG also stated there was a huge increase in participants for this contest over previous years. Once SCUG gets this information we will post it to the membership. See page 6.

On a better note, APCUG has sent the member user groups a link to Microsoft's new website for user groups to legally post articles from Microsoft. The website announces that: Have you ever seen really great articles on Microsoft.com that you wished you could print in your user group newsletter? Well, Mindshare is working to make that happen. Below you will find several articles that you may syndicate (re-publish) in your newsletter. There is no charge to use these, and we will be adding more articles over time. Our hope is that Mindshare becomes

your chosen location to get great content that you can use for your user group (<https://s.microsoft.com/mindshare/license.aspx>). Of course, you will have to use Internet Explorer to get the articles saved as web archived files. I am not a user of IE, Firefox is my browser of choice, however APCUG sends the articles in Rich Text format for user groups to publish.

So, when you see Microsoft articles appearing in our newsletter, we did not simply cut and paste from the MS website, the articles have been picked up by APCUG and delivered to the various user group editors for their discretionary use. Please let us know what you think of these articles, and feel free to check out the above mentioned website. See page 8.



Your Secretary's Notes

by Tom Deeprise
secretary@scug.ca

SCUG Executive Meeting

Jan 2, 2006 at St. James' Church.

Ian and Ed sent their regrets.

1. Approval Of Previous Minutes:

Accepted as written

2. Membership Input:

Jim reported that at November end, Membership stood at 137 (95 Members & 42 Associates) with four Member & two Associate renewals, three new Members and one Associate plus three current Guests, but less two lapsed Members. The meeting attendance for the non-appearing Future Shop Presentation was excellent at over 70 disappointed members and guests. The Newsletter: it was decided that a return to 100 would be appropriate for the Jan. GM and Jim provided smaller and less expensive name labels for them.

3. Vice President's Input:

Ian reported in his absence that our wishes about re-routing the power cables has been given the general OK and options are to be discussed on site with a Church Warden. The sub-group tasked with up-dating the Constitution (the Constitution Review Team-CRT) had met five times, with steady progress made.

4. Secretary's Input:

Accommodations at St. James has been confirmed for 2006. A donation to St James was approved and they are very appreciative of the computer help given by SCUG.

5. Treasurer's Input:

Ed's current Financial Report to Nov. end was approved.

6. Software Librarian's Input:

Pierre reported 46 disks given out at Nov. GM. DOM for this month will be the new version of "Open Office", a free program with similar abilities to Microsoft "Office"

7. Newsletter Editor's Input

Greg reported that everything appears under control.

8. Program Coordinator's Input:

Norm reports that we have thirteen reviews at various stages of completion but are still waiting for Adobe Ac-

robat 7 to arrive. A draft of the updated Product Review Guideline Document is complete and is up for the consideration of the Review Committee.

9. Public Relations Input:

Iain -Compuprizes For January- an Income Tax Program plus Total Uninstall donated by Paul. For February- We go to the 50/50 draw. We have a Wireless Router and USB SD Readers and more Total Uninstall programs in hand.

10. Webmaster's Input:

Iain reported that the SCUG Website was extremely busy in December.

11. Meeting Program:

January: Presentation on Google by Iain. A many faceted subject February: Dan Kranz of Computer Nerds has confirmed he will demonstrate transferring music to computer and the new technology of transferring handwriting to typescript March: Corel has confirmed their interest Ideas for the future: Computers in the medical field, for instance, in Personal Insulin Control, using Quicken etc., the latest AskSam, how do you prepare a DOM? Some of these could be combined as mini-presentations

11. Old Business:

Cupboard inventory-done but paperwork on the depreciated value needed. -No recent information on the potential Antony Chodus demo.

12. New Business:

A hearty Thank You to Vic Sterry for continuing as our valiant proofreader. -Contact with Staple is planned to review the printing program and a possible NL advertisement.

Next Executive meeting will be Monday, January 30th. 2006





Disk of the Month Report for January 2006

Open Office

You will find the latest version of OpenOffice.org on this month's CD. Version 2.01 is a worthy upgrade to a great office suite which rivals Microsoft Office or Lotus Smart Suite in every category but the price!

It's completely free.

O.O. Will open most file formats and can edit them. I particularly like these programs within Open Office:

- O.O. Writer
- O.O. Spreadsheet
- O.O. Presentation

For more information visit their website, the link of which can be found on the CD.

Let me know what type of programs you want on the DOM. This is your club, and we need your input!

Bring in your CD from last month, and it will be replaced with a updated disk with the latest software offering. I only use freeware or shareware.

