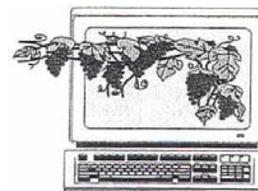


COMPUTER NEWS



Volume 23, No. 3

March, 2006

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The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group has served novice and experienced computer users since 1983. Through its monthly meetings, newsletters, online forum, special interest groups, mentor program and community involvement, it has helped educate people of all ages. The NVPCUG provides opportunities for people to find friends who share common interests and experiences. Through its Computers-to-Schools program, members refurbish used computer equipment for donation to local schools. Since January 2003 the NVPCUG has donated 401 computers and 124 printers.

Getting More Out of Digital Photographs to Be Discussed at March 15 NVPCUG Meeting

By Susy Ball, Programs Coordinator

The Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group will meet Wednesday, March 15, 2006, 7:00-9:00 p.m., at the Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson Street, Napa, California.

During the **Computer Tutor** session of the evening, **Bernhard Krevet** will demonstrate *Picasa Photo Organizer*, a shareware photo management program that enables users to organize, edit and share their digital photos. It makes it possible for users to move their photos across partitions and file folders, add captions, pan and zoom, and use lighting and color effects. You can download it from the Web.

The main presentation of the evening will feature **The Digital Photo Guy, Lee Otsubo**, in an online workshop on digital photography. The program originates in Escondido, Calif., and is designed to help photographers at all skill levels to improve their technique and get more out of their cameras. **Susy Ball**, programs director, will introduce the workshop.



Lee Otsubo

Preceding the two sessions on photography, **Jerry Brown** will lead the **Random Access** portion of our meeting with an open-floor question-and-answer period, during which you can ask questions about specific computer-related issues and receive helpful information from other meeting attendees. Don't forget that you can also e-mail your questions before coming to the meeting (questions@nvpcug.org). If you have found a novel solution to a computer problem you faced, you might like to share it with the group during this session.

Joining/Subscribing to NVPCUG E-mail Lists

By Ron Dack, Webmaster

Over the last few months I have been barraged with requests to add people to our News and Members e-mail lists.

Here are a few simple ways for you to add your name to either or both of these lists.

First, if you send a blank e-mail to either of the below-listed e-mail addresses I will be contacted and advised

that you want to join that list. If you have not been previously banned from the list I will authorize your e-mail address to be added to it now.

1. For the Members list: send a blank e-mail to: NVPCUGmembers-subscribe@yahoogroups.com from the e-mail address you want to use for
(continued on p. 4)

NVPCUG Special Interest Groups

In SIG meetings you can learn about a subject in greater detail than is feasible at NVPCUG general meetings. SIG meetings are open to everyone. Meeting times and locations occasionally change, so for current meeting information, see our Web site, www.nvpcug.org, or contact the SIG leaders.

Digital Photography SIG

Meets: Monthly, second Wednesday
7:00 to 8:30 p.m.
Piner's Nursing Home,
Conference Room
1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
Leader: **Susy Ball**
(707) 337-3998
SusyBall@aol.com

eBay SIG

Meets: Time and place to be arranged
Leader: **Volunteer needed**

Investors SIG

Meets: Monthly, second Monday
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Jerry Brown's home,
23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa
Leader: **Jerry Brown**
(707) 254-9607
bqandjbb@sbcglobal.net

Macintosh SIG

Meets: Monthly, second Thursday
6:30-8:30 p.m.
Napa Senior Activity Center
1500 Jefferson St., Napa
Leader: **Jim Gillespie**
(707) 252-1665
napanerd@pacbell.net

President's Message—

Internet Safety

by Dianne Prior

Parents and Grandparents in our group will be interested in a free event Cybermill is hosting, designed to help adults talk candidly to their teens about Internet safety. The program is entitled "Keep Your Kids Safe on the Internet," and it will be held Thursday, April 6, 6:15 to 7:30 p.m., at CyberMill, 3299 Claremont Way, Napa. Presenters are **Mike Parsons**, Napa County District Attorney Investigator, Northern California Computer Crimes Task Force, and **Sgt. Terry Gonsalves**, Napa Police Department. For more information contact Paul Hippauf (258-8884, phippauf@cybermill.org, www.cybermill.org).



Dianne Prior

The Board of Directors of our users group is still in the process of putting together a survey to find out what the members want. Part of the survey will be exploring the possibility of changing our meeting day to the first Wednesday of each month, to facilitate the task of finding presenters. Be assured that if we do give serious thought to that we will give everyone plenty of notice and will include it among the survey questions.

We're still looking for someone to take over the e-Bay SIG. You don't have to know anything about computers nor about e-Bay ... just have an interest in learning about e-Bay and a willingness to lead the meetings and coordinate a meeting place with computer access.

See you all at our regular meeting on March 15 at 7:00.

Peace and **G**ood,

Dianne **P**rior

NVPCUG Calendar

Wednesdays	9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
March 1	7:00-9:00 p.m.
March 8	7:00-8:30 p.m.
March 9	6:30-8:30 p.m.
March 13	5:30-7:30 p.m.
March 15	7:00-9:00 p.m.

Computers-to-Schools work parties. To volunteer, contact Orion Hill, (707) 252-0637.
Board of Directors meeting, Piner's Nursing Home, 1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
Digital Photography SIG meeting, Piner's Nursing Home, 1800 Pueblo Ave., Napa
Macintosh SIG meeting, Napa Senior Activity Center, 1500 Jefferson St., Napa
Investors SIG meeting, Jerry Brown's home, 23 Skipping Rock Way, Napa
General Meeting, Napa Senior activity Center, 1500 Jefferson St., Napa

Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group

Officers for 2006

Board of Directors

President	Dianne Prior	252-1506*	President@nvpcug.org
Vice President	Ron Dack		VicePresident@nvpcug.org
Secretary	Julie Jerome	224-6620	Secretary@nvpcug.org
Treasurer	Roy Wagner	253-2721	Treasurer@nvpcug.org

Other Directors: Susy Ball, Orion E. Hill, Bob Kulas, John Moore, Dick Peterson, John Simcoe, James Stirling, and Dean Unruh

