

# New Style

Newsletter of the LaCrosse PC Users' Group

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- ❑ E-mail addresses
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- ❑ Learning Windows98
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## This Month:

### Sept 29, 7PM in the Overholt

Brenda Schwenbach of Xerox (see President's Message to right)

## The editor writes again

Very little local material in this issue. Fortunately, we belong to the Association of Personal Computer User Groups and I was able to get some articles from them and from [www.user-groups.com](http://www.user-groups.com). Otherwise, you'd be reading four blank pages in this newsletter.

Please consider sending in accounts of your experiences with new or revisited hardware and software. Kathy Gallagher recently told us about her adventures and she's still alive. Just ask her, writing for the newsletter is not a life changing or ending experience.

Over the years I have printed glowing praise and blazing condemnation of soft and hardware, I will gleefully accept either.

Surely you have something to share with the group.

## Shareware and Microsoft Web Sites

*courtesy of Gary Stelzig*

### Shareware

[www.cnet.com](http://www.cnet.com)  
[www.shareware.com](http://www.shareware.com)  
[www.sharewareplace.com](http://www.sharewareplace.com)  
[www.hotfiles.com](http://www.hotfiles.com)

### Microsoft sites

Y2K Info - [www.microsoft.com/y2k](http://www.microsoft.com/y2k)  
Updates and Fix Bugs (for your specific computer)  
[www.windowsupdate.microsoft.com](http://www.windowsupdate.microsoft.com)

## President's Message

*Marian Havlik*

Our September 29 program will be a presentation by a local Xerox representative, Brenda Schwenbach. She'll tell us what Xerox is doing these days, how we can improve our computer communications, and how computer communications will change.

Our August speaker was Scott Finn who teaches classes at WWTC on Introduction to Programming and Web Page Design (you can take some WWTC computer classes on the web). Scott is also an MS Engineer, and is seeking additional MS certification.

Scott told us about the history of the Web and html, and then showed how to make a web page the easy way, using MS Front Page (~\$50.00).

Prior to programs like Front Page, people had to learn html which not many really wanted to do. The html code is still visible in Front Page (wysiwig), but you do not have to know html to create a web site.

MS web sites get 3 million hits a day. There is a war between MS and Netscape as more things become browser dependent. Most web servers run on Unix, Linux, or Windows NT. Sites like dogpile.com or Ask Jeeves are referred to as web crawlers.

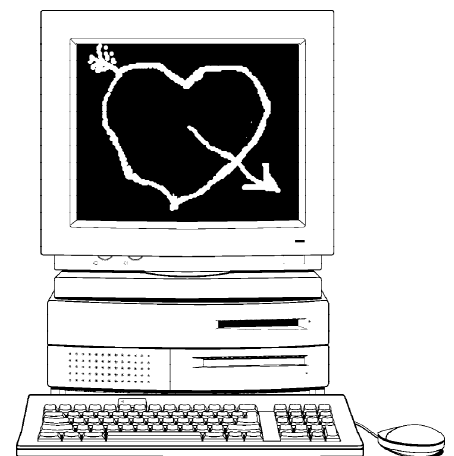
When you load Front Page you should answer YES to the question of "Do you want a personal web server". When using Front Page you have to play by MS's rules and let it do its own thing (this is the biggest bug in the software). A web page is a collection of files connected by hyperlinks.

Scott graciously answered a lot of questions, some unrelated to the topic of the evening. He even suggested I should try HotMail to download MS Word attachments I sometimes find unreadable in AOL.

Joe Doucet had problems after downloading Internet Explorer 5. This new version of IE has a feature where you can save both text and graphics.

Elections will be held during the December 8 meeting with nominations beginning at the October meeting. Consider running for the LCPC Board (4 openings each December). You can volunteer yourself, or nominate someone else. Board members select/and usually serve as officers for the year, or on the Program or some other committee. Don't forget we welcome articles for the newsletter from any member, on any subject.

