

# New Style

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- humor!

Newsletter of the LaCrosse PC Users' Group

volume 21 number 7

July 2001

## This month's meeting

July 25, 7:00 PM Overholt Auditorium, Gundersen Lutheran

President Shane Lambert will be giving a presentation on burning CDs with an emphasis on music.

## A Problem

*Don Atkinson*

For some time I have not been able to access the network from the Aptiva, although DSL works. I finally found the problem. Under "Network Neighborhood" I clicked on the "Entire Network" button and examined "Properties", it pointed to a CD writing program.

This is not the only icon pointing to the wrong program. The Internet Explorer button on the menu bar also points to another program.

How do I correct this? Do I need to reinstall the OS? If you have an immediate answer, please reply. If not, talk to Carol at the meeting.

## Another auction site

On page 7 there is an article about the online auction site, e-bay. I'd like to recommend a site: [www.auctionarms.com](http://www.auctionarms.com). They sell books, memorabilia, components, and firearms from modern to antique. Among the most interesting items are captures, such as the Japanese model 1892 revolver in a French Lebel holster, taken from a German soldier serving in Italy during WWII.

## Use of LCPC Funds

*Gary Stelzig*

We have some extra club funds. Could we purchase some PC diagnostic software that we could use on member PC's that they would bring to a meeting? Your idea!

## Creating Powerful Presentations

*Carol Frank, secretary*

The June meeting started with a question about what programs can support JPEG files. Most any graphics program except Windows paintbrush can support JPEG. What was recommended at the meeting was Paintshop Pro and Ulead PhotoImpact. A trial copy of Paintshop Pro can be downloaded.

Next was Outlook Express and macros. Older versions of Netscape and AOL don't support macros. Outlook Express supports macros because it shares DLLs with MS Word. If macros are turned off in Outlook Express it loses the ability to run pop-up advertisements. (No big loss there)

*Jack Storlie shows off the MS T-shirt he won in the drawing at the end of the meeting*



Marian Havlik recently bought the small Canon Bubblejet printer, BJ-85, for traveling purposes. She was in a hurry to print something out and installed it with just the black ink tank. It printed fine. Then she got a message "raster printer driver isn't loaded." She tried reinstalling it without success. She worked with Canon technical support to get it reinstalled. She did a slow install and after several tries, succeeded.

Shane said that Window ME doesn't support Hewlett Packard and Canon products and most digital cameras. Chuck said that Windows 2000 doesn't support old scanners or other old hardware. According to Shane Windows 2000 doesn't support the elaborate keyboards with extra functions.

Shane also emphasized the importance of surge protectors placed between the computer and the outlet as lightning protection. Due to the recent storms he had to repair twenty-seven computers that had lightning damage.

The most expensive cost is to recover data off the harddrive. Be sure to have a surge protector on the modem line as well. Chuck recommends an Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS) that gives an audio signal. This give the user time to turn everything off properly and save files.

The presentation about MS PowerPoint was given by Marian Havlik. She uses

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

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PowerPoint regularly to given presentations before professional groups. PowerPoint is becoming the standard. Organizers of professional get-togethers often require that all presentations are given in Powerpoint. This saves time and hassles in changing computers and programs. Often the presentation is e-mailed beforehand to the sponsoring organization, though a prudent presenter brings along a CD backup.