Appointed Officers

Computer Equipment Sales Coordinator	(Volunteer Needed)		
Computer Recycling Coordinator	Bill Wheadon	224-3901	Recycler@nvpcug.org
Computer Tutor Coordinator	Mike Moore	255-1615	Tutor@nvpcug.org
Computers-to-Schools Program Coordinator	Orion E. Hill	252-0637	CTS@nvpcug.org
Facility Arrangements Coordinator	John Moore	252-3478	Facility@nvpcug.org
Greeter Coordinator	Bob Simmerman	259-6113	Greeter@nvpcug.org
Librarian	Dean Unruh	226-9164	Librarian@nvpcug.org
Membership Director	Dianne Prior	252-1506	Membership@nvpcug.org
Mentor Program Coordinator	Dick Peterson	259-1712	Mentors@nvpcug.org
Newsletter Circulator	Jim Hearn	224-2540	
Newsletter Editor	James Stirling	944-1177	Editor@nvpcug.org
Product Review Coord.	Marcia Waddell	252-2060	Reviews@nvpcug.org
Programs Director	Susy Ball	337-3998	Programs@nvpcug.org
Publicity Director	John Simcoe	258-8233	Publicity@nvpcug.org
Random Access Moderator	Jerry Brown	254-9607	Questions@nvpcug.org
Special Projects Director	Bob Kulas	255-9241	Projects@nvpcug.org
Webmaster	Ron Dack		Webmaster@nvpcug.org

*All telephone numbers are in Area Code 707.

Come to the NVPCUG General Meetings

Held the third Wednesday of each month,

7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Napa Senior Activities Center

1500 Jefferson Street,
Napa

NVPCUG *Computer News*

Computer News (ISS 0897-5744) is published monthly by the Napa Valley Personal Computer Users Group, Inc. (NVPCUG), P.O. Box 2866, Napa, CA 94558-0286. Subscriptions: \$30 for one year (12 issues). Editor: **James Stirling**, Editor@nvpcug.org. The material in *Computer News* is intended for noncommercial purposes and may not be reproduced without prior written permission, except that permission for reproducing articles, with authors properly credited, is granted to other computer user groups for their internal, nonprofit use only. The information in this newsletter is believed to be correct. However, the NVPCUG can assume neither responsibility for errors or omissions nor liability for any damages resulting from the use or misuse of any information.

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E-Mail Lists

(continued from page 1)

sending to, and receiving e-mail from, the Members list.

2. For the NEWS/Announcement list: send a blank e-mail to: *NVPCUG-News-Subscribe@yahoogroups.com* from the e-mail address you want to use for receiving NVPCUG NEWS and Announcements.

Second, you can subscribe by going to <http://www.nvpcug.org/list.html> and entering the e-mail address in the appropriate box and clicking on the Yahoo Groups logo.

Remember, the NVPCUG Members e-mail list is only for computer-related messages. No commercial or non-computer-related messages are allowed. Using this list for political, commercial, or any other questionable messages may result in your being banned from the list.

The NVPCUG NEWS and Announcement e-mail list is just that — you cannot send e-mails to this list unless you are specifically allowed, such as a SIG leader, Moderator, or CTS coordinator. Replies to e-mails from this list also go only to moderators and not to the person sending the announcement, so if you receive an e-mail news announcement please do not reply regarding your availability to participate or any other matter.

When or if you change your e-mail address, simply update your Yahoo Profile or unsubscribe using your old address and subscribe using your new address. If you are unable to unsubscribe, let me know and I will remove your old e-mail address. Using any of the above ways, you can then subscribe with your new address.

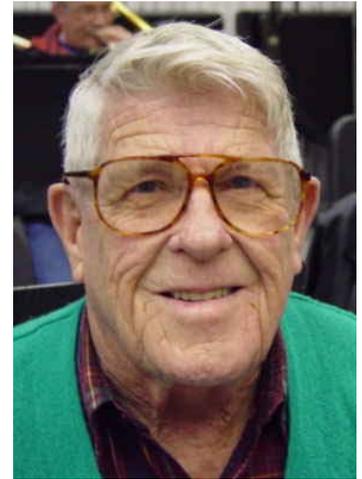
With these simple rules in mind, sign up and start sharing in the knowledge base and events of the NVPCUG. We welcome your input and questions on our Members list, and we will keep you posted as to what is happening with the group on our NEWS and Announcement list.

Jim Waddell Remembered

The NVPCUG lost a valued member when James C. Waddell, Sr., 84, died at a local nursing care center on February 22, 2006. Jim, as his friends called him, was best known as a musician who played with many Northern California symphonic groups. He had helped establish the Solano Community Symphony, and he continued as an active member until his recent sickness. He also had been active in horseback riding and ran a saddlery business with his wife Marcia. Jim and Marcia joined the computer users group about 1996, Marcia recalls, because they had heard about the wonders of computers and thought that such a machine might somehow help them in their business. They had played with an Atari 800, and were considering getting into *Windows 95*, if they could get some help from the computer group. They got lots of advice from many sources, some good and some not so good.

Marcia adds, “We learned a lot of useful information and a lot of confusing lore. It took awhile, but we gradually came to understand the nature of the beast and began to tame it. Jim got quite good at e-mail and *Microsoft Word*, as did I. Then age-related problems began to affect his ability to remember which buttons to push. He gradually forgot all he had learned, and the computer became a mystery to him. I continued to learn how to manipulate the monster and have had it serve me well. I hope to update to a laptop wireless system soon and a better desk monitor. I will continue to use the club as a great resource for keeping up on the latest and best programs to accomplish my goals, as humble as they may be.”

Jim was appreciated by many NVPCUG members as a good friend, and Marcia continues to play an important role as Product Review Coordinator.



Jim Waddell

February 15 presentation--

Susy Ball Speaks on *Smart Computing*

Susy Ball, programs director, presented a PIAB "Program in a Box" at the NVPCUG meeting February 15, featuring computer magazines, especially *Smart Computing*. She pointed out that this journal supplies more than a printed magazine; it also has an online service for answering questions and providing articles from their Web archives. They call it a "one-stop shop for computer problem-solving." For troubleshooting they have a tech support service online with 1,400 questions and answers about error messages; they also have a live tech support center for subscribers at 800-368-8304. Among the handouts Susy distributed was a subscription order form with the NVPCUG name printed on it. The user group gets a special benefit when enough members subscribe and indicate their membership status.

