

New Style

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Newsletter of the LaCrosse PC Users' Group

volume 21 number 8

August 2001

This month

August 29

Firewalls

presented by president Shane Lambert,
(see President's Message)

7:00 PM Overholt Auditorium, Gundersen
Lutherean

In this issue

If you're not online, this month's issue will be a waste for you.

The change in the presentation is due to a significant increase in attempts to break into your computer. Even if you don't have confidential information on your machine, you do have files you've created that are of value to you and would be difficult and time consuming to recreate.

You need to protect yourself. It's neither difficult nor expensive. One of the top rated programs, ZoneAlarm, is free for the download.

On a more pleasant topic, check out the article about web resources beginning on page 5. This should at least point you toward the information you want to find.

The Internet Movie DataBase (*imdb.com*) is a very useful site to find nearly anything you want to know about almost every American, and many foreign, movies ever made. It also includes TV programs, some with episode guides.

President's Message

Shane Lambert, President

Greetings members. I apologize for missing the last meeting and I hope to be able to make the rest of them this year. For those of you who were waiting for the CD Burning discussion I guess you will have to wait yet another month as a much more pressing topic has come up - Internet Security.

With the growing usage of high speed modems, both DSL and Cable, there seems to be a lot more port scanning software running. I believe this is partly due to the fact that with these high speed modems the user now has 24 hour uninterrupted access to the Internet so they can scan more IP addresses and more ports faster and they don't need to be there to make sure the dial up connection doesn't get kicked off. It's terrible that there have to be people out there that have nothing better to do than mess with other people's computers, and until they are gone we have to protect ourselves.

It doesn't matter if you connect to the Internet with a regular 33.6 or 56 Kbps modem, you are still vulnerable to an attack. The advantages of a high speed modem are the faster downloads, no time waiting for a connection and most importantly, no busy signals. However, I am

not typing today to talk about the advantages of high speed modems, more importantly, I am typing today about the disadvantages of high speed modems, with the number one disadvantage being increased vulnerability to attacks.

What can a person do when they gain access to your computer through an Internet port? That depends on which port is open and what type of connection they can get. Generally, an open port will allow nothing more than getting your system name and limited information, but certain connections will

Keven Blum showed us how to get the most from antivirus software



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

allow an attacker to retrieve personal documents, bank account information, other personal information or even the ability to completely change the contents of your hard drive, up to and even including formatting the drive!

How do you protect yourself from these attacks? Well, there's the easy way and the hard way. The hard way involves searching through your computer and removing any software that opens a port and/or closing any open ports. With 65,536 IP ports, this can be very time consuming and you may never find them all. The easy way is to install a personal firewall, and there are many available, including Zone Alarm which is free for personal use. Zone Alarm can be found at <http://www.zonealarm.com> and only takes a few minutes to download and is very easy to install.

Now I hate to be the teacher here but I have to give all of you an assignment due before our next meeting. Download or purchase and install a firewall, configure and use it, then compile a short list of questions for me. I will keep my instruction short and allow time for everyone to ask their questions about Internet Security. No, you won't get a grade on your work, but you will get the peace of mind that nobody will be able to look at your personal information stored on your own computer so long as your fire wall and your computer work together for you.

Membership and Treasurers Report

Gary Stelzig, Treasurer

The club checking balance as of 8/13/2001 was \$774.20. We had income of \$40.00 from two renewals: 1) Robert & Mary Pluntz and Robert & Delane Stolpa - thank you. Expenses paid in July were \$6.80 for stamps, \$12.66 to photocopy the newsletter. We have an outstanding check for \$12.66 that has not been cashed.

Renewals for August: Keith & Barb Barghahn, LaVonne Buchner, Richard & Shirley Dahlby, Dennis Graves, Robert Guggenbuehl, and Leon Wolfe.

Past Due: Ralph Dupae, Darrell Garner and Peter Schaettle.

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.