Pierre Houle
library@scug.ca

Editor's Note: *One thing I really like in OOWriter (Word) is the feature to create PDFs with one click...no other program needed. For more information about Open Office go to: www.openoffice.org.*



Windows SIG

Windows SIG Synopsis for January 2006

Thirty members attended the January Windows SIG. Pierre led the discussion with a talk about Cds and DVDs.

He went into a description of each of the various types, how the disks are constructed, and their uses. Finally, there was a brief demonstration of how to burn a cd using XP.

There were various questions about making Cds and DVDs, and it was decided that the topic would be continued at the next Windows SIG. Please let Pierre know which areas you would like covered. There were no general computer related questions.

The next Windows SIG meeting will be Thursday, February 16th, 7:00 P.M. At Grace United Church, room 10.

Digital Photography SIG

January 2006 Digital SIG Synopsis

Thirty Four members attended the January Digital SIG. Fred Abma led the meeting with a talk about how to take better pictures.


He presented a digital slide show of "does and don'ts" of photography, with emphasis on: watching the background for problem elements, getting down to the subject's level, not taking photographs during mid-day, using a tripod when possible, get closer to your subject to fill the frame, use the rule of thirds, and practice, practice, practice!

With digital photography, there is no cost to making photographs, so know your camera, and take many pictures.

Next month, we will be returning to using GIMP for enhancing digital photographs.

Hope to see you there!

Wednesday, February 1st, St. James the Apostle Church, 7:00 P.M., 140 Lansdown North at Athlone.



Linux SIG

Rick Elnor
linux@scug.ca

We had 6 people attend the 1st meeting of 2006. At this meeting we covered various aspects of the Synaptic package manager software. The software was explained and demo'd in detail as group members asked questions about different functions within the software.

There were several other open source software products mentioned which relate to package installation including: Automatix Smart Package Manager and Autopackage

There are of course other well known package managers but we could only cover what time permitted.

LINKS:

Smart Package Manager
<http://labix.org/smart>

autopackage
<http://autopackage.org/>

Genealogy SIG

Val Conway
genealogy@scug.ca



No Report This Month. Val will be back next month. Do not forget the meeting this month:

Genealogy Meeting
January 31st. at:
St James Church-140 Lansdowne North

Online "My Family Health Portrait"


By Ira Wilsker
APCUG Director
Columnist, The Examiner
Beaumont, TX; radio & TV show host

WEBSITES: <http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory>
<https://familyhistory.hhs.gov>
<http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/download.html>

Recently, a relative in another state was hospitalized via an emergency room admission. His new wife of just a year did not have much information on the family health history, so urgently needed by the physicians in order to diagnose and treat my relative. Urgent phone calls followed, gathering the requisite family medical history to enable the appropriate diagnosis and treatment. Philosophically, what if a comprehensive family medical history could have been immediately available? This circumstance is not unique, but a reasonable solution has been available for free for over a year at www.hhs.gov/familyhistory, courtesy of the U. S. Surgeon General's Office

This site explains the necessity of such data with the statement, "Health care professionals have known for a long time that common diseases - heart disease, cancer, and diabetes - and even rare diseases - like hemophilia, cystic fibrosis, and sickle cell anemia - can run in families. If one generation of a family has high blood pressure, it is not unusual for the next generation to have similarly high blood pressure. Tracing the illnesses suffered by your parents, grandparents, and other blood relatives can help your doctor predict the disorders to which you may be at risk and take action to keep you and your family healthy." In order to accomplish this task, the Surgeon general offers two simple options; one an online web maintained version hosted on a secure server (that is what the "https" means in the internet ad-

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SCUG
Compuprize Winner

Donald Urry - Wireless router
Lorne Longely - Total Uninstall

TID BITS
Greg West
SCUG Editor

Please send your Tid Bits, or interesting web sites to: editor@scug.ca



Google Video is Now Here: <http://video.google.com>

Google now has video search and more. Google heralds this new video service as “world’s first open online video marketplace”, an online place “where you can search for, watch and even buy an ever-growing collection of TV shows, movies, music videos, documentaries, personal productions and more.”

This is fast becoming a trendy thing, downloading video (especially TV shows) as people are tuning in with their video iPods while traveling to work in buses, subways, trains, planes and even walking.

For the budding new film producer, if you are brave or bold or both, you can upload your own private video online into Google's new service.

And if you think this is all just a new craze, something that will soon fade away, think again. TV stations, such as Global TV air home videos of personal viewpoints on election issues with the 6 pm. News...in the form of video blogs.

Yes, Google even supports video blogging now: (<http://googlevideo.blogspot.com>).

And of course, if you are into RSS feeds, Google supplies RSS feeds for video blogging as well.