Susy was particularly enthusiastic about *The Ultimate Computing Resource*, one of the magazine's handouts, which lists the steps to be followed when a subscriber wishes to use its Internet services. With its aid a subscriber can locate recent issues of several computer journals published by the same firm, Sandhill Publishing and read or download articles, or save them in PDF format for reading with a laptop.

Computer Tutor

At the **Computer Tutor** session **Dianne Prior** explained how a computer user can find and use special characters like diacritical markings, fractions, special alphabets, and many others using the ASCII and ANSI character sets.

Bill's Tricks and Tips

Stop Highlighting New Programs

In *Windows XP*, after you install a new program, it is highlighted in your start menu and a little bubble window will show up telling you there is no software. It's a waste, because you just installed it - of course you know there is new software. You can disable this feature easily:

1. To do this, Click on Start. Right-click at the top of the Start menu where your name is displayed, and then click Properties.

2. In the Taskbar and Start Menu Properties dialog box, on the Start Menu tab, click Customize.

3. Click the Advanced tab, and then clear the Highlight Newly Installed Programs check box.

4. Click OK, then click OK again.

Pause on Restarts

If you need to turn your PC off and then turn it back on again, it is best to wait at least 30 seconds before hitting the power button a second time. The reason for this is that doing so allows your hard drives time to spin down and park their read/write heads before they receive their wake-up jolt. Doing so will increase the lifespan of your hard drives.

Powering On and Off

On the general subject of powering on and off, it is best to leave your PC on for longer time periods. If you need to use your PC several times throughout the day, leave it on all day rather than turning it on and off each time. This will avoid the cool-down-heating-up of the PC's hardware and prolong its lifespan.

Regular article by Fresno Personal Computer Users Group member Bill Myers. Used

Get Text From a Web Page

Have you ever wished you could save or print the text from a Web site without all those ads? It's easy. Just highlight the text, then on the toolbar click on edit and copy. This puts the text into the clipboard, so that you can call up your word processor, click on Paste, and see the text on the screen. Edit the text for the portions you want, give it a file name, and it's yours.

Sony BMG - Shame on You!

By John Brewer, December 2005 *eMonitor*,
Computer Club of Oklahoma City

Computer users may have noticed the recent brouhaha about Sony music CDs. Is there a valid issue or simply a lot of heat with no real threat?

The issue developed from the desire of Sony BMG to copy-protect its music CDs. When the music CD is played in a personal computer, and the "accept" button is clicked, software known as XCP is installed. XCP reportedly uses "rootkit" technology. Wikipedia states that a "rootkit is a set of software tools frequently used by a third party (usually an intruder) after gaining access to a computer system. These tools are intended to conceal running processes, files or system data, which helps an intruder maintain access to a system without the user's knowledge. Rootkits are known to exist for a variety of operating systems such as *Linux*, *Solaris* and versions of *Microsoft Windows*." The rootkit concept is the dominant controversial aspect of the 2005 Sony CD copy protection controversy, which has made the previously obscure concept of a rootkit much more widely known in the technology community, and to the general public.

The technical issues seem to be rather complicated, but a survey of the articles available on the Internet is disturbing. Apparently, rootkits install a backdoor to the computer and are difficult to remove. Apparently, there is a patch available from Sony that may or may not remove the Sony software. Personally, I think the only alternative is to avoid Sony CDs or to avoid playing any Sony CDs on a personal computer. The music industry is very serious about copyright violations and may think that the "end justifies the means" in this particular matter.

The following is a portion of a Sony response dated November 18, 2005. "You may be aware of the recent attention given to the XCP content protection software included on some SONY BMG CDs. This software was provided to us by a third-party vendor, First4Internet. Discussion has centered on security concerns raised about the use of CDs containing this software.

We share the concerns of consumers regarding these discs, and we are instituting a mail-in program that will allow consumers to exchange any CD with XCP software for the same CD without copy protection and receive MP3 files of the same title. We also have asked our retail partners to remove all unsold CDs with XCP software from their store shelves and inventory. Please click here for exchange program details.

"Our new initiatives follow the measures we have already taken, including the voluntary suspension of the manufacture of CDs with the XCP software. In addition, to address security concerns, we provided to major software and anti-virus companies a software update, which also may be downloaded at <http://cp.Sonybmg.com/xcp/engiisWupdates.html>. We will shortly provide a simplified and secure procedure to uninstall the XCP software if it resides on your computer."

Sony sounds like it is trying to respond in a responsible manner. However, this type of response is also an attempt to institute damage control. Sony has been sued by the Electronic Frontier Foundation and the Attorney General for the State of Texas regarding this practice.

EFF filed its complaint in a California state court on November 21, 2005. The EFF Web site states that "by including a flawed and overreaching computer program in over 20 million music CDs sold to the public, Sony BMG has created serious security, privacy and consumer-protection problems that have damaged music lovers everywhere.

"At issue are two software technologies: SunnComm's *MediaMax* and First4Internet's *Extended Copy Protection* (also known as XCP), which Sony BMG claims to have placed on the music CDs to restrict consumer use of the music on the CDs, but which in truth do much more, including monitoring customer listening of the CDs and installing undisclosed and in some cases hidden files on users' computers that can expose users to malicious attacks by third parties, all without appropriate notice and consent from purchasers. The CDs

also condition use of the music on unconscionable licensing terms in the End User Licensing Agreement (EULA).

“After a series of embarrassing public revelations about security risks associated with the XCP software, including warnings issued by the United States Government, Microsoft and leading anti-virus companies, Sony BMG has taken some steps to respond to the security risks created by the XCP technology. Sony BMG has failed, however, to address security concerns raised by the MediaMax software or the consumer privacy and consumer fairness problems created by both technologies.”

The Attorney General of the State of Texas has also filed litigation regarding the same spyware from Sony. The Web site for the AG addresses the litigation. Today [Texas] “sued SONY BMG Music Entertainment as the first state in the nation to bring legal action against Sony for illegal ‘spyware.’” The suit is also the first filed under the state’s spyware law of 2005. It alleges the company surreptitiously installed the spyware on millions of compact music discs (CDs) that consumers inserted into their computers when they played the CDs, which can compromise the systems.

