

# New Style

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Newsletter of the LaCrosse PC Users' Group

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May 2000

## This Month: May 31, 7PM in the Overholt Auditorium of Lutheran Hospital

Office 2000 presented by UWL Accounting professor and former newsletter editor, Robin Alexander.

The review of **DeLorme's Street Atlas USA** has been postponed due to lack of space.

**Well...** it's been quite a month. Masked gunmen breaking into a home in the pre-dawn hours of Holy Saturday to stick a submachine gun in the stomach of a six year old boy and carry him off. Haven't they ever heard of coming at a reasonable hour and knocking?

Attorney General Janet Reno announcing that the law will be upheld, I suppose it was inevitable that she'd get around to it eventually. The same Justice Department presenting a plan to break Microsoft into separate companies for the crime of being the operating system used by 92% of computers powered by Intel chips that are not connected to networks.

The revelation that major Internet commerce sites were forced off-line, with claimed losses of one billion dollars, by a fifteen year old Canadian who uses the handle "Mafia Boy".

Barely escaping the end of civilization at the hands of a 23 year old Philippine computer programming student with the "Love Bug" worm. See the article on page 4 about avoiding e-mail hoaxes.

Sun Microsystems chairman announcing that we have sown the seeds of our destruction in the coming 21st Century with genetic engineering, nanotechnology (really, really small machines), and robotics. He warns about the possibility of robots taking over so much of our lives that they will eventually  
*Concludes on page 2*

## President's Message

*Marian Havlik*

Could you build a computer in 90 minutes? Well, the Comtek students from De Soto High School can. It is really amazing what high school students can do with computers these days.

Robin Alexander, a long-time LCPC member who teaches Accounting at UW-L, will start us on our examination of Office 2000 at our May meeting. Robin will tell us all about Excel, and how and why he uses this software. Future Office 2000 programs will cover the Word and PowerPoint portions of the Office suite. Please join us May 31, and bring a friend.

Did anyone get zapped by the "I Love You virus"? If so, please tell us the details at the May meeting. Thank heavens, I never even saw an email remotely connected with this virus, but then again, I use AOL.

There was a review of the new Microsoft Pocket PC and HP Jornada 545 "Palms" in a recent Wall St. Journal. The reviewer still

felt that the Palm V was efficient and elegant compared to the Pocket PC's.

While giving credit to strides made by designers of Pocket PC's, they simply try to do too much, are too complicated, and make too many compromises. The only thing the reviewer liked about the HP Pocket PC was its vivid screen, even in daylight, and the simplified menu.

Tell us about your experiences with either a Palm or a Pocket PC.

My 92 year old mother recently sent me an article entitled "Memory failure only intellectual overload" (or "Would a Bigger Hard Drive Help?"). The article stated it is not our memory that fails us, it is the amount of space available in which to store new information that becomes limited. Age-related differences in memory are related to storage capacity, not a processing efficiency. During our childhood working memory steadily increases. It peaks around age 45, then steadily declines. "As we get older we run

*Concludes on page 2*

*Students Jeremy Trussoni, Doug Hickock and advisor DuWayne Gronning*



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

out of places to store new information. We have a limited amount of space in our memory system, but this is not related to our reading and math abilities".

Interesting choice of terms. (*If this were the case, why didn't Goethe, Einstein or Isaac Asimov run out of memory when they were very young men?* -ed.)

In case you haven't read the La Crosse Tribune recently, every Saturday they have a 2-page Technology section. On May 14 the lead article was on WAP (Wireless Application Protocol). Interesting.

Check it out.

What did you learn new about your computer this week?

## Coming Reviews!

These members took software for review we look forward to their articles. (*soon* -ed.)

Ernesto Brauer & Marian Havlik .....	<i>Microsoft Office 2000 book</i>
Kathy Gallagher .....	<i>Star Office</i>
Bill Brockmiller .....	<i>Go Back</i>
Marian Havlik .....	Inkjet refill
Darrell Garner .....	<i>Final Data</i>
Chuck Whalen .....	<i>Adobe ImageStyler</i>
Earl Heartt .....	<i>MS PhotoDraw</i>
Lisa Doherty .....	<i>Via Page</i>

ally enslave and then exterminate us. Hasn't he ever read Isaac Asimov's laws of robotics? More to the point, shouldn't his board of directors be holding emergency consultations with his doctor?