PC Primer-Start Your Computer without a Logon

Roger Creighton, PC Primer # 493, reprinted from The Communicator, Journal of the Western New York Computer Society, May 2001

You got your new computer and while setting it up, you probably make the same mistake so many others make. On a pop up window, you were asked for your user name and then a password. Anxious to go along with this security assurance, you fill it out. Now two years later you are still seeing the same box every time you start up the computer. Now someone has told you that if you hit the Esc Key, you can bypass this entry and go on to your computer.

You feel humiliated. You feel duped. You feel that Microsoft has let you down, your expected security is a sham. You are wrong! For starters, you were mistaken to think that the pop up screen was for security protection. What this pop up box was for, was to give you personal access to your privately configured desktop. The setup could have been more clear and pointed out that if only one person was using the computer or if all users were going to use the same desktop settings, you could bypass the setup. The intention was for you to be able to make your desktop really yours with your own look. Another person could log on and the desktop would become what they had setup under their logon name. Really great but not everyone needs it.

There is a way to straighten out this mess that you made.... You need to change the windows configuration so the box will disappear and not bother you any more. What you are going to do in essence is tell the computer that everyone should be treated the same. Also you are saying that you do not want to log onto a local area network setup at startup for windows.

Changed e-mail addresses

Change:
Larry Bastian

Old: LGBastian@aol.com

New: LGBWI@aol.com
Lita Bower

Old: minipux@aol.com

New: lbower@presenter.com

There are three conditions that you must meet to make this happen. You must not have a password entered (leave it blank). You must not have any user profiles setup. You must setup Windows so that your primary network logon is Windows logon. Once, you meet these requirements, the box won't need to appear because since you don't have a need for a name and password.

So log on normally, then change your password to a blank password. You do this by going to control panel double clicking on the password icon and using enter as your new password (and the confirm password).

You also need to go to the control panel and double click on the user icon. If you are not set up with multiple users there is no need to change this. You will know if there are no users entered if you get a wizard to set up users. If you get this, just cancel out and check the next step.

To configure your network logon options. First click the start button on settings, then click on Control Panel. Find the network icon on the control panel and click on it. Looking at the network box that pops up, look at the middle of the box and you will see a line "Pnmary Network Logon" click the down arrow on the drop down menu box and choose Windows log on". With that done close out and reboot your computer. Now when you boot up your computer you should have eliminated that troublesome step of logging on when it isn't necessary. Go for it, it is easy to do and you will be really proud of yourself when you have done this.

Virus Checkers-protect your computer's well being

Carol Frank, secretary

July 2001 meeting

There were three new people at the meeting: Norma Anderson, Phyllis Fuller and Marilyn Conway. Jack Storlie announced that Mrs. Anderson is a celebrity, she is WWTC Woman of the Year.

Arlene can't do meeting tags anymore so the Stolpas will be taking over this duty.

Some of our best minds worked on Don's question about misdirected Icons. Kevin Blum suspects that a virus caused the mislinks.

Because we have extra money, Gary is proposing buying diagnostic software that can be shared among members. Donating to computer scholarships at UW-L and WWTC was also discussed.

Chuck Whalen announced a new virus going around called Sircam. It is a variant of the MTX virus. It attaches to e-mail programs like Eudora, Netscape, Outlook and Outlook Express. Sircam reads your contact list, inbox and letters sent. Then it sends e-mail from itself using the addresses it found to spread the virus. This is possible because it has its own SMTP engine. Chuck says to beware of file extensions .scr, .exe, .bat, .doc.; disconnect Windows Sharing and of course have a firewall like ZoneAlarm and a good virus checker that is updated regularly.

Norma Anderson



Al Fritz has a problem with a driver memory error message that eventually goes away and doesn't seem to affect anything. Chuck recommends a program like Dr. Watson, included with Windows. When a driver dies, it created a Log file that tells what file has failed so that it can be dealt with.