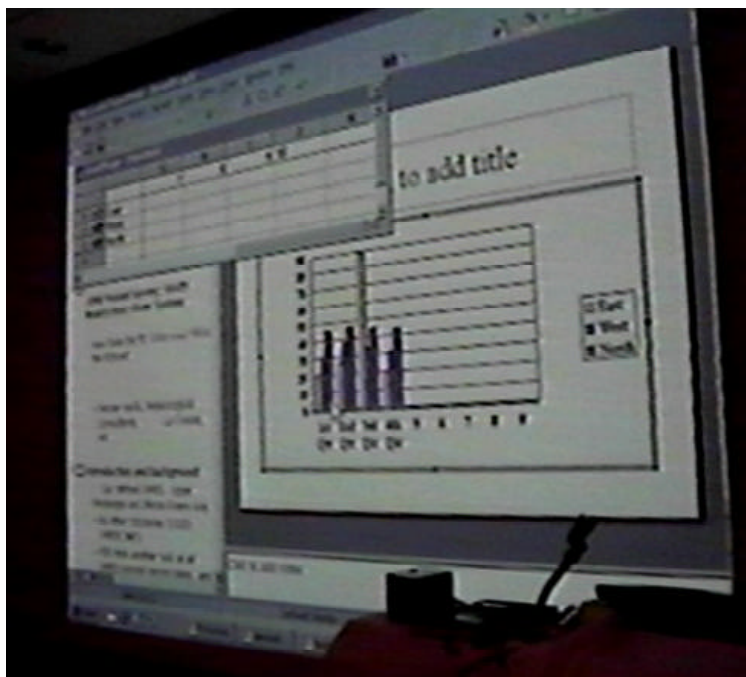
PowerPoint doesn't have to be for professional use only. Another use is as a photo album that performs an automatic slideshow. Genealogy can be organized for viewing by family members and e-mailed.

It is simple to start a presentation by choosing a template that fits your purpose. The chosen template can be edited for background color and decorations. But, be careful with your color choices! Some combinations like white text on a dark background can be hard to read. Some professional groups have standards for appearances and they are usually conservative.

Tables, charts and pictures can be inserted and linked to Excel, Access, Word and MS Photo Editor. This allows for faster updating if both applications are open. Charts also can be created in PowerPoint and edited. Pictures can be resized and repositioned but there isn't automatic centering. JPEG is the preferred format.

The slide sorter allows the user to see all or most of the slides at once and rearrange

*Showing how to edit charts in Powerpoint*



them. Animations can be added, the most useful is to hit a key during the presentation and a line of type appears to emphasize a point. The automatic slide show can be adjusted for speed and method of entry and exiting. Pictures are good to add in order to break up the text and keep viewers alert.

Marian often has thirty to forty slides in her presentations. She can spend up to forty hours tweaking a presentation to make it perfect for a fifteen-minute show.

A PowerPoint presentation can be printed out as transparencies or handouts. Not the best option but it could be the only one if a projector isn't available. Be sure to check the "print in reverse order" option to have it come out collated correctly.

The advent of computerized presentation programs has made creating presentations easier and less expensive (that is if you don't need to purchase the projector). In the not-so-good days it could cost \$4-5 per 35 mm slide to make and it was difficult and expensive to make changes.

At the end of the meeting there was a drawing to give away some of the goodies that Microsoft sent us. The drawings were for a T-shirt, notebook, notepaper, flexible pens and a cap. There were also various CDs of tryout software to take home.

## Membership and Treasurers Report

*Gary Stelzig, Treasurer*

The club checking balance as of 7/13/2001 was \$778.00. We had income of \$60.00. There were 2 renewals last month: 1) Michael Larson and Dr. Ernesto Brauer - thank you. Larry Bastian joined at the last meeting - more info about Larry in the August newsletter. Welcome Larry. Expenses paid in June were \$6.80 for stamps. Carol did the newsletter copies and I have not seen her bill yet.

No past due members. We have 49 members. Renewal for July: Ralph Dupae, Darrell Garner, Robert & Mary Pluntz, Peter Schaettle, Robert & Delaine Stolpa.

Our modest \$20 renewal fee for LCPC can be mailed to our lock box 2991 or to my address at 2032 South 30th LaCrosse, WI 54601 OR bring to next meeting.

*Feeding frenzy over MS tryout software giveaway*



# Getting Started With Internet Music

Bruce Fries - author of *The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook*

This article provides an overview of what you need to record and play music on your computer and how to get music from the Internet.

## Introduction

New audio compression technologies, such as MP3, allow you to use your computer as a digital jukebox that can hold thousands of CD-quality songs. You can quickly find and play any song with a click of a mouse and never have to worry about tapes wearing out or records getting scratched. Instead of spending hours making tapes or programming a CD changer, you can compile customized playlists in minutes.

Audio compression also makes it practical to download music from the Internet, where you can access thousands of songs from artists all over the world. With MP3, you can download a four-minute song in less than 15 minutes (with a 33.6 kbps modem), compared to more than 3 hours for the same song in CD audio format. Now you can sample a wide variety of music from the comfort of your home and find some great music from independent artists you might not otherwise be exposed to.

