

# New Style

Newsletter of the LaCrosse PC Users' Group

volume 21 number 3

March 2001

## Inside

- ☑ Make your HD work better
- ☑ Leaky Memory
- ☑ How private are you?
- ☑ Chain e-mail offer!
- ☑ Secretary's and Treasurer's reports
- ☑ Medical info from the web

## This Month: March 28, 7PM

New Horizons Computer Learning Center.

Tom Smith, owner, and Steve Eckley, Sales Manager will give a presentation on their services. They will also answer any questions about their service.

## About this issue

This month's issue of *New Style* is chock full of information on making your harddrive and DSL work better, finding reliable medical information on the internet, privacy and a bit of humor in a chain letter.

Don't forget that meeting tapes are available! I can dub the 8 mm tape onto our own VHS tape which has to be returned or you can give us your own tape for dubbing.

We appreciate any input about the articles that are printed in here. Send your thoughts to [lacrossepcug@aol.com](mailto:lacrossepcug@aol.com). Article contributions are welcome too!



## President's Message

*Shane Lambert*

I am looking forward to seeing all of our members again at our March 28th meeting and would like to thank all of you for the wonderful comments about my latest topic, "Windows File Management". Remember that I will cover the use of Winzip in a 15 to 20 minute segment as a follow up to last month's presentation.

I want to take a minute to talk about computer viruses.

I have taken a lot of calls and e-mails from both members of our group and the general public about how to get rid of a virus. The best way to get rid of a virus is to not get them at all. Too many people think that because they have an anti virus program they are protected. However, just purchasing and installing the software is not enough, you also have to update the virus data files on a regular basis to keep yourself protected from new viruses. By regular basis I mean every 2 to 3 weeks or at least once a month.

New viruses appear at a rate of about 10 to 15 per week. While most of these are harmless, some of them are deadly to your computer, and if you aren't protected you are headed for a long road to recovery. There are a few viruses that once you catch them, you can't get rid of them without completely reformatting your hard drive - and we all know what a pain that can be!

Many anti virus programs will automatically update their data files when you are connected to the Internet, but you must have that feature turned on. Some virus data file updates can be well over a megabyte in size so if you don't stay on long enough to get the file, you don't get the update. You should check your anti virus software on a regular

basis to make sure you have up to date virus data files. For more information about this, consult your users manual or the web site of the anti virus software you use.

OK, enough on viruses - I could present an entire program on this topic, and maybe I will if enough of you are interested. Let me know at our next meeting on March 28th, or drop me a line at [shane@couleeweb.net](mailto:shane@couleeweb.net). Of course, any other program ideas are always welcome, and if you are willing to present a topic at a meeting, I am sure we can work you into our meeting schedule.

I would like to see everyone bring a friend or family member to our next meeting. I am glad to see that membership is very high now, the highest I have seen since I have been a member, but we still have a lot of empty seats, let's try to fill them all!

That's all for this month, see you all at the meeting!



Visit our homepage at <http://www.lcpconline.com>

## February 28 Meeting

Carol M. Frank

The meeting started out with some talk about "netiquette". Two rules were discussed. First, if you are forwarding or replying to a message, highlight the relevant part of the message and put it into a new one. This eliminates much "garbage". Second, notify your recipient that you are sending an attached file and what kind of file it is. Find out if the recipient can accept it.

More rules can be found at **netiquette.com**.

The program was given by president Shane Lambert on Windows file management. First of all, don't confuse *Windows Explorer* and *Internet Explorer*. Windows Explorer is for managing files on you harddrives and Internet Explorer is an internet search engine.

Using Windows Explorer, files can be copied and pasted into the current folder or into a new folder. The copied file is renamed "copy of\_".

You can change the file name, but be careful! Don't change the file extension. The unusable file error message box will come up.

A file can be directly opened from Windows Explorer by double clicking on it. Files with unknown extensions requires the user pick what program to use. However, if you pick wrong you need to open Edit-Tools - file type. There, the user can associate extensions with certain programs or delete the file extension from the list. (Not the actual file.)

Files can be removed by highlighting the title, hold down shift and hit Delete. This removes the file permanently by not sending it to the Recycle Bin first.

The *Recycle Bin* folder can be opened up and its contents viewed. The user can make a decision to delete the file or restore it back to its original folder. However, to open up the file, it has to be restored first. The Recycle Bin does not automatically remove files to make space on the Harddrive.

*CheckDisk* sometimes creates false files with the extension .chk. These are not complete files, remove all of them as well any crosslink (blended) files using the *Scandisk* program.