If you are leery of this new technology, known as Web 2.0, don't be. You should get your feet wet soon; it is here to stay, here to grow, and soon to become a major player in the media wars.

For a great taste of this new and amazing program check out vintage film clips from: Getty Images' Archive Films Collection, featuring archived B&W clips from days gone by or a video with “John Battelle, co-founding editor of Wired and founder of The Industry Standard visits the Google New York office to speak about his book *The Search: How Google and Its Rivals Rewrote the Rules of Business and Transformed Our Culture* (12/7/05).”

Google just keeps on getting better and better and better...*Keep on Goggin!*

NOOZ from APCUG

The Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG) is an organization dedicated to helping member computer user groups succeed. The APCUG helps to foster communications by operating as an informal network between user group organizations and also with companies that provide computer related and Internet related goods and services. The APCUG also assists member groups in the fulfillment of their educational missions and activities by sharing with officers of member user groups, the knowledge of what it takes for user groups to better serve their members. The APCUG operates as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Hello Region 13 Officers,

This is our first NOOZ for the New Year – my best wishes to your User Group for a successful and prosperous year. Please feel free to contact me on any matter that pertains to your UG.

This edition of NOOZ is sent to the President, APCUG Representative, Newsletter Editor, Webmaster and Program Chair of each APCUG-member User Group.

We urge you to share the information in NOOZ by including it in your newsletter, posting in on your website, or e-mailing it to members of your group.

John Hirsh, jhirsh@apcug.net Region 13 Advisor

In this edition of NOOZ:

1. 2006 Membership Drive
2. APCUG Annual Conference
3. Newsletter & Web Site Contest Winners
4. Jerry Award Winners
5. APCUG Reports News Magazine
6. 2006 Board Officers

1. 2006 Membership Drive. Annual membership in the Association of Personal Computer User Groups is \$50.00. Invoices are sent to member groups but you can renew your membership online by completing the form at http://apcug.net/contacts/forms/renewal_application.htm. After you submit the form, you will have the option of paying by check or credit card. A BIG THANK YOU to the groups that have already renewed their membership. Groups that have renewed will receive an acknowledgement e-mail.

Continued on page 7.

Continued from page 6 - NOOZ.

2. APCUG Annual Conference. The 2006 Annual Conference had almost 230 attendees who enjoyed various presentations and meals sponsored by vendors, the Vendor Faire where they could talk with vendors and book meeting presentations, as well as Round Tables where they could enhance their personal computer knowledge and UG management skills. Thanks to all of the participating vendors – all attendees are encouraged to send them a thank you for sponsoring the various activities. For a recap of the activities and various Round Table presentations / handouts, go to <http://apcug.net/events/conference06/conf06files.htm>. You will also find a copy of the Proceedings Manual with a detailed listing of the Round Tables & presenter bios, website & newsletter contest winners, Jerry Award winners, and the Daily Reports that will give you an overview of some of the conference happenings.

3. Newsletter & Web Site Contest Winners. You will find the criteria for both contests at the above Web site.

NEWSLETTER Small Groups

1st Place – Broward Personal Computer Association, Inc.

2nd Place – Arizona Society for Computer Information, Inc.

3rd Place – Southwest International Personal Computer Club Honorable Mention – Computer Users of Erie

Medium Groups

1st Place – Twin Cities PC User Group

2nd Place – Big Bear Computer Club

3rd Place – Los Angeles Computer Society Honorable Mention Big Blue & Cousins

Large Groups

1st Place – Alamo PC Organization

2nd Place – North Orange County Computer Club

2nd Place – Melbourne PC User Group

3rd Place – Tri County Computer Users Group Honorable Mention Danbury Area Computer Society

WEB SITE Small Groups

1st Place – Fredericksburg PC Users Group

1st Place – Amador Computer Users Group

2nd Place – Santa Barbara PC Users Group

3rd Place – Princeton PC User Group Honorable Mention Santa Clarita Valley PC Group

Medium Groups

1st Place – PC Community

2nd Place – Kentucky-Indiana PC Users Group

3rd Place – Tacoma Area PC Users Group Honorable Mention – Diablo Valley PC Users Group

Large Groups

1st Place – Tampa Bay Computer Society

2nd Place – Sunflower Computer Club

3rd Place – Tucson Computer Society Honorable Mention – Computer Club of Oklahoma City

4. JERRY AWARDS (You will find descriptions and the criteria at the above Web site)

Ongoing - A program run by, or in association with the User Group. The program should have been in existence for more than one year.