I don't know about you, but I'm worn out.

No, seriously, we both are. So here's the scoop: If you've ever read this newsletter, particularly my rantings and thought "Hey I can do better than this!" Here's your opportunity to do so.

I am frequently working six days a week. This cuts into other projects, such as things that should be done around the house, especially since I insist on occasionally doing what I want, rather than what should be done.

This is the deal: we'll give you the newsletter template and Gary will give you the exchange newsletters that we swipe articles from. You can contact us for any help you need. This is a temporary position, at least at present, I am not stepping down. I'd just like to step back for awhile. Please contact us if you are interested.

## Membership Info and Treasurers Report

Gary Stelzig, Treasurer

One renewal last month but I failed to record who gave me the money—probably one of the persons listed below—will the payer kindly jog my memory.

Past due renewals include: Paul Havlik, Joseph Doucet, George Frisch, Kathy Gallagher, and Chuck Whalen. Note: I did not list members with an April renewal date in the April newsletter. Renewals for May include: Mike Larson, and Ernesto Brauer.

Lisa Doherty joined at the March meeting. Her comments to my questions are as follows:

- 1) What brand and size of computer do you use at home or work? At work, not sure. At home, I guess I'm a little outdated already with a Packard Bell, 200 megahertz, 32 megs of ram, 2.5 Gig hard disk drive.
- 2) What type of software do you use most often? Mostly *Microsoft Office 97* at home and at work I have *Lotus Notes* for e-mail and *Microsoft Office*.
- 3) What type of programs would you like our club to present?

Things that would be pertinent to my (our) everyday needs. The latest and greatest software and hardware talks are not all that interesting to me since I probably won't be using it. I'm more interested in Windows quirks, troubleshooting, and helpful hints, etc. I also do a little with web pages and that type of thing is interesting too.

- 4) What do you hope to learn by joining our club?

Just a little about anything.

- 5) Current PC problems that you need help to solve?

I have a few things that try to pop up on my screen everytime I boot my computer. I've tried to take them out of the start-up folder but they are not there and I can't get them to not show up.

Welcome Lisa.

The club checking balance as of 05/13/2000 was \$393.45. This includes a \$20 deposit plus bills of \$44.00 for our post office lock box, \$6.60 for April stamps and \$12.66 in April photocopy costs.

## 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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Paul Bequette—[bequ2546@aol.com](mailto:bequ2546@aol.com)

May Borgedahl—[borgie@fflax.net](mailto:borgie@fflax.net)

Ernesto Brauer—[ebrauer@execpc.com](mailto:ebrauer@execpc.com)  
or [ebrauer@gundluth.org](mailto:ebrauer@gundluth.org)

Bill Brockmiller—

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Arlene Wiese—[awiese@fflax.net](mailto:awiese@fflax.net)

# DeSoto HS's Comtek Club model program

Carol M. Frank, secretary

The April 26, 2000 meeting started with President Marian Havlik asking if everyone is getting their PDF version of *NewStyle*. No one indicated any any problems.

Jack Storlie started with questions. He had a friend with a rewritable CD that copied some pictures for Jack onto a CD. Jack's own CD reader can't read it. His CD reader is quite new so the physical optics shouldn't be a problem. New member Kevin Blum said which language the CD writer uses to save the file is important. There are three ways-ISO, 9660, and Jolivet. Jolivet doesn't work in other CD readers.

Ken Buckley had a networking question. He currently has two computers sharing a monitor and printer using a switch box. He wants to eliminate the use of the switchbox. Chuck Whalen recommend using Wingate and just dropping in network cards and a cable. A hub isn't necessary for just two computers. (*but makes it easier to set up -ed.*)

Ken Doucet's AOL doesn't audibly notify that he has mail anymore. It must have been accidently shut off. Chuck suggested going into *Incoming Mail Notification* and turning it back on.