Some years ago LCPC used to have their board meetings at 5:00 pm, during supper at the downtown Country Kitchen, on our regular meeting night. We don't have board meetings at that time anymore, but anyone who wants is welcome to join my husband and me for a (dutch) supper around 5:00 pm on meeting nights, for more computer talk. If you're uncertain as to details, send me an email a day or so before the meeting.



Visit our homepage at <http://www.wi.centuryinter.net/lcpc>

from the UG library at [www.user-groups.com](http://www.user-groups.com)

# Frugal Computer Protection

by Gil "oddball" Palen

You've spent a small fortune on all your precious computer hardware. Don't expect a device, costing less than 2% of your system investment, to be safe and reliable protection against any serious electrical problems. If you have it all plugged into the average (\$10-\$20) surge suppresser strip, or even the "deluxe" model with 6 grounded outlets and a lighted circuit breaker switch, your system is still at risk!

These little strip devices, are only designed to stop very small overvoltage spikes, which are rare. Most likely and more common occurrences are voltage drops. You've probably experienced some form of brownouts and/or blackouts. Brownouts cause lights, TV's, appliances, etc. to dim or slow to less than normal. Many devices will not operate under these conditions. Blackouts kill all power immediately. For computer equipment, these events can cause devastating results costing thousands of dollars in losses of data and/or software and hardware damage. Corporate IT departments are well aware of the numbers and costs. Are you?

**Power problems are the largest cause of data loss:**

- Power Failure/Surge: 45.3%
- Storm Damage: 9.4%
- Fire or Explosion: 8.2%
- Hardware/Software Error: 8.2%
- Flood & Water Damage: 6.7%
- Earthquake: 5.5%
- Network Outage: 4.5%
- Human Error/Sabotage: 3.2%
- HVAC Failure: 2.3%
- Other 6.7%

## Source:Contingency Planning

The local power utilities do their best to provide a constant regulated power supply to you, but failures for various reasons are inevitable. Acts of nature, and device failures are just two examples. High-tech equipment, including computers, rely on smooth regulated power. They do not take well to less than their required needs! At best, you can lose any unsaved data. Worse problems can result though. An example might be an unrecoverable hard drive directory crash

because data was not correctly written back onto it. We all know how much PC's dislike improper shutdowns! As for power surges, do you really trust that cheap plug strip to handle a major power surge capable of frying your multi-thousand dollar machines? Think about it...

A quality uninterruptable power supply (UPS) is really the only safe way to protect your equipment and data. A typical UPS uses gel-cell batteries to keep your system running if the main electrical power is cut off or reduced below an acceptable and safe level. A medium size home model will usually provide 5 to 7 minutes of power...providing plenty of time for you to save your work, and shutdown safely. The better models have regulating circuitry so reliable that the manufacturers typically provide a financial guarantee of protection of your connected equipment. That piece of mind, is the reason I decided to write this article.

In the last 2+ years, my UPS has saved my equipment at least 5 times. How many times it's kept the current steady during other power fluctuations I can't guess. However, it is the best insurance I've ever bought...(and I hate insurance). It's a real cop too! It sounds an alarm, lights a warning, and gets you very serious about doing a controlled shutdown. Once your machines are off, you want to hug that little box. Trust this: the first time that UPS goes into action, it's paid for itself in time, money, and grief! After the power is restored, you feel great knowing your system survived, and it's still being protected.

The typical home computer setup includes the PC, monitor, printer, modem, powered speakers, external drives, etc. Plan to spend about \$150 to \$200 for good protection. Many new UPS models include jacks to protect your phone/modem line also. These units will operate for 5 to 8 years before the batteries need to be replaced. Any computer supply store or catalog can offer model choices, and more detailed information.

**Internet technical information can be found at these vendor sites:**  
<http://www.tripplite.com/power/index.html>  
<http://www.apcc.com/english/power/index.cfm>

You should also search the Web for more brands and information. Learn a little, gain a lot...you couldn't make a smarter investment in time or money!

## Member E-mail addresses

Please check over your e-mail address carefully for accuracy. If it isn't right let us know!