1st place (\$1,500) - Central Maryland UG (Columbia, MD)

2nd place (\$1,000) - Sarasota PCUG (Sarasota, FL)

3rd place (\$500) - Central Iowa Computer User Group (Ankeny, IA)

How - This category requires the User Group to provide documentation on how they run their program.

1st place (\$1,500) - Cajun Clickers Computer Society (Baton Rouge, LA)

2nd Place (\$1,000) - Tampa Bay Computer Society (Tampa Bay, Florida)

3rd place (\$500) - Tulsa Computer Society (Tulsa, OK)

New - A program run by or in association with the User Group that has been in existence since December 2004.

1st place (\$1,500) - Rockport Computer Users' Group (Rockport, Texas)

2nd place (\$1,000) - Computers Assisting People (Cleveland, Ohio)

3rd place (\$500) - Central Maryland User Group (Columbus, MD)

5. APCUG News Magazine REPORTS. We apologize for not sending the last 2005 issue of Reports out in a timely manner -- you will be receiving it soon. We hope that you have taken the time to check out the online PDF issue at to <http://www.apcug.net/> click on APCUG Reports / click on 4th Quarter 2005 Zip File.

6. Congratulations to the New Board of Directors. Ken Bundy President Don Singleton Vice President Jim Evans Secretary Steve Peyrot - Treasurer

As an APCUG member, you have received this e-mail to inform you of updates, changes, or special news and information from APCUG. Our policy has always been to send e-mail messages only to announce such information, and we will continue to honor this policy. If you no longer want to receive these e-mails, please reply to the sender. Thank you for being an APCUG member.

SCUG Has A New Advisor From APCUG

Hi Folks,

My name is John Hirsh. I want to introduce myself to Canadian APCUG Users' Groups.

I have visited Toronto several times and stayed during the summer at the University of Toronto. I have a cousin who works for CBC-TV.

I live in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where I support the Milwaukee Brewers and the Green Bay Packers failing teams.

I was recently elected to the APCUG Advisory Committee. I have attended APCUG conferences in Las Vegas, the Southwest Regional Conference in San Diego, and two regional conferences in Chicago.

I am President of Milwaukee Area IBM PC User Groups and former President of the Epson QX-10 User Group; Webmaster of Wisconsin All Computer Users Club; former Webmaster of the Southeastern Wisconsin Windows User Group; Member of Milwaukee Computer Society; Member of Milwaukee Help User Group; Member of Southeastern Wisconsin Windows User Group. I have visited a Dreamweaver Group, a Studio Visual Basic group and a group at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

I began a Combined Computer User Group, a Help Desk, at the Blue Star Supercomputer Sales at Milwaukee's State Fair Park. There, we attempted to solve problems and pass out user group literature. For example, folks came up to the desk and could not figure out why their computer had stopped running. We asked if they had used scandisk and defrag. Most of the time they said they never heard of scandisk and defrag. I have also worked at the Help Desk for the Gateway Computer Club just outside St. Louis.

My primary interest is writing and research. I have worked as a correspondent for the Milwaukee Sentinel and a reporter for The Milwaukee Journal. I have also worked for the National Safety Council based in Chicago. I also have attended Investigative and Reporter Editors (IRE) meetings around the country and have attended American Society of Journalists and Authors (ASJA) conferences in Chicago and New York.

I will send information to you from APCUG. If you have problems and I do not have the answers, I will ask help from others who do.

C U Later,
John Hirsh, Email: jhirsh@apcug.net

Syndicate Microsoft**Mindshare Content**

**Protect and purge your personal files
Eliminate private documents permanently from
your hard drive**

By Alyson Munroe

When you stop and think about it, your home computer holds a lot of information about you - credit card numbers, bank account details, passwords, medical information, websites you've visited and those deep, dark secrets you share with your best friend via e-mail.

There naturally comes a time when it's time for an upgrade, whether it be a bigger hard drive or an entirely new PC. But what should you do with the old one? And what about the information on it? You need to remove this information whether you donate it, sell it or trash it. Imagine your hard drive - including all of your personal information - falling into the wrong hands. That's what could happen if you don't do a little damage control before you dispose of your hard drive.

Why "delete" isn't enough

Many people think that clearing their history, deleting files and cookies, and emptying their computer's recycle bin is enough. Not so, according to Vancouver IT specialist Tony Lum. He says that's like removing the table of contents in a book. The chapters (or your files, in this case) are still there, they're just harder to find. What you've actually done is remove a particular file from the disk's index. The file itself still exists on your hard disk. For the average person it's harder to recover, but an experienced programmer (or hacker) could easily locate the file. Previous or temporary versions of the file might also be saved under different names.