Also delete files from the temp (tmp) directories. The fastest and best way to delete temp files is in Accessory-System Tools-disk cleanup.

## Treasurers Report

Gary Stelzig

The club checking balance as of 3/13/2001 is \$673.43. February transactions include: Income of \$120 from two new members and four renewals. Expenses of: \$9.50 for copies for the February newsletter, \$13.64 for stamps.

The two new members are: Karen Kesselring and Arlene Bacon - Welcome.

Renewals were received from: Don Atkinson/Carol Frank, Alvin & Monica Fritz, Jack Storlie, and David Madson - thank you

Renewals due for March include: Lisa Doherty, Shane Lambert, Chuck Whalen, and Jim & Sandy Wheat

Past due include: Dr. Earl Heartt, Chris Hornbeck, and Bill Brockmiller

The *Start Menu* can be rearranged. Right click Start Menu-task Bar-Properties-Personalize menu. The user can sort by name, delete program links, move links around.

There were some digressions into Internet matters as well. One of the tidbits mentioned was attaching files to e-mail. Use *Winzip* to compress multiple files. AOL does this automatically, so besure your recipient can open Zipped files. AOL users have it easy, after writing the e-mail, click the attachment button, browse for the appropriate file, select it and click attach. A word of caution, be sure the file is closed before attaching it. If the file is a Word document, close Word. Lockfiles are created by Word on open documents.

Shane also described the difference between .PNG and .JPG files. Both compress the file but PNG does not deteriorate when resaved like JPG does. PNG is becoming the standard for web graphics. Unfortunately, PNG isn't supported by MACs yet.

There was talk about firewalls. Corporate firewalls are less flexible than personal ones. A request has to be sent to the system manager to make changes which might not be allowed. However a personal firewall like *ZoneAlarm* can allow certain programs to access your harddrive. *ZoneAlarm* can record the pings (hits) to your system. They can be traced back by copying and pasting the IP address into the address bar. Most pings are done be corporations such as Netscape, Yahoo, Ebay etc. and are usually benign. However if it goes to a private address it could be a possible hacking attempt.

## New e-mail addresses

New member addresses:

Arlene Bacon-

**aBaconArlene@netscape.net**

Karen Kesselring-

**KarenUffda@aol.com**

This address has changed :

Brian Hopkins-

**Brian@HandiGadgets.com**

## Well, I've also got this bridge you'll be interested in...

More often than I like, I am the recipient of chain e-mail from my cousin's son and daughter-in-law. Often it's a bogus virus alert, or the retelling of an urban myth, but last week they forwarded one that was so hilarious I had to share it with you.

First, there's the addresses of the 250, or so, previous forwarders of the message (I'm not exaggerating, you should see this list, it takes up more than two screen pages) and then the HTML message:

**Subject: Fwd: free computers**

Hewlett-Packard and Gateway have just merged to form the biggest computer supplier in the world! Bigger than Dell, bigger than IBM, bigger than them all! In response to this amazing merger, IBM has set aside 250,000 free computers to reward and keep it's most loyal and trusted customers! I've already got mine, read on to see how you can get yours!!! This email has a special encoding which will let IBM know every time you send it to one of your friends or relatives. The first 250,000 people who send this to at least 15 of their friends will receive a brand new IBM computer! After you send this to your friends, and qualify, IBM will contact you via email, and get your shipping address. Send them your address, and in a couple of days, a brand new computer, complete with printer, and 19" monitor is sitting on your doorstep! You must hurry, because this offer ends July 31 of this year! Here's the catch, though. Each of your friends must send this to at least 5 people or you won't be eligible, so choose your friends wisely! Remember, a true friend will send this along for you! That's all it takes, no Strings attached! No purchase necessary!!! You don't even have to have previously purchased a computer from IBM! They want to earn or keep your future business, and they're willing to pay for it!!! Take Care, and let's get some new computers!!!

# Helping Your Hard Drive(s) Perform Better

Richard L. Eastline, reprinted from *Hard-Copy*, journal of the Chicago Computer Society, February 2001

Routine actions such as tweaking and maintenance are enhanced by making use of software programs such as the newest version of Partition Magic

Looking at computer stores' promotion for the current offerings of hard drives, you have good reason to blink in disbelief saying, "My, how you have grown since I last saw you!" (or words to that effect). Just over two years ago-the birth of my current computer-the 8.7 GB Western Digital drive seemed an extravagance. Who in the world, other than corporations, would ever use up that capacity? Must have slipped my mind that programmers at Microsoft and elsewhere long ago adopted a credo that proclaims every increase in storage capacity presents an opportunity for further expansion of the contents of any software release with more bloat.