Al also had a problem with Quicken freezing when starting. He had reinstalled Quicken several times. Chuck says to find out what video board his computer has. Go to System Manager, Display adapter. Three-fourths of the time upgrading the video driver will solve this problem.

Kevin Blum gave the presentation on anti-virus checkers with the emphasis on Norton System Works. First of all, start the program, either from the Task bar, Start Menu or Desktop Icon. Click on Help>About to verify what version you have. If your virus checker is version 5.5 (Norton) or 4.0 (McAfee) or less, upgrade! These are no longer supported. Kevin is offering the latest Norton for \$34.95.

Next check system status, this shows when the features were updated. Change Auto Reminder to do virus check update on the internet. The updates will then be downloaded automatically. Be sure to check your subscription status. Subscription is only \$3.95 per year and you can pay over the phone or the internet.

Kevin recommends running a full scan of your Harddrive once a month.

From time to time, create Rescue disks, a back up of the virus checker. These floppies can be a lifesaver if your system is badly infected. But test the disks before you need them!

Your virus checker should work with almost any e-mail program. But not all

viruses come from the internet, floppies and CDs should be checked as well.

There are three options if a virus is detected:

1. Clean the infected files automatically or manually.
2. Quarantine the file.
3. Delete the file from the computer.

Different levels of detection can be set. There are advantages and disadvantages to the different levels. If set too low some sneaky viruses, ex: CAT virus, can get through. If set too high it is possible to get false readings.

Terminology:

Virus—a malicious program that propagates and spreads to other computers with a payload designed to do harm.

Worm—does no intentional damage but propagates.

Trojan—a non-propagating program that enables hackers to get in your computer.

Firewall—stops return "pings" so that hackers leave your computer alone. It also keeps your computer from accessing the internet without your knowledge. (definition contributed by Leon Wolf.)

Hackers generate random IP addresses to see if they get a ping back. If a ping comes back this IP address has a computer ready to be raided.

A good firewall like Black Ice can do an auto lookup of who is trying to get in. There can be very detailed information like name and address! But firewalls need to be updated as well. (Build a better mousetrap, they build a better mouse).

By the way, Kevin has left his day job.

Affordable Computer Services, LLC
(The Computer Doctor That Makes House Calls)



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Computer Repair/Upgrades/Sales
Web Site Development/Hosting
Spreadsheet Consultant

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from *The Digital Viking*, newsletter of the Twin Cities PC User Group, July 2001

Protecting Your Computer

Ira Wilsker, GTPCC

If you have been following the news recently, you have undoubtedly heard of viruses; "worms," programs that "eat" through your files; and "trojans," programs that hide under the guise of other more innocent looking programs. Regular listeners to my radio show (KLVI 560AM 6-7 p.m. Tuesdays) have heard warnings about these threats to computers, and a multitude of callers who have been the victims of these software creatures.

Many unhappy returns

A virus, worm, or trojan is a piece software that was written to be mischievous and loaded discretely onto the victim's computer. According to some computer security publications, there are now over 60,000 identified viruses, worms, and trojans; new ones appear at rate averaging 100-400 a week! It is imperative that all PC (and MAC) users have a modern antivirus installed, properly configured, and updated frequently, at least weekly. There is no good reason not to have an antivirus program installed, other than they slightly degrade performance as they scan incoming data for "signatures" of potential threats. They do this by comparing this data to a file of known threats.

Most antivirus programs can also identify some new threats, because they are often minor variations of existing threats, or use otherwise known code. Cost should not be a problem; a review of the Sunday sale books in most weeks will reveal that the local electronics or office supply stores have the top selling antivirus software titles (NAI's McAfee VirusScan, or Symantec's *Norton Antivirus*) on sale, often for as little as \$5-10 after rebates.