## Music on the Internet

On the Internet, you'll find music in the form of files that can be downloaded to your computer; music that you can listen to as it's "streamed" over the Internet (similar to the way you listen to AM and FM radio), and physical media, such as records, tapes and CDs, that you can purchase and have shipped to you.

Downloadable music is simply music in the form of a computer file (usually MP3 or WMA format) that you can download from a Web site to your computer. Downloadable music can be played on your computer, a portable digital audio player like the Rio 800, or newer CD players the Rio Volt ([www.riohome.com](http://www.riohome.com)).

Streaming audio enables you to listen to digital music without having to wait for the entire file to download. Streaming audio is used by many online music stores to play short clips from songs so you can listen to samples before they you the record or CD.

To listen to streaming audio, you need a sound card and an internet connection.

## Digital Audio Formats

MP3 (technically, MPEG Audio Layer-III) is a standard format for compressing digital audio. MP3 squeezes audio files to about one tenth of their original size, while maintaining close to CD quality.

RealAudio was the first widely used system for streaming audio and video over the Internet. It is a proprietary format, but it is used by many online music stores for sample clips of songs, and by many Internet radio sites.

WAV is the default format for digital audio on Windows PCs. WAV files usually contain PCM format audio, which means they are uncompressed and take up a lot of space (10MB/minute for CD quality audio).

Windows Media Audio (WMA) is a proprietary format developed by Microsoft. WMA is supported by most full-featured player programs and by many portable players

## Internet Radio

Internet radio is a form of streaming audio, usually in Real Audio or Windows Media Audio format. MP3 can also be streamed, but is more commonly used as a downloadable format. Spinner ([www.Spinner.com](http://www.Spinner.com)) provides a nice tuner interface with access to dozens of stations and programmable presets. Sites like Live365.com and Radio.Sonicnet.com allow you to set up a personal radio station, which you customize by selecting the artists and the types of music you want to hear.

## Hardware Requirements

To listen to music on your PC, you need a sound card. To play MP3 files you need at least a Pentium PC (133mHz or faster recommended) or a PowerPC Macintosh. A CD Recordable (CR-R or CD-RW) drive is recommended for recording audio (Redbook format) or MP3 (data format) CDs.

You will need plenty of RAM, lots of free disk space, and a modem to download songs or listen to music streamed over the Internet. To convert your existing CDs into MP3 files,

you'll need a CD-ROM drive that is capable of digital audio extraction (DAE)-commonly called ripping.

## Software Requirements

To play MP3 files, you need a player program or a portable player that supports MP3. The latest versions of the Windows and Mac operating systems come with built-in players, but you'll be better off using an all-in-one program like *MusicMatch Jukebox* ([www.musicmatch.com](http://www.musicmatch.com)) because it has more features and is easier to use, even for non-technical users

*MusicMatch Jukebox* includes everything you need to create, organize and play MP3 files. MusicMatch supports ripping from CDs, analog recording from records and tapes, and burning MP3 files directly to a CD. MusicMatch also automatically organizes you MP3 files into separate folders by artist, album, genre and other categories.

To listen to Internet radio you need a program that supports streaming audio. At the very least, you should install the latest versions of the *RealPlayer* ([www.real.com](http://www.real.com)), *Windows Media Player* ([www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia](http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia)) and a full-featured audio player, such as *MusicMatch Jukebox*. These programs will allow you to listen to the majority of Internet radio sites.

## Downloading Music

To obtain songs in MP3 format, you can download them from the Internet, create them from prerecorded music or obtain pre-made MP3 CDs. Web sites like MP3.com and EMusic.com offer thousands of downloadable songs in MP3 format. Many of these songs are free, and those that aren't usually cost only a dollar or so.

*Napster* ([www.napster.com](http://www.napster.com)) is an MP3 file sharing service that maintains a central directory of shared MP3 files that exist on individual user's computers. Users search by song title or artist name and Napster displays links to matching files on the computers of other users. Each link lists the file's resolution and size, and the speed of the user's Internet connection. The first user then selects and downloads the MP3 file directly from the other user's computer.