Today we can buy hard drives for home PCs with capacities to around 80GB, although the cost for these monster storage devices ranges from \$400 to more than \$1000 (based on maker). In a more realistic vein, 40GB drives can be had for under \$200. The typical pre-packaged desktop computers on the market today generally offer internal hard drives of 10 GB to 20 GB capacity. And all fit within the same size bay as the measly 1GB models of yesteryear. On the other hand, their disks, positioned with acutely tight tolerances, spin at seemingly supersonic speeds

Do you begin to visualize a red flag? You should. The hardest-working mechanical component in your system is an engineering marvel, but being mechanical it has far more potential for problems than you'd care to think about. Therefore, many users adopt the habit of never giving it any thought whatsoever, blithely figuring the hard drive will be reliable at least until the computer is replaced. That attitude is beyond optimistic-unless you're in the habit of upgrading on a yearly basis. If not, then spend these next few minutes learning (or reviewing) several "life insurance" options.

## The basics: Your *must* activities, with some made easier

All right, class-what's our first concern with maintenance? Did anyone say "venti-

lation"? Your sealed tight, super-speed hard drive disks can and do heat up the ambient air inside the CPU case whenever you're doing more than staring at the monitor. All the more reason why a cooling fan has to be as reliable as the drive itself. Not only could excess heat affect the performance of the hard drive, but interior case temperatures well above rated maximums will damage plug-in boards and other components with soldered connections. Moral: If your CPU case tends to feel really hot, it could be an indication that it's time to add another fan or replace the existing one with a more effective unit. Check [www.pcpowercooling.com](http://www.pcpowercooling.com) for a wide choice of cooling options.

From this point on, it's all a matter of software assistance. That translates to conventional chores of defragmenting and disk surface scans, but it also includes partitioning and uninstalling. These all can be done with basic Windows accessory "tools" although faster, more thorough, and less frustrating alternatives are readily available from well-established third-party vendors. So, let's take a tour of the various programs-some quite familiar and others all but unknown. Following the commentary will be an in-depth review of the newest release of Partition Magic (ver. 6) from PowerQuest, much more than a slightly-changed upgrade this time.

## More about that ever-persistent trio of chores

There's a "no-brainer" way to initiate a surface scan of your hard drive's primary partition-just shut down your system without properly closing out active programs. When you next turn on the computer you'll get a message at boot-up (assuming you're using Windows) chastising you for improperly exiting and, like it or not, you wait while the system effects a disk scan to check for errors before letting you get to your familiar desktop screen. Not a recommended procedure. Set up a schedule and at the appropriate time go to Accessories in your program list, select System Tools, and then click on **ScanDisk**. It's a simple application, a descendent of CHKDSK back in the days of DOS, designed to check folders and files to discover and even fix errors such as lost file fragments that could accumulate while using various programs. The basic program ought to be run weekly and the optional

"Thorough" testing might be done monthly, but frequency really should be dependent on the extent of your computer usage. Windows provides a means for setting up a schedule to choose times to run tasks such as ScanDisk and the next utility to be discussed.

Often considered a companion to ScanDisk, the **Disk Defragmenter** is another Windows utility. As most users know, the application-also accessible via the Systems Tools menu-rearranges the files of each program on a hard drive's disk to collect them in a more orderly sequence rather than have them spread piecemeal in various sectors when originally saved. Also, the application permits assigning priority usage so that programs frequently used are closer to the disk's "starting position," thereby allowing them to be more quickly accessed. You can observe these regrouping operations by selecting Show Details and be treated to a painfully slow visualization of thousands of clusters being checked, rearranged, and color-coded. If tempted to minimize the on-screen procedure and go on to other tasks, resist the temptation if possible. Running certain kinds of programs at the same time not only could slow the already tedious processing, but automatic back-up applications (such as GoBack) will assure that the defragmentation sequence never ends. Better that you close other programs and watch television or have a leisurely meal while waiting.

The remaining member of this triumvirate is **Disk Cleanup**, an addition to Win98's system tools. It essentially deletes temporary and cached files, such as old ScanDisk files, Recycle Bin contents, temporary Internet files, downloaded program files, and others. At best this utility does a passable job, but lacks much of the sophistication and cautionary controls found in commercial software. However, if your primary hard drive partition typically shows well under 100MB of free space, it is essential that you use any of the cleanup programs on a frequent basis. Those with 20 - 40GB drives with barely a dent in their total capacity can be lazier, although regular cleanups will lessen possibilities of unexpected program conflicts, system hang-ups, and other unnecessary evils.