There are several dozen other publishers of quality software as well. For those who like "free," there is the excellent *Inoculate!T Personal Edition* from Computer Associates Inc., one of the largest software publishers in the world. This can be downloaded from <http://antivirus.cai.com>. After a simple registration (free), a serial number is issued, and free updates and support become available. CAI posts frequent updates almost daily to the Net, and they can be downloaded and installed by opening the program, and clicking on Tools:Auto Download.

Very sneaky

In the past, most viruses were transmitted by the exchange of floppy disks, but now most are transmitted by e-mail, often as attachments. Some e-mail programs, especially the widely used Microsoft *Outlook* and *Outlook Express*, are very vulnerable to attack. This vulnerability is often the target of virus authors, who create viruses to utilize the fact that the *Outlook* products are directly connected to a browser (Internet Explorer), the Windows operating system, and utilities that can execute viruses written in the popular *Visual Basic* (the recent Anna virus was a simple *Visual Basic* program), machine code, *Microsoft Office* scripts, or the Java language.

While the old adage "don't run an email attachment from someone you don't know" may still be a good idea, the majority of newer viruses will be e-mail attachments from people you do know, maybe even with a message title replying to one you sent. This is because many of the new viruses, worms, and trojans actually hijack the *Outlook* address book and replicate themselves to the e-mail addresses in the address book. AOL mail is also another common target, simply due to the large number of AOL users.

While still vulnerable, users of other popular e-mail programs such as *Eudora* and *Pegasus* are much less frequently the targets of the virus writers. Web based email, such as Hotmail, Net Address, and Yahoo Mail are not immune, especially if attachments are run or downloaded.

The modern rule of thumb is either do not open or download attachments,

or be very suspicious. To get around the suspicion, many virus authors attempt to hide their evil within a nice or innocent looking name or extension. The recent Anna attacks were made to look like a common JPEG image, but with the other wise unlikely file extension ".jpg.vbs." This looked at first like a typical JPEG image file, but the VBS indicated to the observant user that it was a program written in visual basic script.

Guerrilla attack

While the antivirus software can typically detect and remove most viruses worms, and trojans, there are also other threats that are

now becoming more common. Any time users are online, or connected to a network, their computers are vulnerable to a variety of additional threats.

In reality, with a Windows PC, there are about 65,000 "ports" or places of entry for the exchange of information. While online in any fashion, a PC can be a target of either someone trying to electronically break in, or a previously undetected "backdoor" secretly installed on the user's computer may attempt to send information from the (infected) computer to someone else. Trojans with the names of Back Orifice or Backdoor-G have become extremely common; there are hundreds of others as well. These programs allow someone else almost unrestricted access to anything on the user's computer any time they are online.

Ranging from a simple irritant to industrial espionage or sabotage, these trojans are just one type of threat to the online user. Another surprisingly common threat is someone trying to break into the user's computer while it is online. If successful, then everything from keystrokes typing usernames and passwords to data theft and manipulation become possible.

Fighting back

In order to minimize the chance of an outsider gaining access to a user's computer while online, a program generically called a "firewall" is often a necessity. Originally only used by large institutions on their networks, firewalls have become a security essential on millions of home C small business computers on a network or online. A firewall functions by either closing vulnerable ports, or monitoring incoming and outgoing data, issuing an alarm when a suspicious data transfer is found.

Although security breaches are a lesser (but still common) problem with dial-up Internet access, a firewall may be necessary on a computer with DSL or cable modem access. Being "always online" makes a computer an easily identifiable target. While there are some very good commercial firewalls for PCs, such as *BlackICE*, *Norton Internet Security*, and *McAfee Firewall*, one of the most popular is the top-rated *Zone Alarm* from Zone Labs. *Zone Alarm* is free for personal use and available for download at www.zonelabs.com.