The Attorney General’s lawsuit alleges the New York-based company violated a new Texas law protecting consumers from the hidden spyware. The company accomplished this by using new technology on certain music CDs to install files onto consumers’ computers that hide other files installed by SONY. This secret “cloaking” component is installed without the knowledge of consumers and can cause their computers to become vulnerable to computer viruses and other forms of attack.

“Sony has engaged in a technological version of cloak and dagger deceit against consumers by hiding secret files on their computers,” said Attorney General Abbott. “Consumers who purchased a Sony CD thought they were buying music. Instead, they received spyware that can damage a computer, subject it to viruses and expose the consumer to possible identity crime.”

Sony insists on its Web site that it has recalled all affected CDs. However, Attorney General’s investigators were able to purchase numerous titles at Austin retail stores as recently as Sunday evening.

According to Sony’s Web site, the company recently distributed millions of CDs across the nation on 52 CDs by various artists. These CDs contained embedded files used for copy protection — or XCP technology. The files prompt consumers to enter into a user agreement to install Sony’s audio player. By opting into the agreement, which Sony represents is the only way a consumer can listen to these CDs on a computer, the consumer is unaware that Sony secretly installs files into the computer’s *Microsoft Windows* folders. Consumers are unable to detect and remove these files.

Sony BMG claims on its Web site that this XCP technology merely prevents unlimited copying, is otherwise passive and does not gather personal information about a computer user. However, the Attorney General’s investigation into this technology revealed that it remains hidden and active at all times after installation, even when Sony’s media player is inactive, prompting concerns about its true purpose.

The Attorney General’s lawsuit also alleges that a phantom file is installed to conceal the XCP files from the user, thus making it difficult for the user to remove the files from his or her computer. Moreover, recent news accounts allege that newly created viruses that exploit this phantom file have been spreading. A user unfamiliar with installation — and removal — of this technology may be vulnerable to new security risks and possibly identity theft.

Because of alleged violations of the Consumer Protection Against Computer Spyware Act of 2005, the Attorney General is seeking civil penalties of \$100,000 for each violation of the law, attorneys’ fees and investigative costs.”

Sony BMG — shame on you!

John Brewer practices law in Oklahoma City, is a member of the Governor’s and Legislative Task Force for E-Commerce, and enjoys issues relating to eBusiness and cyberspace. Comments and questions are welcome and can be e-mailed to johnb@jnbrewer.com.

In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, this material is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for research and educational purposes. The article may contain sources for content as attributed within the article.

The Editorial Committee of the APCUG has provided this article.

Anti-Spam Programs – Do They Really Work?

by Vinny La Bash, vlabash@home.com

Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc.

February 2006 issue of the *Sarasota PC Monitor* www.spcug.org

Among the most effective anti-spam programs are the ones that use some kind of approval-based e-mail management system. They work by constructing a “white list” of permitted e-mail addresses, accepting mail from anyone on the list, and rejecting everything else. The program initially sniffs through your contact list, inbox, and other e-mail folders, organizes the e-mail addresses it finds, asks you if you want to add or change anything, and the list is complete.

From that moment on, any incoming e-mail that is not on the list is considered to be spam, and is automatically exiled to a quarantine folder or wherever you decided it should go during installation. The programs do work as advertised, which is both their greatest strength and their greatest weakness. Here’s what you need to know before installing one of these puppies.

Scenario 1: A friend you have lost contact with over the years sends you an e-mail. That friend’s e-mail address is not on your white list. Unless you have a quarantine folder where unapproved e-mail is sent without automatically deleting it, you will never see this e-mail. You have to check your quarantine folder, at least occasionally, to see if there are any false positives residing in there with all the junk. How much time will this take? Who knows? None of the programs mention this in their promotional material or specification lists.

Scenario 2: You install a new program or device and run into difficulties. The troubleshooting guide sends you to an e-mail address where you can get a solution to your problem. You remember to add the e-mail address to your white list. You wait for a reply, and wait, and wait. What happened?

Your problem was given to a technical representative who has an e-mail address different from the general support address. You don’t see the reply unless

you check the quarantine e-mail folder, assuming that in your efforts to rid yourself of all spam you did not specify that anything not on your white list be automatically deleted.

Scenario 3: You order something from an online merchant and before your order is shipped the merchant e-mails you to ask whether you want the white one or the black one. The query has been rerouted to the quarantine folder because the person trying to contact you has an e-mail address that is not on your white list.

Scenario 4: Your spouse sets up a Yahoo e-mail account for the sole purpose of sending you a surprise Valentine’s Day e-mail. For no apparent reason you are getting the silent treatment. You ask, “What’s wrong?” Your spouse replies, “Nothing.”

Scenario 5: Your granddaughter just got an e-mail address of her own. She sends you a message, and can’t understand why you won’t answer. She asks her parents “Why doesn’t grandpa love me anymore?”

We could go on, but you get the general idea. Some 99.99 percent of all real spam will be banished from your sight, but the very few legitimate emails identified as spam will very likely be the ones you most want or need to see. Some anti-spam programs have a “sender confirmation feature” that automatically sends a personalized notification to anyone whose message has been quarantined. Simply replying to the challenge causes the original message to be moved to your inbox, and allows their e-mail address to be added to the white list. Legitimate senders can respond to these challenge messages, but suppose that for whatever reason they don’t. Does a seven-year-old grandchild really understand why she needs a grandparent’s permission to send an e-mail?

What you end up with is a time-

The programs do work as advertised, which is both their greatest strength and their greatest weakness.

Even after being married to me for 38 years, my wife still can't read my mind. How do I expect a dumb computer to do it?

consuming process of back and forth e-mails. Why should every e-mail first contact have to be sent twice? What a waste of time. This might be acceptable if your e-mail volume is very low, but who are we kidding? Simply establishing an e-mail account anywhere will get you a boatload of spam. ISP-level filters are a joke. How many essays do you want to compose explaining why someone needs "permission" to send you an e-mail? I don't respond to challenge e-mail. Why should anyone respond to mine?

You can check your quarantine folder regularly, but with the huge quantity of genuine spam generated and thrust upon us daily, it's too easy to overlook a legitimate message. When you finally delete the spam, there is a good chance that among the junk a valuable note is lost forever.

