

New Style

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Newsletter of the LaCrosse PC Users' Group

volume 20 number 6

June 2000

This Month, June 28

Panel discussion on using MS Office. Experienced users will answer questions from novices. In the Overholt.



Preparing this newsletter has gone from an adventure, to a job, to a chore. We're getting burned out.

So...we're still looking for victi... volunteers to do the newsletter so we can take some months off. I'm not asking for your free time, you don't have any, neither do we, it's a matter of setting priorities and fulfilling commitments. I'm not fishing for compliments or thank you notes, I want some relief. If you're interested in helping out drop me a line.

Coming Reviews!

Most of these members took software for review at the Holiday meeting. Please submit your articles.

Ernesto Brauer & Marian Havlik

..... *Microsoft Office 2000 book*

Kathy Gallagher *Star Office*

Bill Brockmiller *Go Back*

Marian Havlik *Inkjet refill*

Darrell Garner *Final Data*

Chuck Whalen *Adobe ImageStyler*

Earl Heartt *MS PhotoDraw*

Lisa Doherty *Via Page*

President's Message

Marian Havlik

Robin Alexander, one of the first members of LCPC and an accounting professor at UW-L, did a great job of showing LCPC how to make use of spreadsheets using Office 2000. Robin showed us how to use Excel to do a budget, and other practical things in everyday life.

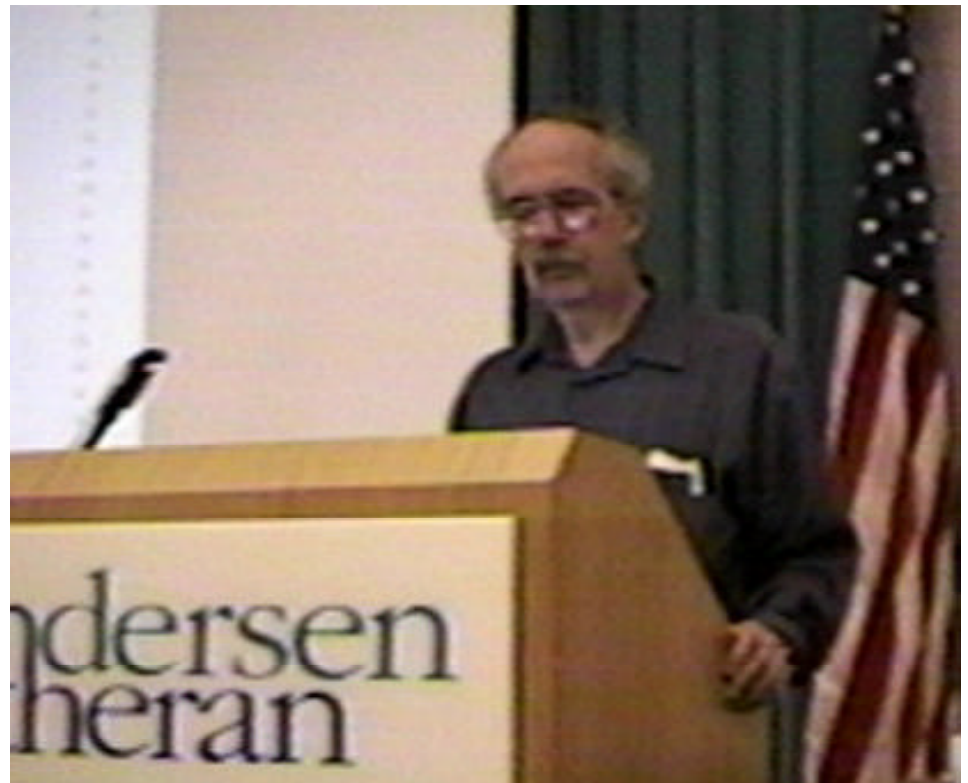
Did you see in the LaCrosse Tribune June 17 Technology Section that classes are being offered at La Crescent/Hokah and Bangor grade schools in Office 2000 for youth entering 4th grade and up! This includes Access, PowerPoint, Word and an introduction

to spreadsheets. Never too young (or old) to start. Classes cost \$5-15/session.

I recently met a gentleman who had lived in Seattle (worked in the computer business of course), but who had moved back to the rural LaCrosse county because this is a great place to raise children. He watched the video Carol Frank made of Windows Bootcamp. He was duly impressed with the knowledge imparted by our VP/speaker Chuck Whalen, and said he learned a number of things about Windows that he was unaware of. No matter how knowledgeable you are, you can always learn something new at an LCPC meet-

Continued on page 2

Robin Alexander introduces Excel



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

Membership Info and Treasurers Report

Gary Stelzig, Treasurer

The club checking balance as of 06/13/2000 is \$436.85. May transactions include a \$50 deposit, bills of \$6.60 for stamps, \$10.55 for photocopies, and \$78.10 for previous postage and flyers expense paid to Don and Carol. The latter two items have not cleared the bank and are not reflected in the above bank balance.