The LCPC Home Page:

<http://www.wi.centuryinter.net/lcpc>

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## Membership Info and Treasurers Report

Gary Stelzig - Treasurer

No paid renewals this past month. Renewal due for September include: John Kuschel.

Our checking balance as of 9/13/99 is \$316.87. August expenses of \$13.20 for stamps and \$10.00 registration fee to the State of Wisconsin for our organization.

# Learning Windows 98 CD-ROM Tutorials

by Dick Reaser, LACS, reprinted from *User Friendly*, the Journal of the Los Angeles Computer Society, August 1999

Learning Windows 98 CD-ROM Tutorials by ViaGrafix is a PC-based interactive multimedia training product. I first learned of the training products from ViaGrafix (incorporated in 1990) while using its software product, DesignCAD. I had also seen a tutorial that was bundled with Act! 4.1 was impressed with the tutorials on CD-ROM which was included with these products. In fact, the company is primarily noted for its training products and offers more than 500 software training titles; it also produces tutorials on VHS video cassettes.

Learning Windows is a set of 5 CD-ROMs entitled: What's New With Windows 98; Learning Windows 98, Introduction; Learning Windows 98, Advanced; Using the Internet With Windows 98; and Learning Windows 98, Secrets and Timesavers.

## Installation

Installation is easy. The instructions are printed on the CDROM's surface. Start | Run | d:setup where d is the letter identification of your CD-ROM drive. You can install the product on a network or a stand-alone computer. The two choices on the stand-alone installation are "typical" which requires 5 MB of hard disk space or "minimum" which requires only 2 MB and runs slower. I chose "typical" for my installations.

## Features

Each CD contains 4 to 6 hours of training according to ViaGrafix. There are 4 to 6 chapters on each CD, each covering a half dozen separate topics. The very effective time-proven teaching approach is to: (1) Tell them what you're going to tell them (via an audio video clip of a young lady speaking); (2) Tell them (via a screen simulation showing cursor movements, typing etc with a voice explaining the actions about to be performed and then describing the actions while they are performed); (3) Tell them what you've told them (via a bulleted list supported with spoken words); (4) Give a test at the end of each chapter to find out what has been learned.

These Windows 98 training sessions do not require Windows 98 to run. They run fine on Windows 95, providing an excellent opportunity to learn about Windows 98 before you install it. In fact, I decided to go ahead and upgrade my Windows 95 to Windows 98 after going through the lessons.

## Operation

I found the lessons easy to operate. When you run one of the CDs, a window is created that takes up approximately 80% of your screen. The window resembles a

TV Screen with standard VCR controls across the bottom. A table of contents and an index for the CD is shown. You can play each CD by chapter or by individual lesson. The index turns the product into an excellent reference source for specific items of interest.

Some of the items are self-running while others let you choose between self-running and interactive. The interactive mode is called Try It, which gives you step-by-step instructions to perform. The lessons cover about 175 topics. A few that were especially useful to me were: Customizing the Desktop, Active Desktop, System Maintenance, Multimedia Aspects, Internet, Web Page production and, of course, the many ways to perform a given task in Windows 98 including short cut tips and tricks.

The tests to evaluate what you have learned are very useful, but they only give you a score for each chapter and don't let you know which specific questions you missed. Too bad they don't have a hyperlink back to the lesson points you missed.

As for documentation and ease of learning, when you click on the HELP button, you get a multimedia presentation of how to use the tutorials. Now that's what I call practicing what you preach!

## Summary

I like these CDs, especially the fact that they start with the most fundamental aspects of using Windows 98 and progress from there. You can go at your own pace. Each

CD can be used as a reference because it is fully indexed: it is easy to go back and review various items that you may not have paid that much attention to the first time around. I like training on CD rather than video cassette. There is nothing like learning directly from your own computer screen rather than watching a TV monitor.

Windows 98 itself is a huge, intricate and complex product. There are many informative books written about it. These training CDs are an excellent alternative for learning how to use the system, but they do not give very specific information on trouble shooting. They should be especially useful to the new or potential user of Windows 98.

I think it would probably be preferable, although also more costly, to attend teacher-led classroom sessions, but you could not then control the pace. Of course, a knowledgeable *personal* tutor would be ideal, but how many can afford that?