New member Lisa Doherty has unwanted shortcuts that show up and can't be deleted. Chuck recommend looking in the registry for these (backup registry first). This is an involved and delicate operation so he will be advising by email.

Representatives from DeSoto HS's Comtek club Doug Trussoni and Doug

*Website designed by Jeremy Trussoni*

Hickock with adviser DuWayne Gronning gave the presentation.

The Comtek Club started last year and has received a lot of publicity statewide. The DeSoto school district is quite small with only 614 students K-12. The small size has meant less bureaucracy and faster implementation of ideas. This club was seen as a means to give greater opportunities for students with an exceptional interest and aptitude in computers. Jeremy (senior) and Doug (junior) are original members and there are currently seven members.

One of the duties of these students is maintenance of the schools web sites. <http://pirates.desoto.k12.wi.us> (for students) and <http://www.desoto.k12.wi.us> (for faculty) These sites have lunch menus, pictures, teachers' lesson plans and assignments.

The original server was a Novell kept in a separate shed. They use Sandbar software which is freeware. Doug does most of the website creation originally by writing HTML code and then using MS Publisher and FrontPage. The two websites use two separate machines. There is sharing to webpages and teachers can easily access their folders to update their pages.

The Wisnet router serves as their firewall. For internal security the students police themselves which has worked quite well. Originally all the computers had locks. Mr. Gronning had these removed since it took less time to just reload Windows than bothering with security. There has been no problems with hacking and the biggest problems are wallpaper changing and icons being moved to different positions. Doug created a bootdisc that can eliminate unwanted add ons.

These students have built all the computers the school uses and do service calls on the school's computers. They are travelling so much between rooms that hall passes were eliminated for them.

For fund raising they build computers and sell them to staff members, students and others. Comtek doesn't build laptops since three desktops can be built for the cost of one laptop. The preferred parts they use are Western Digital HD, AMD chips, Sony floppy disc drives, generic network cards and mother board with built in audio and video.

Comtek Club members get school credit for the work they do and Doug is taking the CISCO networking academy. He also has experience in configuring the wide area network between three school sites. He has a responsible position since he is the only other person who knows the router password. If something goes wrong the list of possible culprits is short.

The club members have found time to do some regular classroom work and service calls during schooltime. Online classes are often done at home in the evening and they take summer classes.

Regular classes at DeSoto HS in computers consist of Basic Computer Skills, Programming, Excel, Accounting, and Web design.

Basic keyboarding and Internet skills are taught at the elementary level.

The DeSoto School District has done great work in providing sound computer skills for the student body and advanced training for the gifted.

*The image of the Desoto Pirates homepage that appeared here in the printed version caused Acrobat Writer to fail. To view the page, please go to the web address above.*

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## Asimov's laws of robotics

1. A robot will never kill or harm a person, or through inaction, allow a person to come to harm.
2. A robot will obey all orders of designated humans, except when they conflict with rule #1.
3. A robot will act to preserve its own safety except when that conflicts with rule #1 or #2.

# Microsoft Intellimouse Optical

by Kevin Wood

System Requirements: (Per Microsoft)

29 MB of hard drive space available

CD-ROM Drive

Windows 98, Windows 95, Windows NT4 (with Service pack 3 or later), Windows 2000 Round mouse port or USB port (Windows 98 or Windows 2000 only)

IntelliPoint software version 3.1 (included)

What is the benefit of the Intellimouse Optical over a standard mouse? The normal Mouse or trackball has a roller. As the roller turns, the mouse tracks the motion of the ball and translates that into electrical signals that correspond to the pointer movements you see on the computer screen.

Eventually however, the ball gets dirty or oily, or the surface used for the mouse has insufficient friction to turn the ball and the pointer on the computer screen will stop responding.

While there are numerous products and technical tips for cleaning mice and track balls, you won't need any of them since the IntelliMouse uses an optical sensor to track motion. It actually checks the surface under the mouse 1,500 times per second to detect motion. This means you can use the mouse on almost any surface. (Reflective or very glossy surfaces do not work well!)

