

New Style



Newsletter of the LaCrosse PC Users' Group

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Inside

- Meeting Notes - Excel
- Users' Toolkit

Excel June 2002 Meeting

David Donskey, Secretary

Presentation

The presentation was given by Club Member, Robin Alexander, Robin showed us the many things Excel can be used for, Data Base Functions, Flexible Budgeting, importing data from other applications, for analysis, among others.

Excel is a spreadsheet created by Microsoft, and uses a grid, rows and columns, storing data in cells. Excel can be used for small databases such as an address book. Robin demonstrated how data could be extracted from such a database using Excel's auto filter function, which allows the user to filter data by the contents of one of its cells such as all the address with a particular zip code could be extracted for a mailing etc.

Data can also be easily sorted using the sort function (Be sure to sort all columns as sorting just one could destroy the entire database, this is one of the reasons excel should only be used for small database) The undo feature can also come in handy if you make a mistake you can backup one step at a time for multiple steps with Excel.

Tool tips is another feature that is available in excel, tool tips allows you to move the mouse over a icon on a tool bar and a description of what it does will appear this feature is also available in other applications and can be very helpful for the new user or for function that are seldom used.

Flexible budgeting is one of the things excel does well, allowing the user to change input values to do what if analysis and having other values in the budget automatically recalculated using the new input.

Formulas in Excel can be duplicated from one column or row to another by copying them, the formula will be automatically adjusted using relative positioning. (i.e. =sum(a5:a10) will become =sum(b5:b10) if it were copied from column "A" to "B")

Robin also explained that Excel can have multiple sheets with related data in a workbook, and that data from other sheets can be used in calculating values in the current sheet, Macro's can be created using Visual Basic for Application (VBA).

Cells can be locked to protect them from being accidentally erased or overwritten, this can be used to prevent formulas from being overwritten as well as limiting user input to certain cells in more complex workbooks (lock cells can only be changed if they are first unlocked)

Data can be imported from other applications such as Peachtree to excel to do calculations, filtering, what if analysis etc. Spreadsheets can also be embedded in other documents such as a Word document. Data can also be imported/exported to and from Handheld devices such as Palm and Handspring for mobile computing

Excel also allows the user to create pivot tables, which is a way of displaying data that is more than 2 dimensional such as sales data by region by month, using an outline type form.

Editor Position Open

by Robin Alexander

After the briefest stint as LCPC newsletter editor, I must announce my resignation due to the fact that I and family will be moving to Durham, NC this fall, barring unforeseen glitches in the plan. We are buying into a co-housing community near the Eno river on the north side of the city.

This will be a major change for us, and I am already walking around in a daze looking and thinking about all the connections, people and places I will be leaving after a 19 year stay. Yet it feels very "right" for us to be making the move.

Meeting Notes

by Jack Storlie

July Meeting

The July meeting *will not be* at our usual Overhold location; rather it will be in 124 Wing on the UW-L campus where Roger Grant will treat us to some laboratory experiences regarding digital photography and image processing. Parking is available on the street. Wing is on State Street between 16th and 17th.

Question & Answer

CD-R won't always eject CD, formatted as data disk on a system using Win98 SE, Chuck suggested using a power tools program called wintop.exe to find out if a program is using, has not released, the CD. Wintop is one of the powertools programs that should be on your windows

Continued on page 2

Presentation from page 1

98 SE CD to install it, you will need to find it on your win98 SE CD it should be in a folder called power tools, copy the file wintop.exe to a empty folder on your hard drive, double click on file it will show all programs/services that are running on your computer, right click on each line (note: Don't touch the run.dll Line) to find out which program is causing the problem.

Chuck also suggested adding this program to you Programs menu for future use, to do that use explorer to search for "msconfig.exe" then drag it to "Programs", "Accessories". "System Tools" Printing, pages getting cut off on right side, need to change margins, in page setup, should never be less then 1/4 inch, as most printers can not print in that area.

Listserv, some members not getting all messages, We are not entirely sure why, maybe overload on AOL servers, or ISP treating listserv messages as bulk mail.

Lost Word Document, screen saver came on and when key was pressed to bring screen back document was gone. Chuck thinks its a hardware problem, need to change power save settings to correct "control panel" "power setting" set to always on.