After using one of these programs for several months, I decided that I would much rather delete spam manually, rather than run the risk of missing an important legitimate e-mail. No computer program, no matter how expertly crafted or trained, can ultimately determine what e-mails I do or don't want to read. Even after being married to me for 38 years, my wife still can't read my mind. How do I expect a dumb computer to do it?

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.

Sound Off (or On) for Capitals

By Susy Ball

Have you ever been typing away and suddenly discovered that you were typing all-caps, because of accidentally touching the Caps Lock key? So then you had to hit it again and retype in lower case. What a waste! I have found a solution that will work for you. In *Windows XP*, go to Programs>Control Panel>Accessories>Accessibility>Accessibility Wizard>>Set Wizard Options. Then click on "I have difficulty using the keyboard." Then go to ToggleKeys and click on Yes. That will give you a distinctive tone whenever you hit the Caps Lock key, one you can hear whether or not you have speakers attached. Most other *Windows* versions have similar choices.

How Safe Is Instant Messaging?

Smart Computing Daily Tip, From Feb. 2, 2006.

Instant messengers are very popular programs, but they can become a security risk if you're not careful. To protect yourself when you use IM programs, make sure your software (browsers and e-mail programs, as well as IM clients) is up-to-date. Monthly updating is the minimum requirement for safety, and if you hear of a new worm or virus, check for updates immediately. Always use antivirus protection and, if possible, a software or hardware firewall. (This is especially important for broadband users.)

To be safe, disable file sharing completely. If you don't want to lose file-sharing capabilities, never open attachments (even if they appear to be from a friend or your IM host) unless you confirm their validity via email or telephone. Because some malicious software has no apparent ill effect on a PC, be wary of programs written by unknown authors, even if a friend or associate recommends them. That person's PC may already be part of a remote attack, though he may not yet realize it. Check the settings of your IM client to ensure it is not set to accept incoming messages or download files automatically, even if the sender is on your accepted list.

Always terminate your IM session when you leave the computer. Additionally, because instant messages are sent in plain text across an insecure network, it is not difficult for hackers to intercept them. Don't ever reveal sensitive information, such as credit card numbers, business data, or vacation plans in an instant message. Finally, avoid using the Web-based IM clients that most IM services offer. These are handy because you can log on anywhere from any browser, but they also offer fewer security protections.

New Federal Web Site Provides Internet Security Information

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, *The Examiner*, Beaumont, TX; radio & TV show host [Iwilsker\(at\)apcug.net](mailto:Iwilsker(at)apcug.net)

WEB SITES:

<http://www.onguardonline.gov>

<http://www.onguardonline.gov/quiz>

<http://www.onguardonline.gov/stopthinkclick.html>

<http://onguardonline.gov/filecomplaint.html>

<http://onguardonline.gov/tutorials>

The media has recently been rife with stories about Internet scams, frauds, identity theft, pedophiles, and other malevolent occurrences that have happened on the Internet.

While there are many online resources providing informational Web sites to help prevent us from falling prey to internet victimization, a consortium of federal agencies has created “OnGuard Online” at www.onguardonline.gov. This consortium consists of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), United States Postal Inspection Service, the Department of Commerce (DOC), and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

Materials are provided on this Web site to inform and educate the computer user about several of the most nefarious threats that commonly assail us as we enjoy the abundance of the Internet. Topics currently covered are spyware, identity theft, phishing, spam scams, online shopping, P2P (Peer-to-Peer) file sharing, and VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol – internet telephony). There are also a series of online quizzes (www.onguardonline.gov/quiz), where the user can test his knowledge on the security risks associated with these topics. A series of videos and tutorials on related topics, such as “Viruses and Worms” and “Protect Your Privacy, Family, and PC,” are also available at this site (onguardonline.gov/tutorials). For those who have been victimized by Internet miscreants, a resource is available to show the user where and how to file complaints with the appropriate federal and other agencies at onguardonline.gov/filecomplaint.html.

Spyware is defined at this site as “software installed on your computer without your consent to monitor or control your computer use.” Spyware can be used to steal your identity or capture your usernames, passwords, and account numbers (keyloggers); compile personal surfing profiles for directed advertising or other purpose (some forms of tracking cookies); display unwanted pop-up ads, which may be pornographic (ad-ware), redirect the browser to other sites (browser hijacking); install unwanted links on the desktop or in the “favorites” or bookmarks; and a variety of other unwanted and possibly

dangerous web related items. OnGuard Online provides links and information on removing spyware, and protecting your computer from spyware.

Identity theft is a scourge that may impact as many as 10 million Americans each year, according to some sources. The incidence of identity theft through internet tricks, such as “phishing” (typically e-mails directing the user to an authentic looking but counterfeit website soliciting credit card information, PIN numbers, etc.); “pharming” (changing data files or “hosts” on the computer to redirect intentional visits to financial or commercial sites to counterfeit sites where valuable personal information is illicitly obtained) accounts for an increasingly significant portion of identity theft. *OnGuard Online* provides information on how to protect yourself from phishing scams, and how to protect your identity while online, as well as instructions on dealing with identity theft if victimized.

Some Internet security companies report that the amount of spam, or unsolicited commercial e-mail, can easily amount to 60 to 80 percent of all e-mails sent. According to this Web site, details are provided on the major spam scams currently in circulation. The top 10 spam scams are: The “Nigerian” E-mail Scam (may also appear to be from Russia, Columbia, England, or other sources); Phishing; Work-at-Home Scams; Weight Loss Claims; Foreign Lotteries (Congratulations, you are a winner in the Spanish / British / Canadian Lottery!); Cure-All Products; Check Overpayment Scams (I have a large cashier’s check – cash it, keep some, and wire me the difference); Pay-in-Advance Credit Offers; Debt Relief; and Investment Schemes (buy this penny stock – it will quintuple in a few days). Sadly, many gullible Internet users still fall for these scams, enriching the crooks and typically receiving nothing worthwhile in return.