My system includes a Fujitsu Lap-top Pentium 133 MHz with 48 MB of RAM, Windows 95 and now Windows 98, a 2.1 GB Hard Disk and a 10X CD-ROM drive. These CDs require a PC with Windows 95, a CD-ROM drive, a sound card, and a 256-color display.

*Learning Windows 98 CD-ROM Tutorials*, ViaGrafix Training Products, One American Way, Pryor, OK 74361. Voice: 800-842-4723 or 918-825-6700. Fax: 800-842-3294 or 918-825-6744. <<http://www.ViaGrafix.com/training>>.

List price: \$50 each or \$200 for the set. ~

## Internet explorer tip

When you want to save an image to disk, right clicking on the image brings up a menu which includes "Save picture as..." Clicking on this will take you to the last directory you saved in. You can use the name specified by the site or provide your own.

To check if you've used a name before, click on any filename in the directory. Then type in the first letter of the name you want to use. Your file explorer view will advance to that letter in the directory.

With a little practice you'll find this much faster than moving the slider bar.

# DLL Conflict Troubleshooting Tutorial

## Stop! Dont wipe that hard drive, theres a better way!

What's a DLL?

Dynamic Link Library

What does a DLL do?

DLLs are best thought of as programmer's toolkits. They contain programming code that is often re-used from one application to another. Some DLLs have one or two routines, while others may have a hundred or more. Rather than re-invent the wheel, a programmer will use a DLL containing optimized code for the task at hand. Dialing your modem, selecting fonts and colors or quickly sorting lists of information are examples of the types of work they perform.

Why do they cause problems?

There are two types of DLL's:

- **Shared or common** - Used by many programs.
- **Proprietary** - Used by one program or by one software publisher

With the earliest versions of Windows, Microsoft established the `\WINDOWS\SYSTEM` folder as the designated storage place for DLLs that are common. The proprietary DLLs were supposed to be installed in the program's own folder. As new and improved versions of DLLs were released it was intended that the updated version would replace the earlier version and that the DLL would be backward compatible. In a perfect world you'd have just one copy of a shared DLL on your system and it would be available to any application that needed it.

The Windows operating system (any flavor) allows only one copy of a DLL to be in memory at any one time. The DLL will remain in memory until it's no longer needed.

Let's start by looking at the following common scenario:

1. A program is launched from your Startup group or folder when you boot your system. That program was distributed with an early version DLL, which is stored in the program's local directory. The DLL has 20 internal functions and is loaded into memory.
2. A few minutes later you load a recently released program. That program needs

the same DLL (by name), but is supposed to utilize the newer version that has 80 internal functions.

3. Since the early version DLL is already in memory everything may seem to be OK, when the program is first launched.
4. However, As soon as the more recent program asks for one of the 60 missing functions you're in trouble. You may get a complete crash, a lockup or a message blaming something that's completely unrelated.

The most common DLL's are those that are part of a programming language such as C++, Visual Basic, etc. These DLL's provide the same "run time" environment as the developer's own system, but don't allow you to edit the program. Software publishers must include these critical DLLs with their programs because they can't assume you already have the right one on your system.

Software publishers often seem to be careless or unable to follow the rules. In some cases, they just don't know better. Both small and large publishers are guilty of not keeping their programming utilities up to date, this results in distributing DLLs that are several years old. Distributing a new program with old DLL's has the same effect as loading an old program on your system.

Microsoft has incorporated several features into the Windows 98 operating system that help to resolve the problem of an old DLL being installed into a shared directory; however it doesn't always work. The worst offenders are installation routines that don't do any version checking and simply unzip files directly into the shared directory, overwriting whatever is there. In many cases W98's *System File Checker* can recover the correct version. Having a current backup is still the best protection.

One of the most common mistakes made by a program's installation routine is to place a common DLL in the program's own folder, rather than put it in the system folder where it belongs. That's the easiest thing to fix, **if** you're careful and follow some simple guidelines. Programs bearing the MS Windows

9x logo on the box generally don't cause problems as they have to meet some very strict and recently revised compliance standards. I'm guessing that the right to wear the logo doesn't come cheaply either.