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## Creating Your Own MP3 Files

To create MP3 files from records or tapes you'll need to record them in real-time, using a sound card. You should use a good stand-alone recording program like *Cool Edit 2000* ([www.cooledit.com](http://www.cooledit.com)), since the sound recording applications that come with most computers are fairly limited. Cool Edit also has a nice audio clean-up plug-in that can remove clicks, pops and hiss from the sound before you convert it to MP3 or burn it to a CD.

When you record using Cool Edit, the song will end up as an uncompressed WAV (pronounced wave). The advantage of a WAV file is that you have the option of editing it to adjust the volume or trim off unwanted silence before it is converted to MP3 or burned to a CD. MusicMatch can also record from analog sources like records and tapes, but lacks the advanced editing features of Cool Edit.

WAV files can be recorded directly to an Audio CD or converted to MP3 files. The process of creating an MP3 file is called encoding. Encoding compresses the audio by removing sounds that most people can't hear. The size and sound quality of the MP3 file is a function of the bit-rate used-the higher the bit-rate, the larger the file and the better the sound quality.

To create MP3 files from an audio CD, the best method is to bypass the sound card and rip the audio directly to your hard disk. Ripping is better than recording through a sound card because it results in a perfect copy without added noise or distortion. Because it is a digital process, ripping is also much faster than recording. For example, a system with a fast CD-ROM drive can rip a four-minute song in less than 30 seconds. Recording the same song through a sound card will always take at least four minutes.

Most audio CDs do not contain information, such as artist names and album and song titles. To save you from having to enter this information manually, programs, such as MusicMatch, can automatically get this information from the CDDb ([www.cddb.com](http://www.cddb.com)) and use it to automatically name the files.

## Organizing Your Music

Now that you've downloaded or created MP3 files, you need a way to organize them.

MP3 files can be organized in one big folder that contains all files, or they can be grouped in separate directories with similar music. It's up to you to decide which method to use, although if you have more than a few hundred songs you should organize them in separate directories.

Playlists are optional text files that contain the name and location of each audio file. Each playlist is like a tape with unlimited capacity, where songs can be added, deleted or moved around without the need to re-record the tape. Playlists can be created and read by text editors and programs like MusicMatch.

## Playing Your Music

You can play songs from Windows Explorer or Mac Finder by double-clicking on them. If your system is set up properly, this should automatically launch the player software (if it's not already running). You can also play individual songs by launching the player and using its "File Open" function. If you have created playlists, you can load one into MusicMatch, set the "repeat" mode on, and sit back and enjoy hours of continuous music. You can use the player controls to jump forward or backwards in the list, and you can click on individual songs to play them out of order. MusicMatch's playlist manager allows you to add, delete and change the order of songs and even save the playlist to a new file.

## Recording Your Own CDs

CD recordable drives (CD-R and CD-RW) can be used to record create music CDs with compilations of songs from different albums and to back up data from your computer's hard disk. CDs are usually recorded in either audio or data formats.

Audio format CDs have the advantage of being playable in most CD players, though the capacity is limited to 74 minutes of music (approximately 18 four-minute songs). MP3 files are just data files as far as a CD recorder is concerned, so you will need to record them to a data format CD.

With MP3 files, you can record more than 12 hours (about 200 songs) of high-quality music on a single CD, in less than 20 minutes with a 4X CD-R drive. You can also use MusicMatch Jukebox to uncompress

MP3 files and record the music to an audio format CD.

## For More Information

For more information on recording and playing music on your computer, pick up a copy of *The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook* (\$19.95) from [www.TeamComBooks.com](http://www.TeamComBooks.com) or read it online for free at [www.MP3Handbook.com](http://www.MP3Handbook.com).

*Bruce Fries is a writer, technology consultant and entrepreneur who lives in Silver Spring, Maryland. He is an associate of the Audio Engineering Society and the founder of TeamCom Books, a customer-focused publishing company that combines the best of traditional print publishing with new media, such as e-books and the Internet.*

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*Another item in the same vein as last month's humor bit. Via APCUG.*

From the internet, author unknown.