Millions of Internet users shopped online during the holiday season, and still continue to do so at online retailers, or at popular auction sites such as Ebay. While most online shoppers have been successful and had few problems, there are also thousands who have been victimized to some degree by Internet crooks. This site explains a series of safe shopping tips, in-

cluding “Know who you’re dealing with; Know exactly what you’re buying; Know what it will cost (including shipping, taxes, and other charges); Pay by credit or charge card; Check out the terms of the deal; and Print and save records of your online transactions.”

“Peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing allows users to share files online through an informal network of computers running the same software.” People, especially children and college students, use these P2P networks to exchange software, music, videos, and other files. While there is much material that can legitimately be exchanged, P2P is also often a source of spyware, viruses, and illicit and illegal copies of pirated software, music, and other intellectual property. This site lists many of the risks common with these P2P services and how to safely utilize such services.

You have likely seen the ads on TV, as well as displays at the electronics and mass merchandising stores for “VoIP,” services that allow the broadband Internet user to make local and long-distance phone calls over the Internet for a flat monthly fee. While expanding on popularity, the path has been bumpy, as some subscribers have been dissatisfied with the service. Issues and service such as “911” calls, while addressed in regulations, are still not universally implemented on many VoIP systems. The *OnGuard Online* Web site also explains what many local VoIP users painfully found out during the recent spate of hurricanes and other storms, that if there is no power, or Internet service is otherwise inaccessible, the VoIP services generally do not function, leaving the user without phone service.

The OnGuard Online site “Stop – Think – Click: 7 Practices for Safer Computing” (onguardonline.gov/stopthinkclick.html) reiterates the oft-stated common-sense warnings that all computer users should be aware of, and implement:

1. Protect your personal information. It's valuable.
2. Know who you're dealing with.
3. Use anti-virus software and a firewall, and update both regularly.
4. Make sure your operating system and Web browser are set up properly and update them often.
5. Protect your passwords.
6. Back up important files.
7. Learn who to contact if something goes wrong online.

If we use the information on the *OnGuard Online* Web sites, we will all have a safer and more enjoyable Internet experience.

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.

Computer Fact or Fiction?

By Laurianne McLaughlin

(Reprinted from *PCWorld.com* Feb. 23, PC Myths, used by permission)

One thing is true about urban legends: People love to repeat them. Better yet, they love to e-mail them.

Did you see the picture of the 4500-pound, man-eating alligator caught in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina? Turns out he's not quite that big, and he's never been on this side of the Atlantic Ocean.

More recently, maybe you received an e-mail warning you about an Olympic Torch virus making the rounds that would "burn" your computer's hard drive. Don't get hot and bothered over this one—it's also a hoax.

In fact, owning a computer opens the door to a host of myths and tall tales about the care and feeding of your pricey info system. And because a computer can be an expensive, mysterious piece of equipment, many cautious people take some of this maintenance "advice" as fact. But rest assured, most of it isn't.

Here's a simple true-false quiz designed to help get to the bottom of common computer misconceptions. Finally, here's some information you can feel good about e-mailing to your friends.

True or false? My PC will start behaving worse than a tired toddler if I don't power it all the way down at night, every night.

False. Your PC doesn't need to be shut down fully every day to stay healthy. Many people hate to wait for Windows to shut all the way down. And they really hate to wait for it to boot all the way up again. The more programs and utilities you have running, the worse that boot time becomes. One answer: Use Windows XP's Hibernate option (look for it in your Control Panel under Power Options). This will make your PC go to sleep instead of shutting all the way down.

True or false? If I spill a drink on my keyboard, it's totaled.

False. A desktop computer's keyboard will usually survive a spill (though you Big Gulp types should be extra careful). Turn the keyboard upside down on top of a kitchen towel and leave it alone for a while. Then you can wipe the top of the keys down with a slightly damp cloth and be back in business.

Multi-Core Processors

By Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., member of the Sarasota PCUG, Florida
February 2006 issue of the *Sarasota PC Monitor* www.spcug.org

When I first started researching central processing units (CPUs) my idea was to try to make some sense out of the naming/numbering schemes currently being used by Intel and AMD. This turned out to be an almost impossible task. Did you realize that Intel has more than 50 different Pentium 4 CPU models? That in each speed range there can be a dozen different models. They vary by cache size, socket size, hyper-threading or not, 64 bit or not, voltage and other parameters. As just one example, Intel's 3.2 GHz processor has 12 different models. AMD is just about as bad when you try to analyze their nomenclature. So, for the moment, I have given up on trying to find a simple way to categorize the currently available CPUs. Maybe next month.

Since the upper end of the CPU production now seems to be aimed at producing processors with more than one central core, I decided to look at that topic. So what does it mean that a CPU has more than one core? You can think of it as a single chip containing two or more central processors. It is like having two (or more) computers in one box. That said, I have to admit that it doesn't double your processing speed. At least, not yet.

Servers and workstations used in business have had multiple processors for a number of years. Mainframe computers with multiple processors have also been around for years. In order to take advantage of multiple processing your operating system must be capable of recognizing and using multiple processors. Windows has had that capability since Windows NT/2000 and it is included in Windows XP. Intel introduced Hyper-threading technology in 2002. That allowed two different "threads" to be processed almost simultaneously. Going the next step and putting multiple processors on one single chip is the idea behind multi-core processors. The AMD64 chip was originally designed to have a second core added at a later date. This became the current Athlon 64 X2 dual-core processor. Intel's Pentium D is also a dual-core processor. In any multi-core processor each core is seen by the operating system as being a discrete processor as if the motherboard had two or more separate CPUs. Ideally this allows the computer to process more work within a given clock cycle.

The question is, why would Intel and AMD want to complicate CPU design by putting these processors onto a single chip? The design is more expensive to produce. The primary answer to the questions is heat. In the fall of 2002 Intel indicated that it had a 4.0 GHz processor in production. That processor never reached the market. There was also talk about processors reaching 10 GHz. That has all changed and primarily due to the difficulty of reducing the heat output of these processors. When you have 125 million transistors in a very small space, as in Intel's Prescott processor series, there is a lot of heat produced. In fact, it takes special cooling to keep the processor from overheating and essentially burning itself up. I have a 3.0 GHz Intel "Prescott" processor in my computer and it runs at a consistent 40⁰ Celsius (104⁰ F). That's only because I have an over sized copper heat sink and very large CPU fan. Ideally it should be running in the low 30's, which would be about 50 percent of the maximum temperature.