You need to go one step further and overwrite your data. Lum recommends you back up everything you want to keep on your hard drive and then run hard-drive wiping software, which will overwrite your information with random ones and zeros. He also recommends you use a program that overwrites your data more than once. The more it's overwritten, the harder it is to recover. Select software to wipe your hard drive clean

Continued on page 9.

Continued from page 8 - Syndicate Microsoft

Is it impossible to retrieve your information afterwards? Not 100 per cent, but Lum says unless CSIS or the CIA is after you, you should be in the clear after using one of these disk-erasing tools that are available for you to download online:

- **Active @ Kill Disk:** This free hard drive eraser overwrites data using zeros. You can upgrade to the professional version that conforms to the US Department of Defense (DOD) standards.
- **Eraser:** Eraser is a free download that boasts a simple user interface and top reviews from a number of popular computing websites and magazines.
- **Softpedia/DP Wiper:** Toronto IT consultant Daniel Gresser recommends freeware programs from Softpedia, like DP Wiper, which can overwrite in from one to 35 passes and has DOD-compliant wiping.
- **WipeDrive:** For \$39.95 US, WipeDrive overwrites your data as many times as you like and runs a verification test.
- **SuperScrubber:** Mac users can try SuperScrubber for \$29 to \$49 US, which also boasts DOD compliance and an intuitive interface.

"Always keep a record of where all important files are stored," says Gresser, who recommends deleting each file by dropping it into DP Wiper and selecting the kind of wipe required.

Unless you take the hard drive out and keep it, to get a PC ready for sale, Gresser suggests PC users delete the following using DP Wipe or a similar program:

- Everything in the My Documents folder.
- All temporary Internet files.
- All cookies.
- All files relating to personal and financial matters
- All e-mail: that may have been stored in folders other than My Documents.

Outlook Express users need to search for and delete *.dbx files and Outlook users need to search for and delete *.pst files. This will send them to the recycle bin for secure deletion. Also, remember to remove all e-mail account settings and passwords, etc.

Reinstall your operating system to overwrite files

Your operating system's installation CD should allow you to simultaneously reinstall and clear your hard drive. Lum says this should be enough to prevent the average person from obtaining personal information from your hard drive. However, he says he's managed to salvage data from computers using third-party software even

after an operating system was reinstalled.

Protect information on your work computer

You'll also want to think about personal information on your work computer when it's time to move on to a new job. You can't wipe the hard drive since the computer isn't your property, but you can make it somewhat harder to find sensitive information by deleting personal e-mails, clearing your web browser's cache and history, deleting any personal files on your hard drive and emptying your trash or recycle bin.

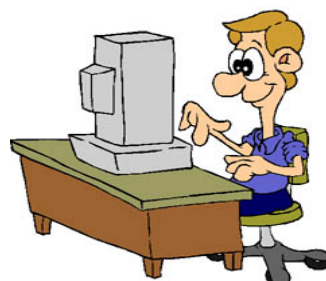
Playing it safe

Still concerned? Don't dispose of your hard drive. "The bottom line is, if you're really concerned about identity theft then don't give away your hard drive," says Lum. Gresser also recommends taking some preventative measures when you set up your new computer. "One thing people can do to make disposing of PCs with sensitive data easier down the road is to encrypt their data as soon as they get a new PC or hard disk," he says. "If strong encryption is used then you can format the drive and dispose of it with the computer. Someone who wanted to retrieve the data would first have to undelete the data and then try to break the encryption, which is not going to happen." He suggests using BestCrypt from Jetico to encrypt your documents.

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There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.



Absence Makes the E-Mail Grow Fonder

By Gabe Goldberg

APCUG Advisor

Columnist, AARP Computer & Technology Website
www.aarp.org

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder" is never truer for me than when I'm on the road, away from my wife, four cats, and e-mail. My wife and cats forgive my travels but it's a challenge e-mailing remotely. Fortunately, technology provides many ways to access e-mail. You're on your own, however, explaining to people you're visiting why you need a break from vacation, sightseeing, or family, to check for in-box nuggets.

Aside from pressure to stay in touch (some people are addicted to e-mail), it's worth thinking about e-mail before traveling, especially for an extended period. Many ISPs (Internet service providers) limit the e-mail they'll store for you. If you exceed this amount your e-mail may "bounce"--that is, be returned to senders. That frustrates people writing to you and causes problems with lists to which you're subscribed.

You can suspend list subscriptions to reduce e-mail volume, but that's a nuisance and won't help if someone sends you huge notes with vacation pictures.

If you have dial access you can't do much other than ask correspondents not to send large notes. Always-on cable or DSL users can leave e-mail software enabled, downloading mail as it arrives. But things can still go wrong--power may fail--leaving e-mail stranded at the ISP.