Just like the antivirus software, the firewall publishers often make updates available on

From Phoenix PC Users Group Inc. News, May 2001

A GUIDE TO COMPUTER REFERENCES

compiled and written by Dick Nash,
Phoenix PC Users Group

Search Engines & Internet Downloadable Software

The web is an amazing research tool. But it doesn't come with a librarian to help you find what you're looking for. The only alternative is a search engine, a powerful software program that scours the internet to find what you're looking for. Using a search engine involves the user inputting into a "Search" block, the name of the subject you are researching. An excellent search engine, The Windows 95/98/me Forum, located at "computingcentral.msn.com/topics/windows95/bonus.asp" has links to 18 internet sites that provide free software, beta software, news, hardware information, an explanation of USBs', games, tips support, etc.

Tips that will assist you to reduce the unbelievable number of internet references you harvest to a more manageable amount include:

- Be as specific as possible when you type in your search terms and check

Protecting your Computer concludes

the Internet. There are a variety of free websites that can identify online security breaches. One of the most popular is the Shields Up test available free at < http://grc.com> To paraphrase a popular unrelated warning, all computer users "need to practice safe HEX."

Ira Wilsker is an Instructor IV of Management Development at Lamar Institute of Technology He has been working with computers since 1965 when he took his first computer class at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. He is a frequent guest on the local television news, and has lectured internationally on a variety of computer topics ranging from computer and Internet basics, to Cyber Crime, and Community Oriented Policing. Ira is a member of the Golden Triangle PC Club and a member of APCUG's Board of Advisors.

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.

out search engine guides (searchengine-guide.com) for category specific search engines and directories:

- Put a minus (-) in front of any word to ensure that this word doesn't appear in any of the search results (Independence Day -movie)
- Use a + in front of any word that you do want to appear in the results (Independence Day + America +4 July)
- Add quotation marks to a search phrase that you do want to appear in the results
- Try a search with the letter T followed by a colon in front of the search terms (T: Independence Day America July 4th)
- Use the term "URL" before the search terms (url: Independence Day, America, July 4th)
- Use a wildcard (*) search, such as if you want to find web information related to "History" and "Historical", use the search term "Histor*" and get replies to both words
- To find sites with a specific domain, type your search parameter as "Domain Edu Independence + History"
- For images, type "Image:" before your search terms or visit "Ditto.com", a search engine that seeks out images

Multiple DataBase Search Engines

Web sites that are essentially search engines that use other search engines to search out for your search terms. The Data Doctor, Ken Colburn, recommends that you keep some of the following in your Internet Favorites (The Arizona Republic, 19 Mar 01)

AltaVista	Fast/All the Web
Excite	InfoSeek
Lycos	Netscape
Webcrawler	AOL
HotBot	Google
Iwon	MSN
Yahoo	Search
GotoLookSmart	NBCi
Northern Light	Direct Hit

Kresch.com/search/search.htm

This site provides links to 8 "Search the Web" windows (Search.com, Meta Search,

Multicrawl, Alta Vista, Excite, Google, HotBot, Lycos and Yahoo)

Invisibleweb.com	Dogpile.com
Looksmart.com	Go.com
Metacrawler.com	Askme.com
Northern light.com	Coopernic.com
Dmoz.com	Directhit.com
Alltheweb.com	

People Search Engines

Four11.com	Whowhere.com
Bigfoot.com	
Us.click.yahoo.com/13joGB/DMUCAA/4ihDAA/NOAVIB/TM	

Yellow Pages Search Engines

Bigbook.com	Gte.net
Theultimates.com/yellow	

Research Search Engines

Encyclopedia.com	Dejanews.com
Genealogy.org/-ngs	Medscape.com
Azleg.state.az.us	Reference.com
Lcweb.loc.gov/homePage/lchp.htm	
Nejm.org/content/index.asp	

New Search Engines

Azcentral.com	Abcnews.com
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Financial Search Engines

Interest.com/hugh/calc	Vista.com
El.com/clinks/taxes	Hotmail.com
Nasdaq.com	Geocities.com
Mortgagequotes.com	Nyse.com
Usa.comYahoo.com	Quote.com