**CAUTIONS:** If you choose to optimize the accessing of your most-used programs

*Continued on page 4*

via Win98 Disk Defragmenter's file relocation option, do not use a third-party utility for any defragmenting operation. If your hard drive is larger than 20GB, check to be certain the vendor's programs are capable of handling that capacity. If you've opted for 32-bit file allocation (FAT), note that not all commercial products may work, including one or more programs within a suite.

## Beyond the Windows System Tools-especially the uninstalling function

With all the promotion dollars being expended to get your attention, you no doubt are aware of utility "suites" sold by Norton (Symantec), McAfee (Network Associates), On-track (Mijenix), and others. These generally will offer several maintenance and fix-up utilities as a complete package although some of the most wanted items, such as anti-virus and uninstall programs, are available separately. Purchased as multi-program packages, these suites provide remarkable cost savings over buying the products individually-assuming that you want most of the items. Nearly all of them include some combination of speed-up applications, or at least promises for more efficient system performance (including faster hard drive defragmenting). Surely one of the more desirable utilities is a professional-strength program uninstaller, which goes beyond that chore by providing disk clean-up functions as well. If the all-inclusive suites don't appeal to you, then by all means invest in this single application to secure peace of mind when facing file deletion choices. Here is one area where the corresponding Win9x built-in utilities fall short.

Each of these third-party products strives to simplify the user decisions when it comes to removal of duplicate files, left over fragments from conventional uninstall operations, and so-called unused file elements that may be needed by associated programs still being used. These utilities have their own search engines, so to speak, that enable them to warn you about questionable deletions and even label available choices as being safe or unsafe removals. This writer has switched from one to another over the years and currently has chosen McAfee's Uninstaller, ver. 6, which includes a deceptively easy-to-use program, QuickClean, that performs a vital housekeeping chore. Every week (schedule is flexible) it automatically wipes out accumulated disk garbage in the categories I've

selected, removing clutter while regaining some 15 MB of space monthly. No mistakes as yet after three full months of use. [Through various rebates, Uninstaller often costs less than \$20.]

## The final, and perhaps most beneficial recommendation: Disk partitioning

Everything is relative. Back when my hard drive was all of 870 MB and very few programs would chew up more than 50 MB of storage, it was deemed practical to divide the total capacity into three partitions. The primary was allotted approximately 320 MB and the other two split the 550 remainder, resulting in D and E drives of 275 MB each. Why? Operation efficiency and easier file maintenance. Store the operating system and everyday programs (word processing, Internet, etc.) in the C partition; downloads and utilities in "D"; graphic images and surplus type fonts in "E."

As you can readily visualize, having the hard drive search and retrieve program files that often are scattered in multiple clusters on the disk-prior to your regular (?) defrag maintenance-involves repeated time and wear factors. Minimize the amount of "real estate" to be covered and you have greater accessing efficiency and longer life for your drive. Now, consider hard drives with 10, 20, or 30 times the capacity of that antique 870 MB unit. It surely doesn't make sense to have single partition anywhere near that size unless, by chance, you're engaged in producing large-size, multicolor magazine illustrations regularly. Most computers of recent vintage running Win98 or even upgraded versions of Win95 can handle partitions larger than 2 GB. But how much larger would be practical for you? It's an individual matter, naturally, although common sense would suggest not dividing a 20 GB drive into just two partitions or as many as ten. Consider how many kinds of program categories you deal with (graphics, databases, spreadsheets, presentations, documents for publication and correspondence) and apportion your drive space accordingly. For almost any drive size, you'd want the primary partition that contains the operating system to be as large or larger than the others. Going back to the 870 MB example, when that drive was replaced with an 8.7 GB unit, the three-partition choice was maintained by making each of the original divisions 10 times larger-3.25 GB for "C" and 2.75 GB each for "D" and

"E". It has worked satisfactorily inasmuch as program installation requirements seem to have escalated by similar percentages. (For the record, that 8.7 GB drive was joined by a twin, similarly partitioned, thereby providing a safe harbor for a duplicate copy of the Win98 system files, copies of essential documents, and ample space for backups. Seemed to be a better alternative than going for a 15 or 20 GB monster.)

OK, you say. "Partitioning makes sense, but I didn't do that (or even know about it) when I got my new computer. What can I do now with a drive that's almost half filled?" Yes, it's not at all that difficult to do partitioning when the drive is empty and it costs nothing but your time and a little strain on your nerves. But, what about a later date? One easy solution, as mentioned, is to install a second drive-perhaps the best choice if you have an available IDE connector, there are four on most Pentiums. (Integrated Device Electronics, type of disk drive interface having the controller circuitry on the drive itself, eliminating a separate controller card.) At today's pricing, 10 GB and smaller drives are bargains. Otherwise, it's more complicated and likely will involve acquiring some specialized software.