One renewal last month was paid by Dr. Ernesto Brauer—thank you. Also Chuck Hosler joined in May and Kevin Blum joined in April.

No renewals due for June, but have past due renewals for: Paul Havlik, Joseph Doucet, George Frisch, Kathy Gallagher, Chuck Whalen, and Mike Larson.

Kevin Blum joined our club at the April meeting. Besides his regular job working for an accounting firm, he has his own computer business named Affordable Computer Services(ACS). He will come to your door and can: 1) install hard drives, 2) install modems, 3) Printer setup/troubleshooting, 4) scanner setup/troubleshooting, 5) general troubleshooting/repair. He will also can install new software, upgrades, plus optimize your PC or do backups. He also does document scanning and web page development.

Kevin is also very knowledgeable in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Lotus, and Word Perfect. His current web site is at www.execpc.com/acslacrosse/index.html

Kevin's home PC has:

FIC 2007 Motherboard, Intel 233mmx CPU, 64MB RAM, 1.7GB hard drive Seagate, 33.6 US robotics modem, 20x CD ROM, and Creative Labs sound card.

Kevin's business computer has: FIC 2011 Motherboard, Intel 233mmx cpu, 128mb ram (crucial), 8.4GB hard drive Western Digital, 56k Aopen external modem, 2x2x6, Memorex CD-RW, 48x CD ROM, and Sound card.

Welcome Kevin.

Chuck Hosler joined last month, some info from Chuck:

I'm very much a computer novice - strictly home use. Member Jack Storlie got me interested in the club. In the very, very, VERY old days I was an active member of the "LaCrosse Area Apple User's Group." I'm talking Apple IIe, pre Mac even.

1)What kind of computer(s)(Brand, model,

speed, etc) do you have at home?

DELL Dimension XPS400 (400 PentiumII 128meg RAM, 8meg video, 10 gig drive, 19" monitor, zip drive), HP Deskjet 722C, HP ScanJet 5200C (all bought in '97). I installed a second hard drive this year, to use mainly for back-up images of my main drive; and to store photo files on.

2) What are some of the computer programs you use most often?

Word '97, Corel Photo House2, Netscape Communicator as browser and e-mail. Norton's System 2000 (antivirus, maintenance, etc.)

In May, I switched from 56 kbs dial-up modem to cable modem (I live in Onalaska). Cable advertises "up to 500 kbs". I'm getting between 300 & 400 kbs most days. If a download estimates 2hrs at 28 kbs, I can get it in 10 minutes or less. If the estimate is 5 minutes, it comes in 20 seconds! Typical web pages flash-in nicely too, but this depends a lot on how much garbage (ads/cookies/etc) they're hung-up with. I'm VERY happy with the modem speed. BUT the company gives VERY little real help on the security issue. On my own I've followed recommendations from Shields Up! <https://grc.com> and installed **Black ICE Defender** <http://www.networkice.com/> as a "firewall". I turn the modem power off, if I'm doing other stuff for awhile. Reconnecting takes 20 - 30 seconds. Overnight, I turn the whole computer off, except on the one night a week I've set for scheduled clean-ups, defrags, etc.

3) Did you say you were retired?

YES! In '98, after teaching at UWL for 33 years. On retirement I did a major expansion of my woodworking shop (a hobby). Other hobbies are archery (recreation many weekends, as well as deer hunting). Following our grandson in his high school sports activities. Some travel.

5) What do you want to learn from joining our club?

I'm not much of a "joiner;" and don't like going to meetings. I'll follow your newsletter mostly. I don't plan to come to meetings EVERY month. Hope that's not a real downer for you. I'm just not real heavy into software/hardware issues.

Welcome Chuck to our club.

*Continued from page 1,
President's Message*

ing. I hope you all realize how wonderful it is to have access to knowledgeable people like Chuck, Robin, and many others, to solve our hardware and software computer problems, and to be able to tap into everyone's collective experiences.