Transferring data between applications, Chuck suggested using csv or SYLK (creates large file) formats as most programs can read them (ex: can be used to transferred a Microsoft sheet file to Excel) to create a "csv" format just go to "File" "Save" and then change "File Type"

Future Program Suggestions

Enesto suggested a demonstration of a program called "Ghost" (Drive Imaging, for backup) as seen in Jack's Articles in the April and June Newsletters. Enesto and Jack will work on this.

Chuck volunteered to do a program on how to read E-mail headers, and how to use this information for spam filtering/reduction

It was as suggested that we do a program on the difference between Works and Office products.

Treasurer's and Membership Report May/June 2002

Dick Dahlby, Treasurer

ddahlby@cs.com

The correct report for May did not appear in the June Newsletter, so I am incorporating May and June with this report.

Income received in May was \$120.00 from six membership renewals. They were George Frisch, Kathleen Gallagher, Chuck Hosler, Mike Larson, Ernesto Brauer, and Joe Doucet. \$20.00 was received in June from Stub Johnson for membership renewal. Thank you all for your continued interest and support.

Expenses paid in May were: \$6.80 for postage, \$30.00 for Web Hosting Services, and \$9.50 for 30 photocopies of the May LCPC Newsletter. Expenses paid in June were: \$6.80 for postage, \$6.33 for 30 photocopies of the June LCPC Newsletter, and \$89.62 to upgrade our newsletter publishing software, Pagemaker, from version 6.5 to 7.01. Present expense for July is \$7.73 for postage.

The LCPC checking account balance as of 07/15/2002 is \$845.04.

We presently have 53 enrolled members in LCPC.

Members whose annual renewal fees (dues) are presently past due are: (Apr.) Kevin Blum.

There were no renewals due in June.

Membership renewals due in July are: Ralph Dupae, Darrell Garner, Robert and Mary Pluntz, Peter Schaettle, Robert and Delaine Stolpa.

Membership renewals due in August are: Keith and Barb Barghahn, LaVonne Buchner, Dick Dahlby, Dennis Graves, Robert Guggenbuehl, and Leon Wolfe.

Annual dues are \$20 (individual or couple), and checks should be made payable to La Crosse PC Users Group. Dues may be mailed to the LCPC PO Box on back cover, mailed to my address or may be paid to me in person at the July

31st meeting.

Dick Dahlby
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Reminder to all members: Remember, if you change your email address, it is very important to inform LCPC of the change, so that the Membership ListServ (membersonly@lcpconline.com) can be changed accordingly. To do so, please send me an email with your new email address and I will see that the ListServ is changed. If you haven't received an email from the ListServ within the last two weeks, please let me know that also, so that I can check on it. Thank you.

User's Toolkit

By Robin Alexander

Besides the main aps we use every day, each of us probably has one or more special little program or utility that makes our computing lives easier. These gems may be freeware, shareware, or even store-bought. I remember the biggest problem I had moving from the Apple to the IBM platform in 1983 was that I no longer had my set of utilities that facilitated my work on the Apple II. I was in strange territory. Over the years, I have built up a collection of favorite utilities and thought others might be interested hearing about some of them. It might get you to thinking about your favorites or set you searching for additional software to use.

Outlining

The first one on my list will be somewhat of a curiosity for most of you – it is a DOS program I began using in the mid '80s called Grandview, and it is the best outlining program I have ever seen. I find outlining programs excellent for keeping lists, developing ideas, and writing. In its day, Grandview was heavily promoted and was last marketed by Symantec. They have ignored my pleas and have never come out with a Windows version. What makes Grandview so great and why I still use it despite the inconvenience of its DOS nature is its excellent design. It was created to maintain outlines, period. It is extremely easy to create and maintain

outlines of all kinds. Every Windows outliner I have tried has been much harder to use and ultimately unsatisfactory as an outliner. So I continue to use Grandview except when its weaknesses would be too burdensome. These weaknesses are printing (very cumbersome) and communication with Windows programs.