Let's take on the more probable scenario: modifying an existing hard drive into multiple partitions and contending with dozens of programs already installed. For that chore, the most practical, the safest, and the simplest solution is to employ one of the two leading software products: Partition Magic from PowerQuest or Partition Commander from V Communications. They are similar in their basic operations but since additional features have been added to the recently upgraded version 6.0 of Partition Magic, this report will conclude with a hands-on review of that release.

## Hard drive salvation for the faint-of-heart: Partition Magic, ver, 6.0

Products like *Partition Magic* have been around for quite some time. And, like many established products, they've gotten better but bigger with each new version. Welcome the newest upgrade! At a list price of 69.95, this frontrunner from PowerQuest costs almost twice as much as its main competitor. Won't argue that point since prior-version owners of Partition Magic can obtain the new version 6.0 for around \$30, making for an easy choice. For acceptable installation, sys-

*Continued on page 5*

tem requirements call for a minimum of 32 MB of RAM (64 MB for Win2000 Pro) and at least 54 MB of available hard drive space. Processor (chip) speeds can be anything down to a 486DX.

Like earlier editions, the new one allows for dividing or redividing an existing hard drive, works with standard FAT and FAT32 file Systems, and permits installing multiple operating Systems on the one drive. Version 6.0 also offers the following features: (1) You can split a current partition, either FAT or FAT32, into two partitions and then specify which folders and files should move to the newly created partition; (2) Drag and drop any existing partition to any unused space-if it is large enough to hold it-anywhere else on the drive; (3) It's possible to restore any partitions that have been deleted but not yet overwritten; (4) All of the revised hard drive partitions are easy to view in terms of types and sizes via a typical Windows "tree" configuration.

In keeping with present-day conventions, version 6.0 incorporates "wizards" to guide the user through each critical step of the partitioning. And, like other kinds of software which invade that sensitive region in the operating system known as the Registry, this product emphasizes the need to backup system files before tackling the partition procedures. No surprise that PowerQuest is suggesting use of their Drive Image software, but you can manage with any large-capacity media -tape, CD-ROMs, or a second hard drive. Likewise, just in case of an unexpected glitch, don't neglect having an emergency floppy boot disk on hand. If all of this has a sense of a catastrophic foreboding, don't get overly alarmed and back away. These are all routine recovery measures.

When you install Partition Magic, the program will check the condition of your hard drive before continuing. If it finds certain kinds of errors (that may not be affecting your everyday usage), it advises you by an error number. Refer to the user manual or an explanation and remedy; often this is nothing more than the inability for the program to "lock" a partition that's being modified due to files being used by another program that was not shut down. There are, however, more serious errors involving bad sectors, for example, that could entail re-installing some programs. Assuming that the drive disk examination is completed satisfactorily, you now are ready to make choices as regards creating additional partitions in unused space, increasing the size of existing partitions by

"stealing" unused space, or dividing existing partitions and reassigning files. The program's wizards take over and lead you, step by step, through the chosen options. For example, if you were intending to create a new partition, the program will inquire as to whether it is to be a primary, logical, or extended partition, whether it is to be positioned (if there's a choice) at the beginning or end of the drive's unallocated space, what byte size, and whether FAT or FAT32. (Note: You cannot convert file system types on compressed drives. It is necessary to uncompress the drive first, then convert FAT to FAT32 or vice versa.) Just let the program do its job after that, leaving you with only one important final step.

When partitioning occurs, your system reassigns drive letters. This could result in problems when accessing files since the drive path information will have been changed. (Especially in the case of CD-ROM and DVD drives which customarily are given the next letter identification after all the hard drive(s) partitions have been accounted for.) Partition Magic can automatically update any drive letter reference in paths used for shortcuts, initialization, and even the Registry. This is done via the Drive Mapper wizard. However, if you have more than one operating system installed, the recommended procedure is to use the Change Drive Letter option. That will allow for permanent drive letter assignment for partitions, thereby allowing for adding or changing partitions without causing any identification reassignments.

As far as operating systems are concerned, bootable partitions can be created for the following: DOS 6.22, Win95/98/ME/NT/2000, Linux (LILO), and OS/2. Each of these has specific boot code boundaries as well as the types of partitions that are supported. The program's user manual contains extensive information and instructions relative to these options.