Dear Tech Support,

Last year I upgraded from Girlfriend 7.0 to Wife 1.0 and noticed that the new program began unexpected child processing that took up a lot of new space and valuable resources. No mention of this phenomenon was included in the product brochure.

In addition, Wife 1.0 installs itself into all other programs and Launches during system initialization, where it monitors all other system activity. Applications such as Poker Night 10.3, Drunken Boys Night 2.5 and Saturday Football 5.0 no longer run, crashing the system whenever selected.

I cannot seem to keep wife 1.0 in the background while attempting to run some of my other favorite applications. I am thinking about going back to Girlfriend 7.0, but the uninstall does not work on this program. Can you please help me !!!??? Thanks,

A TROUBLED USER

Dear TROUBLED USER,

This is a very common problem men complain about, but is mostly due to a primary misconception. Many people upgrade from Girlfriend 7.0 to Wife 1.0 with the idea that Wife 1.0 is merely a UTILITIES & ENTERTAINMENT program. Wife 1.0 is an OPERATING SYSTEM and designed by its creator to run everything.

*concludes on page 6*

# Vinyl LP to Audio CD or MP3 Files

By Bruce Fries - author of *The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook*.

With a good sound recording and editing program you can take those old scratchy LPs and 78s record them through your sound card, filter out all those clicks and pops, and then burn the music to an audio CD or store it as an MP3 file. The following process also works for recording audio from other external sources, such as cassette tapes and microphones.

Use a program like CoolEdit 2000 ([www.cooledit.com](http://www.cooledit.com)) for the PC or Peak ([www.bias-inc.com](http://www.bias-inc.com)) for the Mac. Demo versions of both programs can be downloaded for free.

## Connect Your PC to Your Stereo:

The first step is to connect an adapter cable from the tape out (or record) jack of your stereo receiver to the line input of your sound card. These cables can be purchased from most consumer electronics stores, such as Radio Shack, Best Buy and Fry's Electronics. Newer turntables with line-out jacks can be connected directly to the sound card.

Set the Sampling Rate and Resolution:

The next step is to create a new file in the sound editing program. If you intend to create an audio CD, you must choose a sample rate of 44,100, two channels (stereo) and a resolution of 16 bits. This will create a file that takes up approximately 10MB of space for every minute recorded, so you will need plenty of free disk space. For voice or music to be embedded in a Web page, you can use a lower sample rate, a single channel and 8 bit resolution to create a much smaller file.

## Set the Recording Level:

Now play part of the track and use the Volume Control program to set your recording levels. In Windows, the first screen of the Volume Control program is for playback

levels. To get to the Recording Level screen, choose Properties from the Options menu and select the checkbox for Recording. Make sure the checkbox for the Line-In volume control is also selected. Click OK and the Record Level screen will appear.

Set the Monitor Record Level option in your recording program to On, and, as the track plays, adjust the slider for Line-In so the level meter shows a strong signal, but not so strong as any peaks cause the meter to go into the red area.

## Record the Audio:

Lift the stylus and queue up the beginning of the track. Click the Record button in your recording program and then lower the needle. Make sure no other programs are running while you record. When the track is finished, click the Stop button and lift the stylus.

## Remove Clicks, Pops or Hiss:

Play back the track to hear how it sounds. Trim off any silence at the beginning and ends of the track. If you have an audio clean-up plug, use it to automatically remove any clicks, pops and hiss. If you don't have an audio clean-up plug-in, you can zoom in to each click or pop, select an adjacent cycle of the waveform at the zero crossing points, copy it to the clipboard, and then paste it over the cycle that contains the click. Listen to the track again and run the hiss removal if necessary.

## Normalize the Volume:

Normalize the track to adjust the volume up or down so that all tracks will play at a similar level. A value of 97% usually works well if your software normalizes by peak level. More advanced programs, such as CoolEdit Pro, can normalize by average levels, which is much more accurate. At this

point, you may want to add a fade-in or fade-out. Some CD recording programs, such as Nero ([www.nero.com](http://www.nero.com)) can automatically crossfade tracks as the CD is recorded.