## Searching the system

The following process is intended to let a user check their own system for DLL version conflicts. Before doing so, I strongly recommend that any patches and updates available from MS be installed. Installing these updates will put the newest versions of the most problematic DLLs on your system and give you a valid reference point for what's really old on your system. The most critical DLL's are available in 3 updates:

- "Windows Library Update"
- "Windows 95 Service Pack 1"
- "OLE 32 Update to Service Pack 1"

If you are running Windows 95, you'll find these updates at

[www.microsoft.com/windows95/downloads](http://www.microsoft.com/windows95/downloads)

If you are running Windows 98, click on the *Windows Update* in the Start menu and you'll be taken to MS's semi-automated update site. If you're not sure whether the update is installed on your system or not, install it anyway! It doesn't hurt to be sure.

## Step-by-step

1. Open "My Computer" by Right clicking on the icon and selecting "Explore". Change your view to "Details"
2. Open the `\WINDOWS\SYSTEM` folder and check that you can see files with a DLL extension. If not, you have to turn on the "view all files" option in Explorer.
3. Tap your F3 key to bring up the search window
4. In the "Named" field enter **\*.DLL**
5. In the "Look in:" field open the drop down and select "My Computer" or "Local Hard Drives" if you are on a network.

*Continued on page 5*

6. Make sure the "Include subfolders" box is checked.
7. Click the "Find Now" button.
8. Be patient, this may take a few minutes on a large or slower system.
9. When the search is completed, click on the "Name" button (at the top of the "Name" column) to sort the entire list, alphabetically, by name.

Don't be surprised by the number of DLLs on your system. In a new system, with little more than Windows98 installed you'll probably have three or four hundred of them, but on a large system like mine, there's nearly five thousand!

## Taking control

Look through the list for duplicates. The ones that cause software conflicts are those with copies in the \WINDOWS\SYSTEM folder and one or more copies somewhere else on your system. The most critical DLLs have a backup copy in \WINDOWS\SYSBCKUP - that's a new safety feature introduced with Windows9x and these files are usually the same version. Check the search listing for files beginning with:

BWCC CO CTL  
MFC MSV OLE

## Caution!!

The following is intended for experienced users only. Some people may wish to contact a consultant or system specialist who is experienced in dealing with software conflicts.

Don't get carried away in the following process. We are only concerned with duplicates that meet the following criteria:

- A copy in \windows\system
- A possible copy in \windows\sysbckup
- A copy that is anywhere else

Example: (*using mfc42.dll*)

C:\SOMEPROGRAM\MFC42.DLL v4.25  
old version (rename)

C:\WINDOWS\SYSTEM v6.00.8267.0  
Higher version, shared directory

C:\WINDOWS\SYSBCKUP v6.00.8267.0  
Safety copy, don't touch

1. Right click on each of the duplicate files, beginning with the copy in the system folder, and select "Properties".

In most systems you can speed this up by holding down the ALT key while you double click.

2. Click on the *Version* tab and make a note of the version number, it will be highlighted.
  3. Repeat this for each of the duplicate files having the same name. Double check your work, some file names are very similar.
  4. You only need to keep the DLL having the highest version number and that copy should be the one in the shared \WINDOWS\SYSTEM folder.
- 5. Do not delete any files!!**
6. If any of the duplicates is in a program's own local folder and has an equal or lower version number than the copy in the \windows\system folder, change the file extension from DLL to **D\_L**. This will stop the older version from loading and force it to look in the \windows\system folder for the file.
  7. If you are a neat freak, you can consider deleting the renamed duplicate file when you are sure that everything is working properly. Because of the close similarity to some of the file names it's very easy to tag the wrong file!
  8. Do only a few files at a time, until you are comfortable with the process. Reboot your system and run the programs where you may have disabled a DLL in a program's own local folder. If you are sure that everything is working, you can then delete the renamed DLL.
  9. Some files that are currently active, in memory, may not permit renaming. In most cases, you can temporarily disable programs that are in your Startup folder to complete the operation. In other cases you may have to reboot and perform the rename after starting the system at the DOS command prompt.