Partition Magic, ver. 6.0/PowerQuest Corp./[www.powerquest.com/pm6du/info.asp](http://www.powerquest.com/pm6du/info.asp)/Win95, 98, ME, NT4.0, 2000 Professional/\$69.95 list (\$29.95 for prior-version users if purchased direct from the vendor)/CD-ROM with 150-page user guide/Support via e-mail and fax.

## Leaky Memory

*Terry Houle, Twin Cities PC User Group*

Web surfing with DSL has been great as opposed to using a modem, but I did learn something new and wanted to pass on, for what it's worth. It's probably been a couple of months since I started using DSL and I am using the external Cisco 675 router as opposed to a internal model (so this might be more applicable to the external only).

### One-half impulse power

The problem I was having was web pages that would go nowhere. They might start to load and then stop or not even load at all. Some pages were lust fine and loaded right away. I thought it might be Internet traffic on some busy sites. I finally called my ISP since I thought they might be the problem with a server down.

The person from tech support knew I had DSL and asked how long I had had it. I told him it had been a couple of months and that I had an external router He asked how long it had been since I rebooted and I told him never.

### Warp speed!

He had me unplug my connection to the router for about 10 seconds and I tried to load pages, with the same result. He then had me reboot my machine to make sure it would know about the router reset also. I restarted Windows 2000 and then opened my browser again. The web pages started flying again without any big hang ups.

So now I know that I will be unplugging my router from time to time to make sure it reboots. If you have an external router and things are slowing down more than you think they should, you may want to try this to correct the "memory leak" problem that he indicated the routers sometimes have.

from *Hard-Copy*, journal of the Chicago Computer Society, Feb 2001

## Maizell's I/O

Jerry Maizell  
jerry@maizell.com

### You can try or you can buy a spy with a jaundiced eye

In the bad old days of the Cold War, the U.S. embassy in Moscow must have been a fun place, what with all the latest spy technology they had on hand.

Of course, the KGB, not the CIA, had most of the fun. For example, there were transmitters in every typewriter that sent every keystroke to KGB listening posts, so that they got them before they were delivered to their intended recipients. Given that it took CIA years to discover a "secret" chat room run by its own employees on "secure" systems, CIA didn't learn much from its Moscow experience.

But technology is a wonderful thing. Spy systems that cost a fortune a few years ago are now used by corporations to spy on employees, parents to spy on children and spouses to spy on each other.

Many writers discuss the issues raised by spying software, but few tell you how it's done. I'm going to show you how, for under \$100, you can spy on anyone to whose PC you can gain a few minutes access, or whom you can convince to open an e-mail attachment that contains the self-installing software.

In his home in Kennewick, Washington, Richard Eaton burns CDs for his \$99 program, Investigator, which covertly detects all activity on a PC and reports it via e-mail.

Investigator records when an application is opened and all copy, move, delete and other actions, keystroke by keystroke, even if the document is not saved. If you type something, then decide it's wrong and delete it, the typing is already captured for review by whomever is watching. It reports all websites visited, e-mail, instant messages and chat room discussions, leaving no trace of itself.

Because Investigator inserts itself before the keyboard driver, even encrypting your documents may not matter. Depressing a key causes an electrical process, in under a millisecond, to send a code to the keyboard driver, which translates it into a letter. Investigator captures the codes in that brief time lag before encryption can be applied.

I tested it by spying on myself instructing Investigator to e-mail the results every five minutes. I soon received several messages with attachments readable only by Investigator.

Double-clicking the attachments merged the information into Investigator's database. Every action was detailed: date, start/elapsed time, program/document names, number of key-strokes, complete text typed and most mouse-clicks.

Download a free trial from: [www.winwhatwhere.com](http://www.winwhatwhere.com).

There are many competing products in varying price ranges. Silent Watch, like NSA's so-called Echelon system, creates alerts triggered by specific keywords ("boss," "sex," "antidisestablishmentarianism" or whatever): [www.adavi.com](http://www.adavi.com), \$200; home version, \$49.

SAM (stealth activity monitor) and STARR (stealth activity recorder reporter) are \$30/\$50 respectively: [www.iopus.com](http://www.iopus.com).

Spector and eBlaster are \$70 each from [www.eblaster.com](http://www.eblaster.com). Cheapskate spies can retrieve all stored passwords with eBlaster's freeware WASP.

Let's not overlook Mac addicts: KeystrokeRecorder, [www.campsoftware.com](http://www.campsoftware.com), will cover them for just \$20.

There may be good reasons for companies to monitor employees, such as uncovering theft, fraud and harassment. It can even be to an employee's advantage to be monitored, because monitoring can establish innocence of wrongdoing as well as guilt.