Business and Services Search Engines

Virtualvin.com	Kbb.com
Southwest.com	Amazon.com
Ups.com	Remax.com
Mapquest.com	Fedex.com

Entertainment Search Engines

Imdb.com	Lego.com
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Computer/vidpe Game Sites

Based on the Nielson/Net Ratings as published in the US News and World Report, 19 March 2001. See "www.usnews.com"

Cheatplanet.com	Ea.com
Gamerevolution.com	Ign.com
Station.sony.com	Nintendo.com
Gamewinners.com	Cheatcc.com
Gamecenter.com	
GameFAQs.com	

Discount Air Fares Search Engines

Search.com	Bestfares.com
Cheaptickets.com/	Airfare.com/

Economytravel.com/ Dertravel.com/
 Flightcentre.com/au/
 Flightarrivals.com/Egi-bin/webobjects/
 flights
 Newfrontiers.com/ Airsaver.com/
 Checkairfare.com/ Etn.ni/discount/
 Discount-airfares.com/ Dtravel.com/
 Lowestfare.com/ Priceline.com/
 Cheapflights.co.uk/Airlines.html
 Pricecostcotravel.com/Airline/html
 Thefarebusters.com/ Onlinefare.com/

Internet Downloadable Software

Numerous sites are out there offering a variety of software. However there is always the possibility you can download a virus problem so stay with those sites you can trust and, insure that you have reliable virus protection. Some of the more reliable *include*: **Microsoft.Com**

Who can be safer that Microsoft, downloads are available for all supported operating systems, currently it appears that is limited to WinME and Win2000. Some of the software in support of WinME is suitable to use with Win98SE.

ZD Net.Com The premier publisher of the computer industry with dozens of titles at the supermarket magazine rack also provides almost unlimited access to shareware, freeware and other categories of free software.

PCWorld Another great provider of free software, who has selected "The Five Best Free Download Sites" at the internet addresses below:

(<http://www.pcworld.com/features/article/0,aid,38756,pg5,00.asp>)

Download.Com

A potpourri of games, utilities, tools
DriversHq.Com

Driver updates and includes a freebie device that checks current version of your drivers

NoNags.Com Downloads that don't limit the number of days you can use them

Tucows.Com Zippy downloads

PCWorld.Com/Downloads

Over 7000 downloads from business applications to screen savers

Netlocity Net/Shareware.Htm

The home page for Netlocity's website includes 16 icon links to their recommended download sites

Miscellaneous Other Free Download Sites

These listings are not necessarily secure, so again, always have a reliable anti-virus program, installed, with definitions up-to-date.

Tips.winmag.com/	Onehelp.com
Neatnettricks.com	Downlinx.com/
World windows.com	Webopedia.com
Switchboard.com	Helpsite.com
Windows tracker.com	Freeware.com

Internet E-Mail

Many of the Internet Sites publish periodic information columns that they will send to you, via E-Mail. You can be inundated with these offerings. Recently, during a computer-down incident, I had 400 plus messages waiting on me, most of them columns from these prolific writers. Many of them, such as Winmag.com, have numerous personalities writing columns, and provide excellent sources of information and software. Columns are available from:

Winmag.com	Pcworld.com
Langa.com	

Winmag Newsletters

By way of example, "Winmag.com/subscribe" offers 10 e-mail newsletters, listed below, just to let you know what you're getting into

MS Office Beat	Tip of the Week
The Broadband Report	Power Tools
Power Win 2000	Win Letter
Winmag Preview	Langa List
Windows Insider	

TechWeb Newsletters (TechWeb, Filemine, Byte, Planet IT and Tech Shopper

Internet Technical References

Never forget that your best references are the HELP files that accompany software you install. Additional reference sites include::

Smartcomputing.com/editorial/dictionary/list.asp?guid=hd3hexr0&term=1

An extensive dictionary of computer terms

Support.microsoft.com/support/tshoot/tshooterlist.asp?tp=w98&sd=gn&In=en-us

Provides 16 Windows Troubleshooter Wizards designed to help solve problems encountered in the troubleshooter area.