Another problem is current or electron leakage. As the processor die size decreases and the number of transistors increases, there is a greater problem with leakage. Electron leakage from one pathway to another can result in data corruption. Die sizes are currently 90 nm and are anticipated to drop to 65 nm this year. Finally the power requirements increase with the increase in transistors. The increase in power is another component in the increasing amount of heat produced by the CPU.

Dual-core processors are designed to run at lower clock speeds than the fastest of the single core processors. This reduces the heat output even though the dual core processors currently have 230 million transistors in a smaller space. Intel has also announced another dual core processor to be on the market this summer that will have 1.7 billion transistors! Their literature says they anticipate that by the end of 2006, 70 percent of their desktop and mobile processors will be dual-core. By the end of 2007 fully 90 percent of Intel's processors will be at least dual-core. AMD is moving just as fast in producing dual-core processors. As the number of cores increase on a single die there will definitely be increases in heat output. Cooling requirements for these CPUs will definitely increase. The future of CPU cooling would seem to be water-cooled systems, even for the home desktop market. Unless there is some technological breakthrough, that will reduce the heat problem.

There are other bottlenecks that will become more important in multi-core systems. One is the bus that transmits information from the core to other components. With two or more cores sending information over the bus, both speed and bandwidth will have to increase to handle the increased load. The CPU depends on the computer RAM for the source of its data and instructions. Therefore memory speed is also important and will need to be increased. Finally, information is read from and written to the hard disk. Even with the increased speed and bandwidth associated with SATA drives, this can be the largest bottleneck in the system. So these problems can prevent the user from gaining the maximum advantage provided by a multi-core system. All that said, I have to admit that there will be some definite gains in processing speed with the multi-core systems. This has already been demonstrated by a number of third-party testers. However, it will be some time before a dual-core system will function at twice the speed of a single core system.

I keep talking about “threads” without really giving you any explanation of them. I don't think you really want to go into the programming background for this, so I will try to give you the simple explanation. A thread is a series of sequential programming steps or operations. In some instances, programming steps can be executed simultaneously. However, the program must be designed to allow this to happen. There are also problems associated with multi-threading that can slow down the overall operation. One problem is called “deadlock”. This is when two threads are each waiting for the other to complete its operations. This can result in neither thread reaching completion. For software developers, multi-threaded applications have much higher development costs than the current single-threaded applications. Although Intel's hyper-threading CPU's have been around for several years, very little software has been written to take advantage of the dual-thread processing. Both Intel and AMD are working with software developers to produce more multi-threaded software applications. But it may be some time before the majority of software applications can take advantage of multi-core processors.

Intel has another technology it has developed for use in its multi-core chips. This is called “*Foxton*.” This allows a processor to adjust its speed and power requirements based on

its processing load. Each process will have a base or minimum clock speed and a maximum speed. When the load is low, the processor can raise its clock speed up to a maximum level. This gives the processor more power for faster computing. If the load or the power requirement rises too high, the processor slows. All of this is more technology to simply reduce the system heat to manageable levels.

As I was writing this, Steve Jobs, at MAC World in San Francisco, announced the introduction of Intel-based Macintosh computers using the Intel Core Duo processor. This processor was developed for the mobile computer market. It uses clock speeds from 1.6 GHz to 2.1 GHz. Although it has a lower clock speed, the dual processor will provide some performance gain. There will also be a lower drain on the battery. Several other companies have produced Windows-based laptops using this same processor.

So how will multi-core computers affect the individual computer user? It should improve the efficiency of your computer by improving its multi-tasking ability. Since each core is essentially a separate processor, at least two applications can be run simultaneously. If the dual core also supports hyper-threading, as some of the Intel Pentium D CPUs do, then it could handle four applications or four threads in multi-threaded applications. Now you may think you really don't do any multi-tasking. However, it you are running an anti-virus program, a firewall, or any other application in the background while you also do word processing or emailing, then you are multi-tasking. A dual-core CPU would permit this to happen more efficiently, if not more quickly. Frequently, I am writing, checking a spreadsheet and pulling data off the web. This is also multi-tasking.

I suspect that if you plan to replace your computer within the next year (or two), you will have a dual-core 64-bit processor in your system. With a couple of Gigabytes of RAM, you'll be all set to run *Windows Vista* as a 64-bit operating system.

Dr. Lewis is a former university and medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail at bwsail@yahoo.com.

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article..

How Big Is a 300 GB Hard Disk?

By Jim Sanders, Editor, Orange Bytes, North Orange County Computer Club

www.noccc.org / editor@noccc.org

I recently acquired a 300 GB hard disk for \$110 after rebates. When I look at that 3.5-inch hard drive that is one inch high and easily held in my hand, I find that trying to put all those gigabytes of storage in perspective is a little tough. I thought about the first Z80 CPM system I built in 1977 from a Cromemco kit that I had to solder together. It used 8-inch floppy disks that held 128,000 bytes. Each byte represents an alphanumeric character (alphabet or numerical digits).

The diskettes were easily damaged, and it was a good idea to keep them in storage boxes. I made some good money selling the SRW Computer Products plastic storage boxes at a great ACP Swap Meet for a discounted price of \$2.00 each. They were designed to hold 10, but you could get 2 or 3 more in if you were careful! I wondered how many such floppies my 300 GB would be, since each gigabyte represented a billion bytes. So I punched the numbers into the calculator, to find that $300,000,000,000 \text{ bytes} / 128,000 \text{ bytes} = 2,343,750$ diskettes. I don't know how to visualize that, but I did calculate that it would take \$468,750 worth of those boxes to store them all. I then remembered that the average price at that time was about \$3.50 a diskette. Again the calculator: $2,343,750 \text{ diskettes} \times \$3.50 = \$8,203,125$. Wow! That is a number that I don't want to think about if I am talking about a hobby.

Another way to wrap your mind around huge numbers is to start small, with something that you can relate to, and work your way up. Now we know that one byte equals one character of the alphabet. The common Courier 10-point type has 10 characters per inch. So, if we have 120 characters/bytes in a row, we have one foot. There are 5,280 feet in a mile. So $5,280 \times 120$ gives the number of characters or bytes that would be on a mile-long ticker tape that was being printed with 10-point type; that would mean 633,600 bytes in the mile. Compared to the 300 gigabytes on the hard disk, 633,600 bytes is not much. To find out how it compares, we can take the 300,000,000,000-byte capacity of the hard disk and divide it by the 633,600 bytes in a mile. The result is the equivalent of 473,485 miles of ticker tape.