Also, because of the speed at which it tracks motion, I would recommend limiting the speed of your hand movements to less than 1,500 per second - be careful when on that 15th cup of coffee!

During testing, I used a desk, my hand, paper, even holding the mouse slightly above the surface, and the mouse always worked. This could be very bad news for Mouse Pad manufacturers!

The IntelliMouse came with a USB connection and an adapter so the mouse can be used in a PS2/Bus port. I plugged the mouse into the USB Port. During the installation, the mouse lit up (indicating the operating system was talking to the device.) I was pleased to note that the mouse seems to work without any requiring any special software

**Use:** I was able to use the mouse immediately, even without initially loading the software that came with the mouse. The mouse worked well with the software I normally use. A neat feature is that the lower rear of

the mouse lights up. Great for when you need to find the mouse in a dark room! Actually, the light just lets you know that the mouse is enabled and working.

For those of you who are still getting used to using a mouse (I know there are some of you out there), this mouse is probably not for you. Not only does it have the normal two mouse buttons, it also has a scroll wheel and two extra buttons on the side, about where you rest your thumb and ring fingers.

Initially, I thought these buttons performed the same functions as the corresponding buttons on the top of the mouse, they do not! The size and shape of the IntelliMouse make it very comfortable to hold and use.

Eventually I installed the IntelliPoint 3.1 mouse software. With it, I gained the ability to program the various mouse buttons to do what I wanted them to do. One drawback, however, is that no two buttons (or button and scroll wheel) can have the same function. You can however, always set a button you do not use much to no function at all. I tend to not use the lower right button (located on the right side vs right top of the mouse) so I disabled that button. An added bonus of the software is that you also get a lot of neat new mouse pointers! The one I use has a hand drumming the fingers rather than showing an hourglass.

**Summary:** Overall I liked the Intellimouse Optical. It installed easily.

It worked even without special drivers (at least on my system). It worked as advertised. There was no learning curve to learn different commands in order to do the things I normally do (in other words I did not have to re-learn how to use a mouse.) Hopefully the next version of the software will permit the user to have two buttons perform the same function, but do not hold off buying the mouse just for that. **I give the Intellimouse 5 stars.**

*Kevin Wood has served on the APCUG COMDEX committee and as a Board of Advisors member. He has served as President of the Atlanta PC Users Group, and of the Birmingham Software Developer's Association. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the APCUG, an International organization to which this user group belongs.*

*This was sent to me by Marian, I'm not sure where she got it from.*

## How to Spot an Email Hoax

Without researching the factual claims made in a forwarded email there's no 100% sure way to tell if it's a hoax, but here are common signs to watch for.

1. Note whether the text was actually written by the person who sent it to you. If not, be skeptical.

2. Look for the telltale phrase, "Forward this to everyone you know."

3. Look for statements like "This is not a hoax" or "This is not an urban legend." They usually mean the opposite of what they say.

4. Look for overly emphatic language, the frequent use of UPPERCASE LETTERS and multiple exclamation points!!!!!!

5. If the message seems geared more to persuade than to inform, be suspicious. Hoaxers are out to push emotional buttons.

6. If the message purports to give you extremely important information that you've never heard of before or seen elsewhere in legitimate sources, be suspicious.

7. Read carefully and think critically about what the message says, looking for logical inconsistencies, violations of common sense and obviously false claims.

8. Look for subtle or not-so-subtle jokes, indications that the author is pulling your leg.

9. Check for references to outside sources. Hoaxes will not typically name any, nor link to Websites with corroborating information.

10. Check to see if the message has been debunked by Websites that cover Internet hoaxes (see below).

### Tips:

1. Virtually any chain email you receive (i.e., any message forwarded multiple times) is more likely to be false than true. Be skeptical.

2. Hoaxers usually try every means available to make their lies believable — e.g., mimicking a journalistic style, attributing the text to a "legitimate" source, etc.

3. Be especially wary of health-related rumors. Most importantly, never act on such rumors without first verifying their accuracy with your doctor or other reliable source.