This article describes using remote computers for e-mail; it doesn't cover traveling with a laptop (which may require reconfiguration for sending e-mail) or using your cell phone or wireless PDA (which should be straightforward).

Facilities for reading e-mail will require your normal e-mail password; if your PC logs in automatically, you may not remember it! It's a nasty surprise--realizing when you're far away--that you've forgotten your password.

The easiest way to read e-mail when away from home is through your ISP's facility. If you normally read e-mail via a Web interface, your life is simple indeed: find an online computer, enter the ISP's e-mail Web address (URL), and you'll have your familiar interface. This also works for Yahoo!, Google's Gmail, and other national e-mail services.

Even if you usually read e-mail using a PC program such

as Outlook Express, Eudora, or Thunderbird (which all use an Internet protocol; called "POP3"), your ISP may provide Web access to e-mail, so ask. If it's available, practice using it before leaving so you can learn the process and have ISP tech support handy instead of a long-distance call away. Again, take your ISP information with you so you can log on, get help, etc.

Some ISPs provide an e-mail interface called Telnet. This text-only (not graphical) interface was developed in the Internet's early days. It's fast, efficient, and accessible from most PCs, but isn't intuitive and best suits technically oriented folks. If you'll use this on the road, practice beforehand is essential.

A very simple tool for accessing many ISP's e-mail is Mail2Web [www.mail2web.com]. Enter your e-mail address and password; the Web site fetches and displays your e-mail. Notes you send will appear to be from your normal e-mail address. Yahoo! provides a similar facility for reading POP3 e-mail.

AOL members can visit AOL's Web site [www.aol.com], click the Mail link, and access e-mail.

If you use an always-on Windows XP PC, you can--with technical setup beforehand and assuming no ISP-imposed blockage--use its built-in Remote Desktop feature to operate your home PC remotely as if you were sitting in front of it.

Two final issues: First, keep security in mind when using strange computers. Don't allow passwords to be saved; when finished, clear the browser cache and close applications you've used. Second, be careful setting an "away" message for everyone who e-mails you. Some less-than-clever notification systems annoy people and interfere with mailing lists.

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Continued from page 5 - Family Health

dress) at <https://familyhistory.hhs.gov>, the other a 1.6mb downloadable "Zip" file which may be stored on a home computer, and utilized in the privacy of the home. The files created in either version can easily be exchanged among family members via email or disc.

In the online version, a family history can be newly created, or an existing version can be uploaded from the home computer to the secure Surgeon General website where the data can be managed, and then saved back on the home computer; no personal information is saved or captured by the government computer, protecting the privacy of the user. It should be noted that much effort has gone into the creation of this web based service, in that it explicitly works equally well with almost all known browsers, including Internet Explorer, Firefox, Mac Safari, Netscape, and many other browsers.

The first step in using the online version is to "Create a Family History", or to "Load a Saved Family History" if a file had been previously created. The preliminary step is to create a personal profile, where basic information such as name, gender, height, and weight are entered. The personal profile continues with a simple checklist of major common diseases (such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes), and age of onset, followed by a fill in the blank chart of other diseases. After the personal health history is created, there is then an opportunity to create a family profile. The family profile states "Only add family members that are biological (blood) relatives (not adopted or step-relatives)." Similar fill in charts are presented to complete the information for the other family members. Data can be modified, added, or deleted at any time. Once the user has completed entering the basic family information, a button "Go to My Family" takes the user to the basic "Family Health Portrait" where a family health tree can be displayed or printed; this family tree contains symbols and abbreviations immediately recognizable by a health care practitioner as a basic family health history. Other family members, such as aunts, uncles, and other blood relatives can be added to the list as well. Other family members listed on the family tree can have their own personalized family tree created at this point, and the entire file can be downloaded to the user's computer, leaving no personal data on the HHS computer.

If for privacy or other reasons, the user does not wish to enter personal family health data to the secured website, the downloadable version is a self-contained version of what is available on the website. Once uncompressed with any zip utility (built in to Windows XP), the file is easily and quickly installed. The software does require the Microsoft ".Net" utility, version

1.1 or later, available for free at windowsupdate.microsoft.com. Once installed, the entire process is completed in the privacy of the home, with no personal data leaving the computer, unless the user desires to send the data files to other family members to complete or use as a basis for their own family health history.

With this information readily available both within a family unit, and shared with other blood relatives as appropriate, family health histories can be easily maintained, and distributed or printed as needed.