Microsoft.com/technet/win98/default.asp

A clearing house of resources to help deploy, maintain and support the Windows 95/98 operating system

Accessmagazine.com/helpdesk/plugins/plugins.jsp

This particular internet address involves internet plug-ins that work in tandem with your browser to give it different capabilities. **Tomshareware.com/howto/01q1/010115/index.html**

This site takes the reader through a pictorial narrative on how to build a computer. Other portions of this site address a variety of computer subjects.

Fixwindows.com/win98/index.htm

Covers over 30 areas of interest to the Win98 operating system. It also covers Win NT4, Win2000 and Windows ME

Cnet.com

An outstanding collection of items of interest to computer users

PCWorld.com

Has numerous articles available for downloading

Ace.net.nz/tech/techfileformat.html

Publishes a listing of almost every file format in the world. Descriptions beginning with ABK and ending with ZOO, and includes numbers and symbols

Additional Sources include:

Techrepublic.com

<http://privacy.net>

Member.tripod.com

Mapquest.com Atomic.com

Gocheat.com Langa.com

Packword.com Pogo.com

Ontrack.com/powerdesk/

Practicalwindows.com

Imdb.com Searchable internet movie database

Infoplease.com An almanac, encyclopedia, dictionary and an atlas

Infospace.com White and yellow telephone Listings, business listings and maps

Onelook.com Calls on dozens of dictionaries, glossaries and specialized vocabulary lists and provides search engine-style links

Play.yahoo.com Play games against fictitious opponents or real live people

Virtualplastic.net Register related site and customize your computer

Phoenix Editors Note: Thanks to Dick Nash for the tremendous job in searching out and compiling this list for the membership.

Cyber Shopping 101

John Victor (Corn Soc), reprinted from *The Communicator*, Journal of the Western New York Computer Society, May 2001

Frugal Computing on the Internet

When it comes to getting great deals on computing related items, It's hard to beat the deals found on the Internet. In my travels in cyberspace, I found some great ways to shop for bargains on the Net. Today I'd like to share them with you. I cannot stress just how important it is to comparison shop. A 'Deal' is only good, if you benchmark the best prices available and can still beat that price.

There are many other factors however, to consider before making the purchase. First, has this product undergone any reviews by experts that can rank it. Secondly, will this product really work with my existing system. Other factors that are also very important are sales tax, shipping costs, vendor reliability, warranty/return policies. Also, Rebates and Promotions, Clearance sales, can make a big difference in your decision making, and you should always check the manufacturer's website for them. If you're willing to buy "factory reconditioned" or "refurbished" items, many manufacturers and virtual stores have special sections dedicated to these items, which can stretch your dollars even further. Finally there are the Online Virtual Auctions like E-Bay, in which you can buy both new and used items, usually at a discount. I personally tend to avoid Online Auctions as a whole, since statistics clearly indicate that 80 to 90 percent of internet fraud happens there. Okay, now that you know the drill, let's get shopping.

Visit these websites whenever you plan on buying **ANYTHING!**

<http://shopper.cnet.com>

<http://www.dealtime.com>

<http://www.dealbrowser.com/>
#Comparison Shop

<http://www.pricescan.com>

<http://www.pricewatch.com>

<http://www.mysimon.com/>

If you want to find reviews for any item you're buying, the very best place to look is at Product Review Net:

<http://www.productreviewnet.com/>

Here's some sites to visit for rebate offerings are:

http://www.egghead.com/ss/rebate/s/manu_rebates.htm

<http://www.uscomputer.net/rebates.htm>

<http://www.refundswweepers.com/>

<http://www.free-after-rebate.net/>

<http://www.rebates-rebate.com/>

<http://www.dotdeals.com/>

<http://www.cyberrebate.com>

<http://www.fightdivx.com/rebates.htm>

<http://www.freakyfreddies.com/rebate.htm>

<http://www.hp.com/ghp/assist/rebates.html>

<http://www.lexmark.com/promotions/index.html>

To find deals on refurbished or reconditioned items

<http://www.heartlandamerica.com>

<http://www.tigerdirect.com>

http://www.damark.com/dmrk_visitor.asp

Here's a couple of my recent favorite places to cyber shop:

Dynasty (great CPU & Memory prices)
<http://11199.76.95.206>

OverStock Outlet (misc. bargains & refurbis)

<http://www.overstock.com>

Also, instead of getting up at the crack of dawn to check out sale papers on Sunday Mornings, you can simply visit a vendor website earlier that week. They all have weekly specials or sales sections listed on their websites. Here's a few favorites:

www.circuitcity.com

www.officemax.com

www.officedepot.com

<http://www.bestbuy.com/>

For those of you that have not tried purchases on the Internet, and are still squeamish about your first cyber purchase, I can offer you some tips. First, make sure you have the latest version of the web browser you are using. It should be at least version 5.0 or greater, of either Netscape or

Microsoft, and support "128 Bit Encryption" technology. Most online banking and investment websites will require this to perform any financial transactions. There are good reading references, to help keep you safe and secure, at these websites:

<http://www.fraud.org/internetlintset.htm>

<http://www.ffc.gov/bcplmenuinternet.htm>

<http://www.consumer.gov/Tech.htm>

<http://www.sec.gov/investor/online.shtml>

Some final notes.. Always exercise caution when looking at deals that may appear "too good to be true", because they just might be. Rebates can take up to 12 weeks or more, so keep good records.

Finally, if you are uncomfortable about ordering online, many of the online internet stores have the option of phone orders.

So always remember, that no matter where you ultimately buy from, **ALWAYS** check for the **BEST Prices**. Only then, can you know whether or not you're paying a fair price and truly getting a

Last Word

An excerpt from an e-mail from Gary. This was part of a memo distributed at Dairyland Power Cooperative:

Another interesting antivirus approach is one taken by the UK Ministry of Defence's Defence Evaluation and Research Agency.

The organization offers *SyBard/Mail* (a part of its SyBard:Mail [STET] Suite), a tool that does not allow an e-mail to be sent without the knowledge of the user rather than preventing viruses in the first place. It's a bit like allowing the burglar free access to your home, but preventing him from leaving until the police arrive. *SyBard/Mail* works by notifying the user with a pop-up dialog box that asks for confirmation whenever an e-mail is sent. In theory, the system is supposed to prevent a virus or worm from propagating, since the user will not authorize an e-mail sent by a virus. *SyBard/Mail* works with SMTP-based and MAPI-based mail clients.

LCPC Board

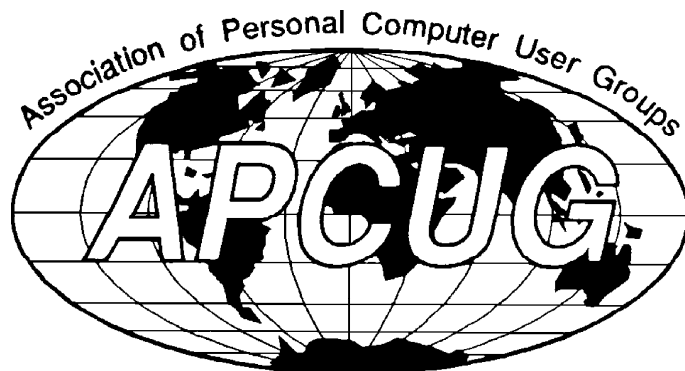
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General meetings are held the last Wednesday of Jan-Oct in the Overholt Auditorium at the Lutheran Hospital. The combined November-December meeting is held the second Wednesday in December.

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

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

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