Information tidbits

There are two programs I use to keep track of those annoying bits of information that don't warrant a whole database or more formal tracking method. I use the shareware program, Action Outline from Green Parrots Software, to keep of oft used phone lists, to do lists, and all kinds of miscellaneous information. Once loaded, AO is available at the click of a taskbar icon. Yes, it is an outliner, but I don't use it for that – it's not nearly as convenient for outlines as Grandview. AO is a two-pane program, showing the outline view in the left pane and freeform text in the right pane. I use outline headings for information categories and the freeform pane for the information itself. Very handy.

Another program I use for miscellaneous information is Info Select, which began its life as a DOS program called Tornado Notes in the '80s. The program is from Micro Logic. I actually use two versions of this program because both have their strengths. For a long time, the 1992 version was the latest but recently they went through a flurry of development and came out with version 6, which is quite a bit more advanced. I don't use anywhere near all the program's capabilities. In the 1992 version, one creates "notes" that appear on the IS screen sort of like post-it notes, and they can hold any sort of information. They can be free form or structured. For me, what makes IS so useful is its search feature. To find one or more notes on a topic, just begin typing and a graphical representation of the notes that contain a word beginning with those letters appears. At any time, press Enter and bring up the filtered set of notes themselves. A major use I make of this is to keep track of registration codes and serial numbers for software I use. Since I change computers regularly, I

install my software a lot, so one of the first items I install is Info Select to ease the task of entering codes required to install other software programs.

Incidentally, there was a similar program for the Apple II called VisiDex. So one of my loved utilites on the Apple had been replicated on the PC (and improved)!

Version 6 of Info Select adds a robust outline view to the mix, but it's still not as convenient as Grandview when true outlining is needed. I do use it for notes as I'm doing software development. It's a program I'd like to learn more about but haven't found the time.

Encryption

I keep all my data in a folder called DATA. That makes it easy to back up and synchronize between computers. One day I realized that should I lose my portable or a CD of the DATA folder, a thief would know more about me than I do. Identify theft would be no problem at all. So I bought a program called BestCrypt from Jetico. It takes a portion of your hard drive and creates a virtual drive that you access via a drive letter. You gain access to the drive by entering a password. Then you can read and write from the drive. I moved my whole DATA folder to this drive. The drive is actually a large encrypted file on the physical hard disk. It is a file like any other so I can back up my data by copying this file to a CD. Should the file be stolen, it is useless to anyone without both the BestCrypt program and the password.

Most missed utility

One of the best DOS utilities ever developed was Magellan by Lotus. It was a file finder that, again due to its design, was magnificent at its job. Magellan took all your files, or a subset of them defined by you, and created an index of their contents. It could read files from Lotus 1-2-3, WordPerfect, dBASE and many others. Once the files were indexed, a process that took quite a while back on those old machines, you could search for files by part of a file name or by a word or words contained in the file. It would search across all folders and show a list of files in a pane on the left of the

screen. As you moved down the list via the arrow keys, the contents of the file would be displayed in a pane on the right of the screen with each instance of the searched word highlighted. It would display the file in its native format: spreadsheets would look like spreadsheets, database records like records, etc. Once the indexes were created, it was extremely fast. For a person like me who forgets where he puts things, this program was a godsend.

Lotus promoted the heck out of this program, but for some reason it didn't sell well enough and Lotus abandoned it. I would still use it (like I use Grandview) except for two problems: In the days of smaller hard drives, a 32K file number limit seemed reasonable (my drive was jammed packed with just over 10,000 files!) and Magellan just gives up if it is asked to index a drive with over 32K files. (My current drive C has over 100,000 files right now.) Secondly, since Lotus stopped supporting the program, new viewers for Windows apps haven't been developed so even if I went through the trouble of breaking sets of files into different partitions, I still could not view the files I had found, and that was one of Magellan's main benefits.

I have looked at a number of Windows based file find programs but none has had the elegance, power and simplicity of Magellan. Windows programs often suffer from click and windowitis in which, to see anything, one has to keep clicking away and opening new windows. The Magellan interface showed everything one needed to see on one screen with a well thought out navigational scheme.

Well, that's it for now. Perhaps others could write in about their favorite utility program.

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LCPC is a member of APCUG

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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:

lacrosecug@aol.com

Commercial advertising rates: \$50 per page, \$25 for half, etc. Member's personal ads are free.

LCPC

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