

New Style



Newsletter of the La Crosse PC Users Group

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October 2002

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A Call For Help

By Shane Lambert

Last month was the first time I actually published the newsletter for the group, although I had offered to help before. I have come to find that this is a lot harder job than I thought it to be. Don't get me wrong, actually creating the newsletter is a breeze, it's finding content that is almost impossible. Last month I was able to find articles that fit the meeting topic but have not had much luck this time.

Past editors have been able to find articles to print from other user group newsletters, but I don't have access to those so my only source for content is on the web. Big problem with that is most of the information on the web is copyright to the original author and although I ask for permission to reprint the article, I never hear back from the author. I don't want to be accused of plagiarism so I don't use the article.

In the past we have asked other members to contribute and from time to time that does occur, but we never seem to have enough to fill 5 pages, hence this month's newsletter is only 4 pages total and I had to add this article to fill the space. I realize how difficult it is to write an article but it would truly make my job, and future editors jobs, easier if others would be willing to contribute.

I actually enjoy putting this newsletter together, it's a good distraction from the programming I normally do. I will continue to do my best to fill at least 4 pages every month but I would like to see this newsletter expand to 6 or even 8 pages. To do that I will need content, either from members or from other sources. If you have a story to share or information that may be helpful to other members, you should submit your article to editor@lcpconline.com no later than the 15th of the month to give the editor ample time to create the newsletter. If you are shy and don't want your name in print then make a note and we will leave your name off the article.

In short, I can only provide you with information I know or find on the web. My knowledge is very technical and will go over most people's heads. Information on the web is hard to find and usually copyrighted. So, where do we get content?

October Meeting

Genealogy Research

*Presented by
Mary Ann Nelson
and James Warnter*

7:00 pm October 30th

Overholt Auditorium

Lutheran Hospital

Late Edition

By Shane Lambert

I have to apologize for this late edition of the newsletter but forces beyond my control are to blame. I worked very hard to put together a nice newsletter this time and when I was finally happy with it I tried to create the PDF file to place on the web site - only to get an error that my printer wasn't working. I was at a loss and tried many times to determine what the problem was.

My first step was to delete the Acrobat Distiller from the system. This is the program that creates the PDF file and actually works like a printer. I removed it and reinstalled it only to get the same problem. I spent hours trying to fix the problem only to be stumped at every turn. I still have not fixed the problem and was only able to create this PDF file by taking the newsletter file to the office and creating it there.

You can bet I will be asking about this situation at the meeting and I hope someone can help me with this. If you have any ideas you can share them at the meeting or you can help me through the list serve. Hopefully I can fix this problem before the next newsletter is due!

Slicing, Dicing and Chopping Spam

By Carol Frank

A large crowd gathered to hear advice about a topic important to any internet user-Spam. First, though, everyone introduced themselves and how they use their computers. Then Shane Lambert announced a new virus that he just been fighting with that very day-MBR Bye Bye, it uses Flash animations to travel and erases Master Boot Records in Window 2000 and XP. The only thing that can fix it is to put in the Windows CD and reboot.

Chuck Whalen gave the presentation on fighting Spam. First a sobering statistic-in January 21% of e-mail traffic was Spam, in August Spam had increased to 36% of e-mail traffic. Spam in so easy and cheap to do if there is only .001% response this is enough for a profit and reason to continue.

This article will give only the highlights of Chuck's presentation. There is a VHS tape available, contact president Marian Havlik.

For examples Chuck had three random samples to look at. First bit of advice-if you have Outlook Express in View-Options turn off preview pane to prevent auto opening of mail. This is a defense against viruses. A feature of Spam are misleading titles and addresses. If you are curious, look at the message without opening it under Properties. Look at the Headers, some addressed look normal but some don't. Watch for foreign addresses, in the sample shown that particular e-mail traveled through Denmark (dk) United Kingdom (uk) Russia (ru) and originated in Japan. This is called an open relay and often come from an unsecured proxy server not intended for Spam. A handy utility to have is Trace Route

A another spam showed an example of a dictionary search and Blind Carbon Copy to send this. A dictionary search is a program that automatically generates e-mail addresses and sends them out to see if they score.

There are some Dos and Don'ts about Spam:

- 1 Don't buy from them!
- 2 Don't reply or click on unsubscribe, the exception to this are Direct Marketers Association sites. For those you need to deliberately opt out or else they assume opt in.
- 3 Delete the e-mail
- 4 Block further Spam from that domain. Outlook Express has Block Sender in Message Rules. Erase all that is left of the @ and leave the domain name. Example from xxx@oooo.com to oooo.com. If left as is Outlook Express will



Chuck Whalen Talking About SPAM

only block the individual address, not the domain. But don't delete the domain of people you want to stay in contact with!