*Here are a couple of sites that I've found useful in the past. I haven't checked to see if these addresses are still valid -ed.*

<http://kumite.com/myths>

<http://www.mcafee.com/support/hoax/aol4free.asp>

# Learning Office 2000

From *Sacra Blue*, Magazine of the Sacramento PC Users Group  
reviews by Tom Anderson

As much as we talk about “intuitive” computers and software, the real fact is that computers are not intuitive at all until a person has used one for a while. New computer owners, booting up their new systems and trying to make sense of what they see, need help. Here are some books that can provide assistance.

## Microsoft Office 2000 8 in 1

Joe Habraken’s book covers *Windows 98* and all the components in *Office 2000 Premium*, including *Access 2000*, *FrontPage 2000*, and *PhotoDraw 2000*. For the most part, the book is very well thought out and executed. The first section covers Windows 98 and each successive section covers one of the Office 2000 applications. Each section consists of a series of lessons that walk the reader through basic and intermediate tasks of the application.

These tutorials are easy to follow, and progress gradually through the skills needed to use an application effectively. The section on Word, for example, covers styles, tables, columns, and inserting graphics. The discussion on Access discusses what the program is used for, how databases and tables are designed, and continues through queries, reports, and relationships.

Habraken aims the book at beginners with little knowledge of Windows or Office applications, and that audience should find the book very valuable.

## Special Edition Using Microsoft Office 2000

The Using books are among the oldest series of computer books. Over the years the series has changed from essential guides to software programs to a collection of texts that approach the programs in different ways. The simple Using is a basic guide to the program (see next review), while the Special Edition series provides advanced material for a more experienced audience.

Special Edition Using Microsoft Office 2000 is written by Ed Bott and Woody Leonhard, two of the more knowledgeable people in the field. Both authors have extensive experience using Office and writing about it, and are willing to criticize

Microsoft’s design choices, a rare quality among book authors today.

Instead of showing the basics of text formatting or tabs and indents, the authors go straight to customizing the Office interface to make it more efficient. Each section also has tips on customizing the work environment of each application. The techniques discussed for each program focus on more challenging material: Excel pivot tables and pivot charts, planning meetings in Outlook, and self-running PowerPoint presentations. Scattered throughout the book are hundreds of usage tips, troubleshooting pointers, and “secrets of the Office masters.” Extensive cross-referencing makes it easy to find more detail on chosen topics.

The CD-ROM included with the book contains a full, licensed copy of “Woody’s Office Power Pack,” a popular Office add-in, along with clip art, Word templates, FrontPage themes, and substantial excerpts from several Using books on Office applications.

If you have moved past the beginner books on Office, this is an excellent next step to acquire broader and deeper skills.

## Using Microsoft Word 2000

As mentioned above, the basic Using books are aimed at beginners and cover elementary topics. This volume demonstrates that, using the first 160 pages to cover text formatting, spell-checking, saving files and similar subjects.

Tables, styles, and printing constitute the greatest part of the third section. Page layout, footnotes and endnotes, columns, templates, charts and graphics are covered in the context of creating professional documents.

The book’s next section covers real-world uses of Word: mail merges, workgroup documents, custom forms, and the like. The authors also discuss using Word with the Internet, and close with a section on customizing and fine-tuning Word.

This is a helpful guide for real beginners with Word. Those with some experience, though, would be better off with the Special Edition version.

*to our humor impaired readers: this story is a joke, do not send in your unused programs*

## Act Locally, Think Globally!

### Recycling Begins on Your PC

Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group

You toss aluminum cans, plastic bottles, and newspapers in the recycle bin without even thinking, right? Well a new dot.com wants you to think the same way about-get ready-bits and bytes. Don’t laugh.

The company is Bit-Recyclers (their [www.BitRecycle.com](http://www.BitRecycle.com) web site is often unreachable because of excessive traffic) and their business plan is simple: Don’t delete old programs-recycle them.

But there’s a twist, one that’s going to turn the computing world on its head. And turn a tremendous profit for Bit-Recyclers.