But you owe it to yourself to become aware of the possibilities by investigating some of these programs.

Why leave spying to others when you can spy on yourself and cut out the middleman?

### Dont bug me, Pollyanna, I've tied my camel down

I've never met anyone who has read Eleanor Porter's 1913 novel "Pollyanna," but we are indebted to it for the noun meaning a blindly optimistic person. There are, fortunately, few Pollyannas in the computer world. I empathize with those naive enough to follow their advice.

When I read a nationally syndicated newspaper computer columnist's advice to ignore antivirus and firewall protection as being

more trouble than they are worth, I shudder, but hope that few will take such nonsense seriously.

When I see a Time-Warner business magazine that describes itself as the "companion to business people who face the risks and opportunities the Web brings to the business world" publishing a description of privacy invasion as "a service," I wonder if the world's gone mad.

That is the theme of Joshua Macht's article "You're Being Followed" in the December issue of eCompany Now, [www.ecompany.com/articles/mag/O,1640,8840,00.html](http://www.ecompany.com/articles/mag/O,1640,8840,00.html). It helps to have a strong stomach when reading about "cultural anthropologists" like Paco Underhill, who follow customers around stores with cameras to record their habits.

Maybe you will rate Underhill's discovery of the "butt brush" as a service to humanity. But if the fact that women don't like to be bumped while shopping surprises retailers, I wonder why they imagine women (or men) appreciate being spied on.

It is one thing to note shoppers' habits in general (such as whether they're more likely to buy something on a low or high shelf), and quite another to surreptitiously pin a transmitter on them without their knowledge. As far as I know, Underhill hasn't gotten to that point (yet). But Macht thinks it's OK to do just that on the Internet with "web bugs." Web bugs are invisible 1-pixel graphics embedded in a web page or HTML (web-style) e-mail that transmit information to another computer.

When you open an HTML e-mail containing a web bug it contacts a 3rd-party server, transmitting some or all of the following (and perhaps more): The IP address of the computer and type of browser that fetched it, the URL of the page where the web bug is located, the time it was viewed, and a previously set cookie value.

It can detect how many people have viewed the same e-mail message or if you've viewed the message at all. People who do not view a message are removed from the list for future mailings.

The bug can synchronize a cookie to your e-mail address, allowing a website to know the identity of people who come to the site later.

See Richard Smith's web bug FAQ, from which some of the above information is de-

*Continued on page 7*

# How to Surf Safely for Medical Information on the Internet

by Penny Nicoll, Central Texas PC Users' Group

Have you found yourself going to the Internet to find medical information and wondered where to go to find information that you can trust? Newspaper and magazine articles tell you different things and then too, there are friends, neighbors and co-workers, to say nothing of family members, that tell you where to go and whom to trust.

According to an article that I read recently, 70 million Americans went online between June 1998 and June 1999 looking for health information. There are over 20,000 sites that deal with nearly every conceivable health subject. How can anyone expect to find information that can be relied on and trusted?

Be aware of the fact that *anyone* can author a website, *anyone* can call themselves a doctor, or an expert, but are they? When a website deals with medical information the accuracy of the information and the credentials of the author must be open to questioning.

Medical content is important; it should not be viewed as entertainment. It can be presented in an entertaining manner, but it should still contain reliable information.

You, the consumer, the web surfer must learn how to look at a website and decide for yourself if the information should be trusted or not. How can you learn to do that?

In the past few years there have been several organizations that have been working to provide clear guidance for evaluating online sources of health information. One is the Internet Healthcare Coalition:

<http://www.ihealthcoalition.org/content/tips.html>. Another is Health on the Net Foundation:

<http://www.hon.ch/HONcode/Conduct.html> (Look for the identifying logo)

## summary of evaluation tips from these two sources

Don't rely on just one Internet site for information; seek information from several sites or other sources.

Information from a site should support and not replace the relationship between you and your physician.

Authors and contributors should always be identified, along with their credentials. Only medically trained and qualified professionals should give medical or health advice,

unless a clear statement is made to the contrary.

Any specific claims as to the benefits or advisability of a treatment or product should be justified/supported by balanced, appropriate evidence.

The date when a page containing medical information was last changed should be clearly displayed (e.g., at the bottom of the page). Medical data changes frequently and you need to know if what you are viewing is current.

Whoever is supporting or sponsoring the website should be clearly identified, including any commercial or noncommercial organizations that have contributed money, services or materials.

If advertising is a source of funding, this should be clearly stated. It should be easy to determine a distinction between any advertising or promotional material and the medical advice contained on the site.