Many times we cannot recall family health problems that family members may have had which may give us a predisposition, or otherwise genetically affect us. With this free service and software from the Surgeon General, we may all be better able to provide our health care professionals with the information that may prove so vital to our health care and treatment.

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Configuring a Basic User's PC

By Gabriel Goldberg

APCUG Advisor

Region 2

Columnist,

AARP Computers and Technology Website

Don't be alarmed by the high-falutin word "configuring". It just means deciding what components -- otherwise called "parts" -- will perform various PC functions. It's like old-days car buying: reviewing a dealer checklist to pick dozens of individual features, from radio to power steering to disc brakes and more. The good news is that almost any current PC with a printer and Internet connectivity will handle mainstream requirements. That means that a generic Windows PC is usually adequate -- but you should upgrade if you'll do anything challenging or exotic.

Just as when buying a car, the first step in buying a computer is deciding what you'll do with it: e-mail, Web searching/viewing, or word processing? Financial work with Quicken? Digital photography? Simple games? Ultra-demanding tasks like high-end games and digital video editing?

Just as when making any major purchase, a small investment in learning pays off for years. Before buying a PC, learn the basics: -- take a class, buy a book, attend local computer user group meetings, consult Web sites, read technology magazines at the library.

As you look at applications' system requirements (processor speed, RAM size, hard drive storage capacity, video card speed and memory, etc.) note differences between minimum and recommended specifications. Vendors are often too optimistic -- and that's being charitable -- about what's needed for their software to run productively. It's much safer, and not much more expensive, to buy at least the recommended choices. In fact, I usually buy a little more power than I need. This bumps cost just a little and it avoids future problems and upgrades. Purchasing this way greatly extends a PC's life and makes it more compatible with future innovations, at least for a while.

Remember that as PCs evolve, a range of choices is always available, from bleeding-edge new to borderline obsolete. An equally valid -- and more economical -- approach to configuring is finding the current technology "sweet spot" the point where cost, performance, compatibility, and useful life are in balance. A key decision is whether to buy a brand-name system or an unknown-brand machine, have a PC built to order, or build it yourself. Choices for laptop computers are much more limited: brand-name systems dominate, trailed by a few

off-brand manufacturers. There are no build-it-yourself options, though manufactured systems can be customized extensively.

Each purchasing choice has advantages and advocates. Brand-name systems can be evaluated and compared by consulting references such as Consumer Reports magazine, are available everywhere via catalog or on-line shopping, and may have better standard or optional warranties (often worthwhile for quick service and peace of mind). But brand-name systems sometimes suffer from using commodity parts vs. best-quality components.

Unknown-brand machines can be reliable money savers or risky acquisitions. I'd only buy such a system from a trusted store with a flexible return policy. I favor having PCs built to order by small local shops with established reputations, offering maximum flexibility and consultation during design. And I've enjoyed watching my PCs take shape as they're assembled from a tableful of parts!

Some people build their own PCs, often with training and mentoring from computer user group volunteers. This demystifies system innards, greatly facilitating diagnosing and repairing problems and upgrading components. Build-to-order and build-yourself allow specifying brand-name parts for improved performance and reliability. No matter where you purchase, look carefully at monitor choices. Traditional CRT monitors prices have declined, allowing buying larger devices with better resolution. And newer/thinner/lighter LCD panels offer a powerful -- though sometimes less flexible -- alternative. Visit stores to compare brands and models and explore settings to match your preferences.

Decide how you'll back up your software and data. Choices include a second -- perhaps external or removable -- hard drive, writable optical media such as DVD, and tape. The first two are most often used, with each having unique advantages. Follow your backup plan regularly; nothing ruins a day like losing months or years of can't-be-replaced data, not to mention having to reconstruct all your software.

Small choices can make large differences in productivity and comfort. For example, mouse technology has advanced far beyond the traditional two-button wired device. Mouse alternatives include trackball and wireless devices, gadgets with many extra programmable buttons, wheel mice allowing horizontal/vertical scrolling, etc. Considering how much time you'll use your pointing device, it's worth spending a little extra money to have the device that suits you best!

Continued on page 13.

Continued from page 12 - Configuring a PC.

Windows offers many choices for easing use -- enlarging type, making keyboarding easier, providing special audible and visual cues, etc. Accessibility options are found in different places -- usually via Control Panel or the Start menu. It's worth exploring these to tailor your PC to your individual preferences. Similarly, small add-on programs can greatly improve a PC's comfort factor. Remember that Windows is highly configurable: you can change how it looks and operates. As you become familiar with your new PC, explore options/settings/preferences. Just as you wouldn't insist on driving a car with seats and mirrors exactly as they came from the dealer, don't be captive of Microsoft's initial settings!