## Author's note:

This troubleshooting process is not intended to solve all conflict situations. It does however, eliminate the most common problems. **Duplicate DLL's, where no copy is in the common \windows\system directory, are a completely different situation**

**and beyond the scope of this article.** For those situations a thorough understanding of the operating system and a backup plan are required. I strongly advise the reader to leave these files **as-is**. In most cases they will not cause system problems, unless both programs are being run at the same time.

This article is furnished as a benefit of our membership in the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization to which this user group belongs. The author, Rod Ream is a full time, independent, PC Consultant and is also the Director of Technical Services for the Pasadena IBM Users Group (PIBMUG). His base is in Alhambra CA and he can be reached at [rodream@techie.com](mailto:rodream@techie.com).

## Blow my mind department...

While looking for articles for this newsletter I found an item about the search site **www.about.com** pointing to inappropriate sites in response to innocuous queries.

So, I tried it myself, searching "photography". I got these four "**About.com** GuideSites about "photography":

### Gay Erotica

A cornucopia of (*censored*)! Fulfill all your fantasies with stories, hardcore and softcore pics, chat, forums and more.

### Australia for Visitors

Do you dream of traveling in the Outback? Of surfing off the white-sand beaches? If your travel dreams go south, we'll help you get there in style.

### Amateur Erotica

Erotic stories, pictures, and more — even a shopping mall. It's all created by people just like yourself; share in the pleasure.

### Graphics Software

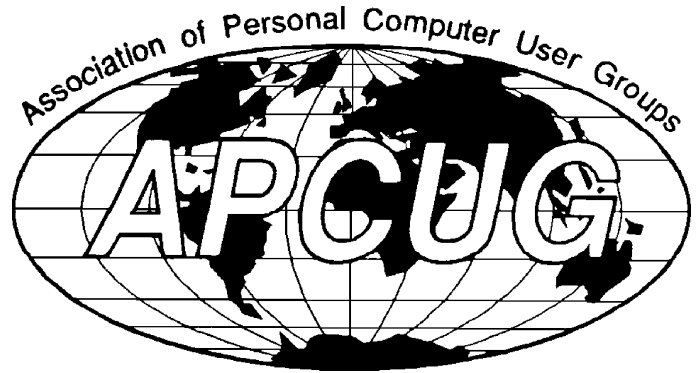
Whether you want to produce powerful presentations, build animated ads or just perfect your pictures, Guide Sue Chastain can help.

Who would have thought that a search site might need to be listed with blocking software such as Net Nanny? Notice that none of the above sites is mainly devoted to "photography". Once you got down to net page listings those were devoted to photography, but what's with this erotica stuff?

I did the same search at **Askjeeves.com** and came up with plenty of pages about specific photographers. There was little or no duplication of results among the five search engines.

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**LCPC is a member of APCUG**

New Style is published eleven times a year, monthly Jan-Oct and a combined Nov-Dec issue

General meetings are held the last Wednesday of each month in the Lutheran Hospital, either in the Overholt Auditorium or conference room 1 in the basement, check page 1 for location. The combined November-December meeting is held the second Wednesday in December. Meetings begin around 7:00 PM. Everyone is welcome, attend a meeting or two with no obligation to join.

Dues are \$20 for one year following payment. Membership entitles you to attend meetings, tap into the corporate wisdom, receive special user group discounts from publishers and others, receive (and contribute to) this newsletter. You may also obtain software provided by publishers for review of the product. Uncredited articles and filler are written by the editor.

Other user groups are welcome to reprint with proper credit.

The newsletter is printed the Wednesday before the meeting, submit articles by the 13th of the month. Upload to [deapublish@aol.com](mailto:deapublish@aol.com) or phone me at 784-0150 if you want to deliver the article. Submit in ASCII, AmiPro, or WP5.

Commercial advertising rates available upon request. Member's personal ads are free.

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