DECEMBER ELECTION I've been president of the LCPC since January 1999 (completing my 2nd term). I will not run for the Board in the election to be held December 2000. So, it's time to start thinking of who you'd like to nominate for the LCPC Board. The LCPC Board works like this. Four persons will be elected to the Board in December. The Board meets shortly thereafter (usually in early January), and informally decides who will assume which office. Customarily, the current vice-president (Chuck Whalen) becomes president. Being on the Board (and thus usually being an officer) is not too much work. As president I write a short column every month. In addition to 11 general meetings per year, we had Board meetings about 4 times per year, usually at a local restaurant (round tables work best for small meetings). The main topic at Board meetings is planing programs for the year. Methods of increasing membership, and various types of publicity have been also been among topics discussed during the past 2 years. During the past year we've made a number of changes, the most significant of which is distributing the newsletter via email. This has cut our costs, enabling us to keep our dues at a reasonable \$20.00 per year per person (or family).

Web Site Listing Free ISPs

By Gary Stelzig

Do you want stop paying those monthly fees to your Internet Service Provider?

The July issue of Kliplinger's magazine noted that there is a web site that has a complete list of the free ISP's - www.nzlist.org - check it out.

Spreadsheets Demystified

Carol M. Frank

The main topic of discussion at the May 31, 2000 meeting were DLLs. First of all, Ernesto Brauer's children installed AOL Instant Messenger and while it is on Solitaire crashes. Chuck explained that the same DLL is shared by Instant Messenger and Solitaire, but Instant Messenger doesn't release the shared DLL for Solitaire's use. This is a well documented problem with Instant Messenger.

Guest Peter Schaettle also had a problem that concerned DLLs. Mr. Schaettle found out about us that very day when he called the Public Library reference desk in order to find help. He was given Marian's phone number and called just before she left the house. We are glad to help.

Mr. Schaettle's problem happened when he installed a Juno free Internet disk on his Aptiva E3N with Windows98. Now his MS Outlook won't print his email. Chuck first asked if this was a first edition of Windows. He then suggest going into the Windows system subdirectory and find the file sfc.exe and run it. This program is the system file checker. Select Check for changed files and deleted files. This will catch programs that change things on you.

Chuck warned not to play with user.exe., gdi.exe, or system.exe. There is a known bug in these, and if they are altered Windows won't reboot correctly. Just press "ignore". This program comes with the Windows installation defaults and Chuck recommends running this every time you install something. Scanning can take some time.

Peter Schaettle



Mr. Schaettle has Norton System Works and Chuck gave a demonstration on how to use the Clean Sweep portion to check for redundant DLLs. Apparently the Juno Internet program had removed a shared DLL and didn't check for it. Clean Sweep will catch duplicate DLLs. But be careful of doing this with MS Office since Office needs some older versions of DLLs. Office 2000 has a repair itself function.

After scanning DLLs in Clean Sweep the redundant DLLs are color coded green, blue, yellow and red. Red meaning leave alone, yellow you might remove and so forth. Always double check what it recommends, don't trust it implicitly.

Many problems with DLLs happen because program writers want to make installations faster by bypassing checking DLL versions. A default installation is slower because it checks DLL versions and only overwrites if they are newer. Most people don't want longer installations.

Another solution is to download the latest version of Internet Explorer. This will automatically rebuild without erasing your data files. Just doing the update is much faster than reloading Internet Explorer which could take about 3 1/2 hours.

A third solution is to do a Windows update-good for weird problems with Windows98.

The presentation "Introduction to Excel" was given by Robin Alexander with input by Marian Havlik and Chuck Whalen. Robin is

a founding member of LCPC and newsletter editor for several years. He teaches accounting at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse.

Robin's Powerpoint presentation gave a description of a spreadsheet and a historical overview of spreadsheet programs spiced with humour. A spreadsheet has rows and columns for text, numbers and formulae to use for statistical and financial functions. Graphics can be added for decoration.

He demonstrated setting up a simple budget spreadsheet. In comparison, budgets on paper and in Quicken can be fairly rigid. The budget maker can easily go back and change figures to reflect new information in expenses and income.

A neat little feature is when copying labels they can immediately rename according to the title of the first label. The first label was January and subsequent labels immediately renamed February, March etc. Column sizes are easily adjusted and format changed to make it easier to read.

Other uses for spreadsheets are letters and databases (too easy to override formulae)

The database demo was setting up an address book. An auto filter can help to look at specific categories in the database.

Data analysis can make use cross tabs (pivot table). The sample sales data sheet can sort by products, location, dates, subtotals and totals.

Robin also showed an amortization table for loans and interest. He has templates available for amortization and bonds. E-mail him if you want a copy.

concludes on page 5

Chuck giving instructions on using Clean Sweep



During his brilliant presentation of "Windows Bootcamp" (Think I'm being facetious? Watch the tape. If you weren't there you should view the tape, Chuck was immensely informative and understandable.) Chuck Whalen asked in passing if anyone does a full backup any longer.