Save to a WAV or MP3 File:

If you intend to record the track to an audio CD, save it to a PCM format WAV file (PC) or an AIFF file (Mac). Save the file to MP3 format if you want to play it from your computer or on a portable player.

## Record an Audio CD:

Now you can use a CD-Recordable drive to create a Red Book audio CD that can be played in most CD players. Avoid using CD-RW media because it will not be compatible with most CD players.

It pays to experiment with a short clip before you record and clean-up an entire album. Find out which settings work best for different types of recordings and write these down for future reference.

Many of these old 78s and LPs are irreplaceable, so it pays to preserve them in a digital format. If you ever have recorded a cassette or reel-to-reel tape, you should be comfortable with this process and delighted with the ability to improve the quality of the audio.

For more information on recording from vinyl LPs to audio CDs or MP3 files, pick up a copy of *The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook* (\$19.95) from [www.TeamComBooks.com](http://www.TeamComBooks.com) or read it online for free at [www.MP3Handbook.com](http://www.MP3Handbook.com).

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# Connecting Your PC to Your Stereo

By Bruce Fries - author of *The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook*.

If you've taken the time to put your music collection on your computer, you'll probably want to listen to it through a good stereo system. Even if your stereo isn't in the same room as your computer, there are several options for connecting the two, including direct analog cabling, USB Audio devices, wireless audio transmitters, and network audio receivers.

The most basic concept of connecting audio equipment is that inputs must always be connected to outputs. Sometimes you will still get sound if you mistakenly connect a sound card output to an output of a stereo receiver. When in doubt, connect the sound card output to the CD jack on your stereo—it's always an input.

Connect high-level (also called line-level) outputs to high-level inputs, and connect low-level outputs (such as a microphone) to low-level (Mic) inputs. Do not use the receiver's phono input jack because this is designed for a very low-level signal and has a special equalization circuit. Avoid using the sound card's headphone or microphone jack to connect to other equipment unless you have no other choice.

Most consumer sound cards have 1/8" mini phone jacks. A mono jack is used for the microphone input, and stereo jacks are used for the line-in, line-out and headphone. Better sound cards may have separate RCA jacks for the left and right channels. These are the same kind of jacks found on most home stereo systems. High-end sound cards may also have connectors for digital inputs and outputs.

The simplest connection between a computer and a stereo system is to run a cable directly from the sound card's line output to a line input of your stereo. To record from your stereo system to your computer, connect a cable from a line-out (or record) jack on your receiver to the line-in jack on your sound card.

If your sound card's line output is an 1/8" stereo mini-phone jack, you'll need an adapter cable (male 1/8" stereo mini-phone to dual male RCA). These cables can be purchased from most consumer electronics stores, such as Radio Shack, Best Buy and Fry's Electronics.

USB audio devices perform the basic functions of a sound card, but outside of the PC,

and are less likely to pick up noise from the PC's electronics. USB audio devices can be used for both recording and playback and are a good solution for notebook computer users who want higher quality sound.

The *Roland UA-30* ([www.edirol.com](http://www.edirol.com)) is a flexible USB audio device that supports both Macs and PCs. The UA-30 works great and includes just about every type of input and output connector you might possibly need.

Wireless audio devices can transmit a stereo audio signal up to 300 feet. These devices typically include a transmitter and a receiver with standard RCA line-level input and output jacks. Wireless audio devices provide more flexibility than hard cabled connections, but are much more prone to interference compared to other types of connections.

The *MP3 Anywhere Digital Audio Sender* by X10 ([www.X10.com](http://www.X10.com)) is a good wireless audio device for most users. It sells for under \$100 and uses the 2.4 GHz spectrum to reduce interference and provide a high quality connection. The MP3 Anywhere also includes a remote control and software, which allow you to control most popular player programs.

The ideal way to transmit audio from your PC throughout your house is by streaming the audio from your PC via a network. A network audio connection eliminates the loss of high frequencies, interference and hum typical of analog cable and wireless connections.

The *Rio Receiver* ([www.riohome.com](http://www.riohome.com)) is a very capable network audio device that allows you to access individual songs and playlists from your PC anywhere you have a telephone or network jack. The Rio has an LCD interface that displays song title, artist name and other information, and also includes a remote control.