## what to do with information learned

Realize that personal information shared with health web sites is highly vulnerable. *People who visit health web sites often think they are anonymous, but they aren't. Sites are sharing personal health information that they collect from visitors, without their knowledge or permission. In consistency between the privacy policies and the actual practices of some health web sites does exist. Some sites state a privacy policy and then include a disclaimer that states that they are not liable for any third party actions.*

Besides the various medical websites, many people go to chat rooms on medical or other websites for information. This may be OK for very general information, but it can't be trusted for anything individualized. The information given out on a website or in a chat room is by necessity very general in nature; a sort of "one size fits all" philosophy. Remember, these sites are going to do their best to protect themselves from possible lawsuit. After all, a main reason for being there is to draw interest and then be able to sell you something.

Instead of sharing specific personal information online, retrieve information about conditions etc, and then discuss that information with your personal physician. Use this information to increase your understanding and improve your ability to talk with your doctor.

The "doctor" on the Net doesn't know you or anything about you except what you say. How can he or she be expected to reliably advise you about how to care for and treat your body?

First and foremost, use your own common sense and remember that the Internet is not a substitute for your personal doctor.

*This article was originally published in July, 2000 issue of the PC+ which is the newsletter for the Central Texas PC Users' Group in Austin, Texas.*

---

*Maizell's I/O, cont. from page 6*

rived: [www.privacyfoundation.org/education/webbug.html](http://www.privacyfoundation.org/education/webbug.html). It's not only junk or spam e-mailers who employ this subterfuge. Among the companies detected using web bugs in e-mail or websites: Barnes and Noble, eToys, Quicken, Microsoft.

You can't remove web bugs, but you can disarm them by blocking cookies, deleting cookies already on your system, and installing a firewall. For guidance on cookie handling see [www.junkbusters.com/ht/en/cookies.html](http://www.junkbusters.com/ht/en/cookies.html). For an excellent free firewall see [www.zonealarm.com](http://www.zonealarm.com).

Before viewing HTML e-mail I set ZoneAlarm to block all Internet activity, so bug transmissions are intercepted.

(Even when web-bug free, HTML e-mail, except for special purposes, is a discourteous abomination. I open such messages last, if at all. I'd rather read 10 spams about getting rich quick than one HTML message from a friend, especially when the type is set against a dark color.)

Pollyannas may trust that web bugs, cookies and similar intrusive devices are used only for good purposes. But I favor the Arabic saying: "Trust in Allah. But tie your camel."

## LCPC Board

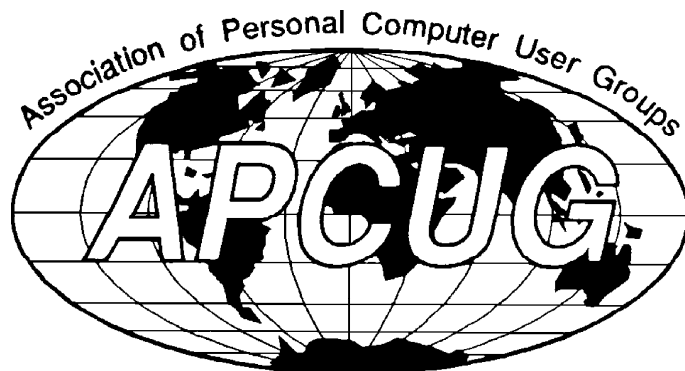
**Shane Lambert**—President, Board ..... 784-5445  
[shane@couleeweb.net](mailto:shane@couleeweb.net)

**Marian Havlik**—Vice-president, Board ... 782-7958  
[havlikme@aol.com](mailto:havlikme@aol.com)

**Gary Stelzig**—Treasurer, Board ..... 788-7075  
[gstelzig0@aol.com](mailto:gstelzig0@aol.com)

**Don Atkinson** ..... 784-0150  
Newsletter editor and publisher [donaldeatkinson@aol.com](mailto:donaldeatkinson@aol.com)

**Carol Frank** ..... 784-0150  
Secretary, Board, newsletter, programs  
[carolmfrank@aol.com](mailto:carolmfrank@aol.com)



[WWW.APCUG.ORG](http://WWW.APCUG.ORG)

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 Jan-Oct in the Overholt Auditorium at the Lutheran Hospital. The combined November-December meeting is held the second Wednesday in December.

Thank you, Gundersen-Lutheran, for making this wonderful facility available.

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, please submit articles by the 13th of the month. Upload to:

[lacrossepcug@aol.com](mailto:lacrossepcug@aol.com)

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

**LCPC**

**P.O. Box 2991**

**LaCrosse, WI 54602-2991**