It's hard to accept that exactly six years ago we shelled out \$2600 and had the fastest computer in town, a Pentium 90 with 8 Meg of RAM and a 425 Meg hard drive. We added a \$180 tape backup and could do the entire system on two tapes that cost about nine dollars each. Tape technology advanced with gig and multi gig drives, but they have fallen far behind the 10 gig hard drives that equip even bargain basement

machines today. With drive capacity growing at an almost explosive rate, and prices falling, I think the best advice is to wait until you actually run out of space before you buy another drive. Scream as we may against bloated code and enormous programs, they are here to stay and we may as well accept them.

Check out [pricewatch.com](http://www.pricewatch.com) when you're ready to buy, they do the comparison shopping for you. Select what you're looking for and you'll receive page after page of retailers with that item. When I looked last week, 20 gig drives started at \$85, 30 gigs for \$132, they're \$159 and \$179 at Best Buy.

What to do for backup? You could buy a drive of similar or larger capacity as your

drive and keep duplicate files on each, this will currently cost you at least \$4.25 a gig. Last time I looked, backup tapes are more expensive than that. Zip drive disks are \$100-150 a gig, depending on what you pay for each Zip disk. There is another alternative, which is the topic of this article. I've seen plenty of CD-RW drives starting at \$160, I got the last one from Office Max five days ago for a "C" note. From personal experience with another CD-RW, I can tell you that they are slow and can be aggravating. As with scanners, it is the software that will determine whether you have a fulfilling or frustrating experience.

Now on to the article...

Will CD-R and CD-RW become the floppy of the future?

*by Surya Singh, East Tennessee Computer Society, reprinted from **User Friendly**, newsletter of the Los Angeles Computer Society, May 2000*

Ten years ago the common method of sharing files was via a square piece of plastic, five and a quarter inches in diameter. This "floppy" disk held either 360 kilo-bytes or 1.2 megabytes depending on which type was being used. With today's ever increasing need for removable storage however, CD-R and CD-RW, may become as popular as the floppy disk was in its heyday.

CD-R and CD-RW are acronyms that stand for Compact Disc-Recordable and Compact Disc ReWriteable, respectively. Both CDR and CD-RW drives are extensions to the standard CD-ROM (Compact Disc Read Only Memory) drive format found in most every computer. These two systems are related to each other and present the consumer with a wide number of upgrade choices in this brave new world.

Key Features

The key feature of CD-R and CDRW drives over their now commonplace relative, the CD-ROM drive, is their ability to write data to a disc. CD-R media can be written once only to any particular area on the disc. CD-RW drives build on the CD-R standard and allow the user to write and rewrite to any particular area on a CD-RW disc many times. Most CD recordable drives available today have rewriteable features and can process (read) both CD-R and CDRW media.

However, a CD recordable must have rewriteable features to rewrite CD-RW discs. In other words, a CD-RW drive can only rewrite CD-RW media (not a CD-R discs) and a CD-R only drive cannot process CD-RW media.

One of the caveats with CD-R media is that once it has been written or marked it can never be erased. Thus, working with CD-R media is quite similar to writing everything with a permanent ink pen: Nothing can ever be erased. Moreover, if a mistake is made, the whole process must be restarted and the erroneous disc is simply trashed. It was because of this vexing problem that CD-RW technology, using phase-change media, was developed.

CD Formats

CD-R and CD-RW drives, unlike most drives, can record in a variety of formats, each of which effects the final utility of the finished disc. The most common CD-R and CD-RW formats are:

1. The Packet Writing Format-This means of using the disc allows for the disc to easily act as a removable media drive. If CD-RW media is used, the drive responds and acts as a diskette or Zip drive would. However, the disc first needs to be formatted to the UDF format style which reduces the storage capacity to approximately 550

MB. CD-R packet written discs can be read by any CD-ROM drive as long as they are at least "temporarily closed." If the UDF drivers are installed on a PC, a CD-RW packet written disc can be read by most modern CD-ROM drives as long as they support packet reading.

2. Standard Data Track Format This method creates a CD data disc similar to most CD-ROM discs distributed with software. This format allows the user to store the full 640 MB that the disc can hold; however, the disc data must processed using a CD recording application (e.g., Adaptec's CD Creator) and cannot be written to directly.

3. The Audio Track/Multisession Format - This is the standard means that digitized forms of audio are added to CD discs. However, each time a series of songs are recorded, a new session is created. For a 'multisession' to be read, the CD player must support the multisession format.