Whatever your choice of PC to stereo connection, you will be able to use your computer as a digital jukebox and take full advantage of the latest digital music technologies to play high-quality music anywhere in your house.

For more information on connecting your PC to your stereo, pick up a copy of *The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook* (\$19.95)

from [www.TeamComBooks.com](http://www.TeamComBooks.com) or read it online for free at [www.MP3Handbook.com](http://www.MP3Handbook.com).

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*Tech Support, continued from page 4*

It is unlikely you would be able to purge Wife 1.0 and still convert Back to Girlfriend 7.0. Hidden operating files within your system would cause girlfriend 7.0 to emulate Wife 1.0 so nothing is gained.

It is Impossible to uninstall, delete, or purge the program files from the system once installed. You cannot go back to Girlfriend 7.0 because Wife 1.0 is not designed to do this. Some have tried to install Girlfriend 8.0 or Wife 2.0 but end up with more problems than the original system.

Look in your manual under "Warnings-Aliimony/Child support". I recommend you keep Wife 1.0 and deal with the situation.

I suggest installing background application program C:\YES DEAR to alleviate software augmentation. Having installed Wife 1.0 myself, I might also suggest you read the entire section regarding General Partnership Faults (GPFs). You must assume all responsibility for faults and problems that might occur, regardless of their cause.

The best course of action will be to enter the command C:\APOLOGIZE. In any case avoid excessive use of C:\YES DEAR because ultimately you may have to give the APOLOGIZE Command before the operating system will return to normal. The system will run smoothly as long as you take the blame for all the GPFs.

Wife 1.0 is a great program, but very high-maintenance.

Consider buying additional software to improve the performance of Wife 1.0. I recommend Flowers 3.1 and Diamonds 2K. Do not, under any circumstances install Secretary with Short Skirt 3.3. This is not a supported application for Wife 1.0 and is likely to cause irreversible damage to the operating system.

Best of Luck,  
Tech Support

# Trash to Cash-Online

by Donna Barnes-Roberts, Pasadena IBM Users Group

## Here's how to turn your excess stuff into greenbacks

Ready to get rid of that unsightly IMSAI computer you use for a foot rest? How about that pot that says Roseville on the bottom, the one you can't stand? Well, with a few keystrokes, you can make someone else happy, unclutter your closet, and stuff a few bucks into your pocket.

How? With the Internet. It's not a multi-level marketing scheme and definitely not illegal. It's called EBAY. You simply list your item on their auction site, let people bid on it, and send it after the high bidder pays for it.

I have sold everything from machine tool brochures, WW-II throat microphones, dishes, dress patterns, slide rules, broken dolls, stereo equipment. The guideline is—if you can ship it, you can probably sell it. In fact, I've seen cars listed and even heard of houses listed, so I'm sure you can sell just about anything of value on ebay. The only however? Not everything is worth offering on ebay.

If you are unsure whether or not your treasure is really trash, just search ebay's completed auctions for similar items that have been offered in the last month. If it was of-

fered for \$2.00 and nobody bid on it, figure it really is trash and not treasure. And note that heavy stuff is not usually a good idea for ebay. Remember that you will have to package this and convince the post office to carry it someplace else. They do have limits.

To become an ebay tycoon, all you need is an Internet account, a computer, and a way of uploading pictures of your stuff to the Internet. (Pictures are optional but highly recommended.) When your item sells, you just e-mail the buyer with your address so he or she can send you your money, and send them the merchandise after the check clears. Most buyers are prompt and polite. Some are not. Kinda like life.

Once you decide to list an item with ebay, head to their site at [www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com) and click on the sellers link. This page walks you through the process of listing your item. Ebay charges start at \$.25 to list each item, depending on how high you set the starting bid. They also charge a small percentage of the final selling price if it sells. You can also set a reserve, so that you don't have to sell the item until the bidding gets to a price that you set that is hidden from the bidders.

## Need Some Stuff?

After you have sold your stuff and have extra money (and some new-found room in your home), how about buying someone else's good stuff they just listed on ebay?