The company has no plans for using or reselling the old software you send to them. Instead, they’re simply going to recycle the bits. Like reuse them.

It sounds strange but it makes sense. Every time you delete a program (ironically, not to the recycle bin, but <M>really delete it), untold numbers of bits and bytes are destroyed. Throw away a floppy or CD, and it’s gone forever. Toast. History.

The company wants them all, each and every bit.

Jeff Grayschvanser, Bit-Recycler’s CEO, proposes reusing the bits for new programs. “Upload unwanted applications, utilities, or even Mac programs, and we’ll turn them into new programs.”

The company promises to supply individuals who have slow Internet connections with postage-free mailers in order for them to mail in their floppies and CDs.

*Continued on page 7*

Microsoft Office 2000 8 in 1 By Joe Habraken [\$29.99, 1278 pages] Que Books, 1999 ISBN: 0-7897-1840-5

Special Edition Using Microsoft Office 2000 By Ed Bott and Woody Leonhard [\$39.99, 1520 pages with CD-ROM] Que Books, 1999 ISBN: 0-7897-1842-1

Using Microsoft Word 2000 By Jane Calabria, Dorothy Burke, and Rob Kirkland Que Books, 1999 [\$29.99, 720 pages] ISBN : 0-7897-1 854-5

# To Surge, Or Not To Surge

Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer User Group [dealsguy@mindspring.com]

People purchasing new computers often ask what to do about power line and lightning protection. To emphasize the importance, it's better to understand household electricity, what it is and what affects it. Lets analyze all this, but in a visual manner.

Electricity in your home (in the USA) is rated at an "average" of 117 volts and is referred to as "AC" (Alternating Current). There are basically two different types of electrical power, AC and DC. Direct Current (DC) is so named because it maintains a near constant voltage of a certain value at all times, such as the 12-volt system in your automobile. DC is not normally used in the home any more except in unusual situations. Alternating Current (AC) is electrical power with the voltage constantly changing from one polarity to another (from positive to negative to positive, etc.).

For long distance transmission, DC decreases in voltage and is expensive to convert from one voltage to another. AC maintains its voltage better with the assistance of transformers that greatly increase the voltage for long distance transmission, then drop it back down for home use.

To illustrate AC electricity graphically, lets visualize or draw a large "S" laying on its side with a horizontal line running through the middle of it. Let's call the horizontal line "0" volts, and the bottom of our S will be -117 volts. The top of the S going above the horizontal line will be + 117 volts. Note that the value of our electricity starts at 0 volts dropping to 117 negative volts, then rises back up to the "0" volts line, continuing on up to positive 117 volts, then back down to the 0 level as the electron flow continually reverses. In our electricity, this complete *sine wave* takes place 60 times each second, continuing one after another in our graphical representation of electricity in your home.

In a perfect world, the voltages I described would remain constant, but in reality many things affect them. Electric Companies try to regulate power at a proper level, but certain conditions can still affect those voltages. For example, in hot weather many people turn on devices using large amounts of electricity, such as air conditioners, greatly loading the power line. The Electric Company

has to compensate, although the voltage "could" still decrease if power lines are overloaded. If loads suddenly get lighter, the voltage can rise (dangerous for your computer) in spite of the Electric Company's regulation.

Sometimes a factory or business in an area has equipment using high amounts of electricity causing sudden surges up or down quicker than Electric Company equipment can adjust for. Some surges described would be seen as "spikes" in the graph you just drew, not to mention a possible low-voltage situation.

Lets draw a very narrow V upside down on top of the + portion of the sine wave. That will be the spike and you can see that it would exceed the 117 volts your computer equipment is designed to operate at, possibly damaging components in its electronic circuitry.

In your own home, turning on a high-consumption device (such as a toaster, or especially an air conditioner) can cause voltage spikes in the home's electricity and also causes spikes when turned off. In my case, the computer room is in one end of the home and the electrical service box (entry point) is on the other end, making a long electrical run to the plugs in my computer room. Turning on the copier in that room, which initially draws heavy current, causes my computer's Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS) to "beep" me that the supply voltage has gone below acceptable limits. That didn't happen when my copier and computer were on plugs closer to the power panel.