To put that into perspective, let's take the circumference of the earth (nominally 25,000 miles) and divide that into our answer. So, $473,485 /$

$25,000 = 18.93$. If we could find a big enough roll of ticker tape, printing all the information on that hard disk would wrap around the equator of the earth 18.93 times. That sounds impressive, but how many people can really visualize that? Besides, I don't know anyone who has a big enough ticker-tape printer. Another thought, that ticker tape would be 5,000 miles short of stretching from the Earth to the Moon and back.

But let's try it with regular 8.5 x 11-inch paper. Again, standard printing would be 10 point type, 10 bytes per inch, and 6 lines per inch. Most people leave at least a half inch margin all the way around the page. So that means each line will be 7.5 inches, or 75 bytes, and there will be 60 lines per page. So each page will use 75 bytes x 60 lines, or 4,500 bytes. First, let's take 1 of the 300,000 megabytes on the disk and see how many pages that represents. $1,000,000 / 4,500 = 222.2$ pages. We still have 299,999 megabytes left and, using them, the total number of pages comes out to 66,660,000 pages.

That is also a little hard to imagine, so let's see how many reams of paper that is. Take 66,660,000 pages, divided by 500 sheets per ream = 133,320 reams of paper. Again, a little hard to visualize.

A lot of things have their volume given in cubic feet. That's 12 inches x 12 inches x 12 inches or 1,728 cubic inches, or 1 cubic foot. I measured one case of paper at 11.25x9x17.5 inches, or 1,771 cubic inches. Let's be generous and round that off to one cubic foot. So at 5,000 sheets, or ten reams per case, we divide the 133,320 reams that we came up with by 10 to get 13,332 cases, or that many cubic feet of space.

Stipulating that an average house is 1,400 square feet with eight-foot-high ceilings, then the average house has 11,200 cubic feet of space, ignoring the walls. If you filled up your house, wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling, with cases of printed paper, you would still have 2,132 cases left over. If you are in better shape than I am, there is still room to get one car in that two car garage. That's $10' \times 20' \times 9' = 1,800$ cubic feet, so that still leaves us with 332 cases of paper. We could take all of the junk out of the other half of the garage, lay down a two foot thick layer of paper and put all the junk back in on top of it. That's how much the 300 gigabyte disk holds! So, unless you are planning on taking out a home improvement loan, don't buy that 400 gigabyte disk.

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The Mouse from Hell . . . Hardware Review. . . or Sort of

By Ann Moore, Topeka PC Users Club, *Personal Computer Newsletter*, February 2006

Several months ago, I sent the following e-mail to “Answerperson” concerning a tragedy in my life:

“Dear Answerperson,

“When I started my computer this morning, my mouse showed no sign of life. Its heart (red light) did not flicker nor did it feel warm to my touch. It was stone cold dead. I tried to revive it by performing an uninstall-reinstall, to no avail. A check of outlets and wiring found them intact. How do I determine the cause of death? There were no early signs of malfunction. If it were an animal, I could have a necropsy performed. Must I disassemble it to determine the cause of death? I cringe at the thought of disemboweling my friend. My mouse was not extraordinary in any way – it was not wireless nor was it ergonomic, just a simple mouse that I loved and cherished. Every day for four years, I held this inanimate object in my hand, caressed it, and knew every curve and indentation intimately. We were as one.

“I have accepted the fact that I must now lay it to rest, but where? Is there a cemetery for computer mice? Should I have it cremated or do I put it in a box and bury it in my backyard under the lilac bush? What will become of my dear friend? Is there a computer mouse heaven? This has never happened to me before and I am devastated. Please no cards or flowers. There will be a memorial fund set up in the name of ‘Ann’s Mouse’ and donations may be sent to commuter@cox.net”.

Answerperson offered his deepest sympathy and suggested that I put my sorrow behind me, go on with my computing and find a new mouse. I visited Best Buy in search of a replacement and found no sympathy there. Their only concern was to sell me a very expensive replacement. In my vulnerable state, if the clerk had shown a little compassion, I might have purchased a more expensive model, but because his attitude was cold and unfeeling, I left the store with one of their cheapest models. There is an old adage: “You get what you pay for,” and that is exactly what I got – in spades.

I doted on my new mouse, showering it with an

abundance of TLC. I never mistreated it by applying any unnecessary pressure, jerking or pulling. In spite of all my efforts to maintain a close personal relationship, it soon became apparent that we were not compatible. The erratic behavior of the mouse became noticeable following surgery on my right shoulder. I was forced to change the mouse settings to accommodate my left hand and the mouse began to balk at every command. Although I moved it around very slowly, it would take off and race around the screen leaving me breathless in my attempt to keep up with it.

In October, I purchased a new LCD 19-inch monitor and the mouse went ballistic. It refused to leave the confines of its colorful, soft pad. Trying to reach the far corners of my monitor with my cursor became almost impossible. The mouse resisted my every effort to control its actions. Every day was a tug-of-war and I was losing my patience. I had serious work to do and no time to play games. I needed a good, reliable mouse. I decided that this obnoxious, malevolent, detestable little rodent had to be eradicated. It was time to go cordless.

Completing a jubilant trip to Best Buy, I came home with a Logitech cordless mouse. I could hardly wait to start using it. What a difference a cord makes! This Logitech moves like a dream and is a pleasure to work with. It takes me everywhere I want to go. Truly, a match made in heaven. I am certain that I have found a new reliable friend.

What do I do with this evil, malicious, wicked little devil that made my life a living hell? No sad songs or mourning for this monster. I had visions of snipping off its tail to make it impotent, then dropping it on the floor and stomping it to death. I even considered calling “The Terminator.” What I will do is wrap it up in colorful paper and donate it to the club for a prize at the next Christmas party. I am hoping it will fall into a strong masculine hand that will teach this contemptible, spiteful, despicable creature how to behave in the presence of a lady.

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups has provided this article.

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