Not surprisingly, most users get started on ebay as a buyer, and the depth of the offerings are truly outstanding. If you are looking for anything from the commonplace to the esoteric, you'll probably find it for sale on ebay. It is world's attic for sale, and there are always surprises.

Auctions usually take a week, so there is plenty of time to place your bid, and you can watch the bidding escalate as time passes. Usually there is a flurry of bidding just before the auction closes, and things sometimes get crazy at the end. Or ebay crashes. Kinda like life.

While ebay is not the only auction house on line, it is the most diverse. For instance, Butterfield and Butterfield has online auctions for fine art and antiques, and Egghead is there for computers and software. These sites actually sell and ship merchandise they own or have on consignment, so you know who your seller really is. For reliable merchandise and product guarantees, these can be a great idea, but for the young business of selling anything online, give me the rag-tag wild west of ebay anyway!

Artist Donna Barnes-Roberts has essays on art, examples of her paintings, links to art-related sites, art clubs in the Pasadena, area, and a little humor, at: [www.barnesroberts.com/art/](http://www.barnesroberts.com/art/). You can reach her at [donna@barnesroberts.com](mailto:donna@barnesroberts.com).

# Random Access - April 2001

Bruce Preston, Moderator

Members who are unable to attend the General Meeting may submit questions to [askdacs@aol.com](mailto:askdacs@aol.com)—they will be presented at the meeting, and the response(s) will be placed in the Random Access column.

**Q.** Everything I read tells me that having TEMP files can really slow your machine down. Why do they exist, and why don't they disappear? Why isn't there an automatic way to get rid of them?

**A.** Anything that is in your TEMP directory (C:\TEMP or C:\WINDOWS\TEMP) should be fair game for deletion immediately after booting. If you look at the creation date of a file in the temp folders, and the date and time is earlier than when you booted the machine—the file may be deleted. Files are often left there after doing an install, or if a

program is shut down abnormally. Once you start an application, such as a word processor, it will create temporary files, and may hold them 'open' which means that you can't (and shouldn't!) delete them until the application closes.

**Q.** I have an IBM Aptiva with Windows 98. Should I leave it on when I am not using it, or just turn off the screen, or use the "suspend mode" option?

**A.** There have been problems with "suspend mode" where it won't start up properly, perhaps because the hard drive doesn't come up to ready speed in time to reload the suspend image. We suggest that you leave the machine on all day, but turn it off when it is not going to be used for a long time, such as overnight. There are certain stresses put on the hard disk, the power supply and cir-

cuit boards when you start them up from a 'cold' state—enough that it is probably more cost and energy efficient to leave it on and idle. If your monitor has an energy saving feature that blanks the screen (rather than just activate a screen saver), then use it.

Bruce Preston is president of West Mountain Systems, a consultancy in Ridgefield, CT, specializing in database applications. Members may send queries to Bruce at [askdacs@aol.com](mailto:askdacs@aol.com). Response will be published in the next issue of *dacs.doc*.

**There was a problem with the transmission of articles from APCUG this month, so I cannot properly credit the source of the excerpts of Random Access printed here. -Don Atkinson, editor**

## LCPC Board

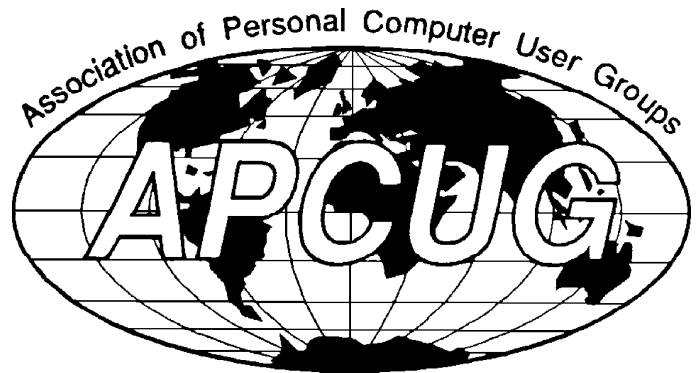
**Shane Lambert**—President, Board ..... 784-5445  
[shane@couleeweb.net](mailto:shane@couleeweb.net)

**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)



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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)

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P.O. Box 2991

LaCrosse, WI 54602-2991