Lightning often strikes power lines and the resulting spikes can be carried down the line into your home's distribution system and into any unprotected electronic equipment. The Electric Company can only regulate so much, so lets examine protection for all this.

Surge protectors have unique electronics built-in that can smooth out those surges,

dips and spikes in the electrical sine waves just illustrated and are designed to maintain the power's voltage at the correct level. The cheaper ones have a minimal amount of components and are actually not good protection. Many people prefer to turn on the computer, monitor and peripherals with one master switch (laser printers should not be included). That's fine if you have surge protection to handle such a surge, but you should check that capability when choosing your protection. If it doesn't list those ratings in the brochure, it's probably not that good, so look for better equipment. Mine specifically stated that in its paperwork.

Good surge protectors will probably run about \$60.00. Many also carry up to \$25,000 insurance protection for excessive surges and lightning strikes. However, read the brochure to see if it's good in the event of a direct lightning strike. Some aren't.

You might think that if one is good, two might be better. Not necessarily, I'll explain later. If you can afford it I recommend an Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS). Why? Many areas often have a very short interruption of the power that doesn't effect most clocks, VCR, etc., but the computer notices.

All of a sudden, it is rebooting and you've lost everything since your last "Save," not to mention the improper shut down and possibility of file corruption. Everyone has had power go out at one time or another and that's when a UPS excels if you're using your computer.

UPS devices provide surge protection as well as a temporary electrical source if the power fails. They mostly come in two types. Some switch extremely fast to a backup battery, automatically keeping your computer going. Another type lets your computer actually run off the battery and keeps it fully charged to supplement what your computer needs. I have no preferences there. They are available in different capacities. For the home computer, I suggest a 400 volt/amp capacity. Should your power go out and fail to come back on, it offers temporary power for easily halting your task, saving your data and shutting the computer down properly, probably allowing a maximum of 20 minutes.

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**UPS devices provide surge protection as well as a temporary electrical source if the power fails.**

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*Continued on page 7*

*Continued from page 6*

A cheaper one (with a 250 volt/amp capacity) allows about six-to-ten minutes. That's still OK if you're at your computer when that happens and work fast to shut down. These times are for the average home computer and monitor, not including a printer. A laser printer should not be on the same surge protection as your computer and monitor because of a laser's high power consumption. A UPS is not necessary for a printer or scanner. However, separate, but adequate, surge protection is advised.

While the UPS is also a surge protector, it is typically not as good in the role of a dedicated surge protector, but will still do the job well enough. So why not use both? Two surge protectors will combine their ratings. But if combining a surge protector and UPS, microsecond timing involved in surge protection could conflict with the timing in the UPS. Surge protection companies say you can use a surge protector in the line "before" a UPS, but not after if you really want to use both. In fact, in the event of a lightning strike, their \$25,000 insurance may be void if they find you had both and connected them backwards.

A "Smart" UPS can also be upgraded to let your computer keep a continuous log of the power's voltage. Other software is available that will automatically save data, then shut down your computer if it is unattended when the power fails. Want another reason to buy a UPS — while a good surge protector can smooth out the spikes and maintain a proper voltage for you, "low voltage" on overloaded lines can also damage your computer equipment or cause data errors. A surge protector cannot make voltage out of thin air to accommodate a low voltage condition, but a UPS has backup batteries to compensate for it.

It's a known fact that lightning strikes ride in more on your phone line than they do on the power line, so it's also a good policy to include surge protection for telephone lines. Here in Florida, we are in the "lightning capital of the world" so many Florida residents make it a policy to unplug the power and phone lines to the computer as an added security during lightning storms (in the event of a direct hit), even though they own surge protection.

Does that fully insure me? Not necessarily — one of our club members did just that, dropping the power cord on the floor next

to his receptacle. When he received a close lightning strike, it jumped from the wire inside the wall, through the wallboard, to the power cord attached to his computer. Considering the distance between the earth and clouds, that short jump was no problem for lightning. His case was certainly unique though.