History of CD formats

Why is CD recording such a complex system? Basically, it stems from the history of CD technology. CD technology was invented by Phillip's Electronics and others almost two decades ago. The original CDs started out as an optical incarnation of long-playing vinyl records (LPs). For this reason CDs, unlike diskette and hard drives, read/write along a continuous, spiraling track instead of sectors. This causes the drives to vary their speed as data is read at various points on the disc because on the outside, more "media" goes by for a given angular velocity. However, data storage is best done using a sector or packet based approach and not the

spiral-track approach of CDs. To accommodate data, CDs often place all their data in the first "track" along with a Table of Contents that stores information about all the files and where they are located. Even the speed ratings of most drives are a product of CD history. Drive multipliers (e.g., 8x) are in proportion to the speed of the first drives that operated at a rate of 150 kilobytes per second.

Popularity

Another reason for the great popularity of CD recorders is their economies, which makes them extremely cost competitive for the storage of a large amount of data. CD-R discs cost about one dollar or less per disc and CD-RW discs are less than \$5 a disc. This results in exceptionally low cost per megabyte CD-R discs have a unit cost of less than 1/6 cent/MB and CD-RW disc have a unit P cost less than 1 cent/MB. In comparison, hard drives have a unit cost ranging between 3 and 6 cent/MB and Omega Zip disks have a unit cost more than 50 times greater than CD-R (i.e., about 10 cents/MB). In addition to cost, CD-R and CD-RW are

gaining popularity because of their backward compatibility with the CD-ROM standard. This allows distribution of data on CD-R discs to a wide number of users without having to worry if the user has the right drive to read the media.

Problems

CD-R and CD-RW systems however, are not perfect. One key disadvantage is that CD-R and CD-RW drives can be somewhat expensive. For example, CD-RW drives range from \$200 to \$400 depending on the drive's speed and interface. A second disadvantage with CD-R and CD-RW drives is that they are relatively slow. Most of these drives operate only two or four times the speed of the original CD-ROM specification. Thus, even the fastest CD recorders are 10-15 times slower (while writing) than a hard drive and 2-3 times slower than CD-ROM readers.

In terms of marketability and support, CD-R and CD-RW have not seen a major advertising campaign (excluding a small campaign by Philips Electronics) nor have they been endorsed by any major computer vendor. Nonetheless, CD-R and CD-RW drives have

generated a great deal of end user support and are increasing tremendously in popularity. Since CD-R and CD-RW are not proprietary standards, there is a great deal of competition between a number of CD-R and CD-RW manufacturers. This competition should not only lower the prices of the drives, but may help CD-R and CD-RW become more widely accepted in the computing industry.

In summary, the complexity of today's software and the data files associated with it, has grown exponentially. One of the most promising and cost effective solutions could be the CD-R and CDRW system. However, for this technology to "replace the floppy" the price of the drives must come down and performance must be increased.

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. Surya Singh is a member and SIG leader of the East Tennessee Computer Society in Knoxville Tennessee.

Spreadsheets Demystified

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Various kinds of graph charts can be created. The graphics work the same in Excel as in Powerpoint. The spreadsheet or graphs can be imported with links into MS Word. Changes in either program will be reflected in the other. The screen can be split between Word and Excel to make it easier to work in both at the same time. Another nice bit is the feature function catalog which gives descriptions of each feature.

The macro language in now Visual Basic but what used to be many homemade macros are now premade tasks in Excel. For instance splitting data into two columns is now a feature found in Data: text to columns.

Robin has demystified spreadsheet programs demonstrated the many uses for them. A copy of the video tape is available from secretary Carol Frank.

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

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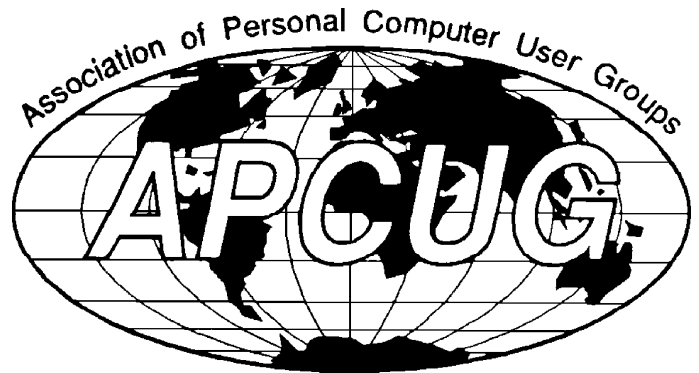
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General meetings are held the last Wednesday of each month in the Lutheran Hospital, either in the Overholt Auditorium or conference room 1 in the basement, check page 1 for location. The combined November-December meeting is held the second Wednesday 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 or phone me at 784-0150 if you want to deliver the article. Submit in ASCII, AmiPro, or WP5.

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