Name-brand computers usually include software bundles. Vendors shout about how valuable they are and how much money you're saving on them -- but that's only true if you'll use the software provided. As soon as you have your machine, examine pre-installed software and remove anything you know you won't use. Then defrag your disk and then install the programs you'll use. These simple steps will make your machine run better by decluttering it.

Finally, If you understand how to do this, use built-in tools such as MSCONFIG to chop out unneeded services started by default when your system boots.

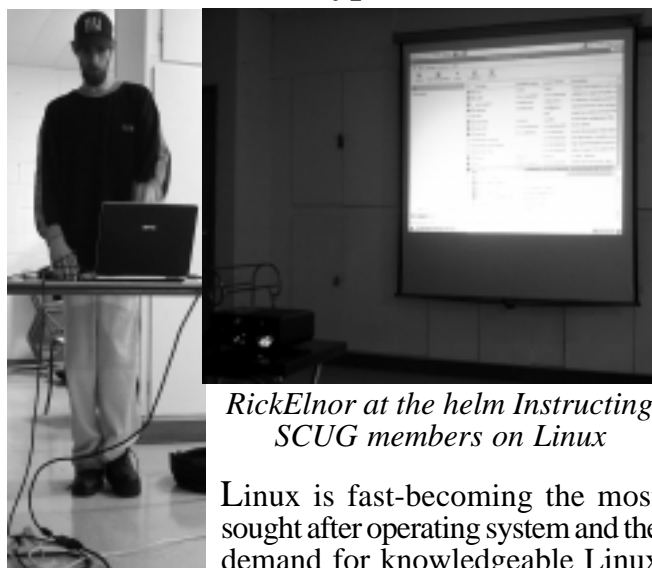
Software bundles often include junior-grade versions or limited-time trial copies of critical tools such as anti-virus and anti-spyware software. For system reliability and security, upgrade these to full versions and subscribe to update services.

Not much else in modern life besides computers keeps getting faster/better/cheaper. And it's not hard to find or build a computer that meets needs for several years, runs reliably, and doesn't break the bank.

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What's All The Hype About Linux?



RickElnor at the helm Instructing SCUG members on Linux

Linux is fast-becoming the most sought after operating system and the demand for knowledgeable Linux technicians is forcing schools to integrate this OS into their regular programming. Hardcore Microsoft supporters, such as Dell Computers, now are beginning to offer their computers without Windows. Dell says that "Dell Precision™ open-source n Series1 workstations deliver maximum workstation performance. Smart for businesses with proprietary software images or special Linux needs, these systems are available with factory installed Linux." HP is considering selling computers with Linux operating systems and Open Source programs.

Really, the writing is on the wall...or rather: desktop. And what about Microsoft's new OS coming soon? Will that be MS's Saviour?

Let's face it, people are getting fed up with the recent rash of problems associated with Windows. In fact, Tom Adelstein, Editor in Chief of Lxer.com, writing in Newswire says that "With the eventual release of Vista, Microsoft will stress its current customers' resources. Word on the street says that Visual Basic programmers haven't made a successful transition to C# and the .Net framework appears like just another development model - not the development model. So, unless an enterprise needs Microsoft media player and a few other replaceable items, the Linux desktop has much appeal in the corporate environment (<http://lxer.com/module/newswire/view/52350>)."

Come out to a meeting and take Linux for a test run on February 14, 2006. See page 16 for time and location.

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Last Wednesday of the month
 7:00 p.m. social time
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**Meeting Schedule:
 see the last page of this paper!**

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I have an IBM ThinkPad 266 MHz Pentium II Laptop - 32 megs RAM, 4 GB harddrive.

Looking for parts:

- * larger harddrive
- * RAM
- * PCMCIA for WiFi connection

Please email me at: editor@scug.ca



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- * **Executive and Digital** - St James Church-140 Lansdowne North
- * **Windows - PC** - Grace United Church, 990 Cathcart
- * **General Meeting** - St. Bartholomews Church, 718 Cathcart
- * **Genealogy Meeting** - St James Church-140 Lansdowne North
- * **Linux Group** - St James Church-140 Lansdowne North



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Executive	Digital Photo	Windows-PC	General	Genealogy	Linux
Jan 30	Feb 1	Feb 16	Feb 22	Jan 31	Feb 14
Feb 27	Mar 1	Mar 16	Mar 29	Feb 28	Mar 14
Apr 3	Apr 5	Apr 20	Apr 26	Mar 28	Apr 11
May 1	May 3	May 18	May 31	Apr 25	May 9
Jun 5	Jun 7	Jun 15	Jun 28	May 30	Jun 13
				Jun 27	

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