In summary, my advice is to buy high quality surge protection. Better advice (in my opinion) is to buy a UPS for your computer and monitor and separate surge protection for a laser printer or scanner. It's also important to add telephone line protection, either incorporated in the power's surge protector (or UPS), or separate telephone line protection. The dual protection is better because of the built in ground to shunt away the surges. It always appalls me when I see a salesperson sell somebody a \$1500 computer with a \$12.95 surge protector, which is almost useless. Surge protection is sort of a "pay me now, or pay me later" situation.

Surge protectors and UPSs are rated in "joules" and I recommend a rating of 90. Lesser ratings will still protect your equipment, but will often destroy themselves when hit by a surge if their rating is exceeded, and will require replacement. Surge protectors are mainly for upward surges and spikes. UPS devices can handle both upward and downward voltages, but are not quite as

*Recycling-Continued from page 5*

Who buys recycled bits? You'd be amazed. Start with Microsoft. "Without Bit-Recyclers, Windows 2000 would have never reached the marketplace before 2001," explained a Microsoft representative who requested anonymity.

Producers of clip art, photography images, and MP3 files are also major users of recycled bits.

"Don't send manuals and boxes," warned Grayschvane, "because they are of no value to us-unless they're in digital form." He recommends dumping the paper docs in the real recycle bin.

Microsoft representatives explained they were all for the new dot.com's idea provided no one actually reused program code, and would probably start their own recycling strategy early next year.

Over the last four months, venture-backed Bit-Recyclers increased their staff level at a rate over three times that of most start-up dot.coms. Joseph Pelassio, account execu-

good at surge protection. In spite of everything I have described above, "absolutely nothing" will protect you in the event of a direct lightning hit.

One other thing to keep in mind is that the "metal oxide" devices in most surge protectors do wear out and it's wise to replace a surge protector about every four years. If the many choices of surge protection confuse you, seek a "knowledgeable" person in your user group for advice. Don't depend on the store's salesperson.

*\* Special thanks to my friends Paul Witherage from "Sarnia Computer User Group" and Ron Klair of "Central Florida Computer Society" for critiquing this article and offering their suggestions to improve it.*

*\* Bob Click is a Nationally known writer and is featured in hundreds of user group newsletters. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.*

## **Microsoft strikes again**

When logging on to the Internet Monday night my first stop was MS's update page, not my homepage. It was only there for seconds, If I hadn't been watching the screen I'd have missed it. I never set this up, what is going on, and how do I stop it ?

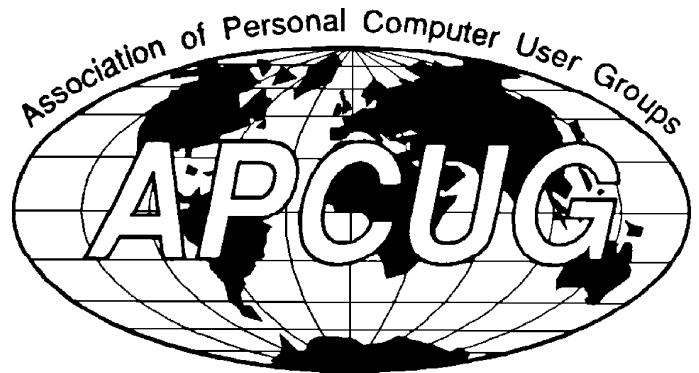
ive with Pelletier Capital Market reports initial earnings could reach those of eBay by the end of Q4 2001.

Me? I'm going to stick those CDs and floppies in a desk drawer. I just can't bear the thought of the next version of Word recycled from Wordstar. ([www.bit-recyclers.com](http://www.bit-recyclers.com))

*Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World Magazine, frequently writes for Forbes ASAP, and is the president of the Pasadena IBM Users Group. Bass often writes about the effects of Phrenology on upgrading software and other tongue-in-cheek topics. Write to him at [stevebass@earthlink.net](mailto:stevebass@earthlink.net) There is no restriction against anyone using the article as long as it is kept in context, with proper credit given to the author. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.*

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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. Unsigned articles are 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.

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