Trying to stop Spammers is like a game of Whack-a-Mole. Spammers stay at a internet service provider for an average of 72 hours. Any complaints to the ISP will cause the spammer to change, sometimes just an address or domain name. This will cost the spammers time and money to make changes and meanwhile "customers" can't reach them.

There are some anti-Spamming organizations and tools. Black lists are very effective but there are no appeals and no accountability which means a potential for abuse. Your ISP doesn't want server space used up by junk mail that their customers don't want and some will prefilter, particularly AOL. You can complain to Spamcop.net. Spamhaus.org has statistics and research about spam. Sam Spade is a program that does trace routes, domain ownership, locations etc. There are proxy e-mail programs but these can conflict with other protective programs like your anti-virus program.

What about laws? Every political body in the world can pass laws against Spam, but if they are not enforced. . .

The best defense are educated consumers that use the tools and tricks mentioned above plus some more mentioned here-change e-mail addresses on a regular basis!; have separate e-mail addresses for public and private use; make your e-mail address hard to figure for dictionary searches-8-10 characters with odd characters and digits, ex: jo99_smith; use word filters.

There is no magic 100% anti-spam program, just alert consumers.

Treasurer's and Membership Report

September 2002

Dick Dahlby, Treasurer

Income received in September was \$100.00 from four membership renewals, and one new membership. Membership renewals were David Donskey, Mary Borgedahl, Darrell Garner, and Arlene Wiese. The new member is Eileen Temte. Eileen is also a member of the Digital Duffers. Thank you Eileen, and welcome to LCPC. Received so far in October is \$20.00, a renewal from John Benton. Thank you all for your continued interest and support.

Expenses paid in September were: \$14.95 for annual renewal of the registration of our Domain Name, \$24.61 for recognition dinner for Robin Alexander and his wife, \$14.80 for postage, and \$7.92 for 30 photocopies of the August LCPC Newsletter.

The LCPC checking account balance as of 10/15/2002 is \$1,023.20.

We presently have 53 enrolled members in LCPC. Members whose annual renewal fees (dues) are presently past due are: (August) Keith and Barb Barghahn, and Dennis Graves. (September) Betty Mullenbach.

Membership renewals due in October are: Lita Bower, Arthur Osborn, and Paul Pfaff.

There are no membership renewals due in November.

Annual dues are \$20 (individual or couple), and checks should be made payable to La Crosse PC Users Group. Dues may be mailed to either of the following addresses.

La Crosse PC Users Group
P.O. Box 2991
La Crosse, WI 54601-2991

Dick Dahlby
501 Olivet St
La Crosse, WI 54603-1318

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 can be changed accordingly. To do so, please send me an email with your new email address and I will make the change to the ListServ. 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.

Dispelling Linux Myths

By Shane Lambert

As you all know I have been playing around with Linux for quite a few years, and this year became the secretary of the newly formed La Crosse Linux Users Group. One of the biggest complaints I hear from people when I talk about Linux is that it is so hard to use. However, when you think about it, so is Windows, but since the majority of computer users learned to use computers with Windows it seems simple when compared to Linux. In reality, Linux is no more difficult for the average person to use once they take the time to learn, which they've already done with Windows.

Graphical User Interfaces: Technically speaking, Windows is simply a Graphical User Interface, or GUI, for DOS. Even Windows XP technically still has an underlying DOS although it appears invisible to the user. Linux could be considered DOS on that type of system, and there are many GUI's available for Linux, almost all of which are free to use including KDE and Gnome. Most of the Linux GUI's are very similar to Windows but in my opinion much more powerful. They use less system resources than Windows and require far less memory. And did I mention they are free? What did you pay for your last version of Windows?

Games: Another big concern is the ability to play games in Linux. Linux wasn't originally developed to play games, then again, neither was Windows. Most distributions of Linux come with many games (Red Hat comes with 50) where Windows usually includes 4 or 5, and mostly card games. I run many different game on my Linux machines and when compared to the same game on a Windows machine they run more smoothly and faster on the Linux machine.

Many game manufacturers are developing their games to work in Linux, and several are no longer supporting the Windows platform. Does this mean games won't be available for Windows? Of course not, if people continue to use Windows, and we know they will, then game manufacturers will continue to make games for Windows.

Reliability: How many times does your Windows machine lock up and require a reboot? I currently run 6 Linux servers and use 3 Linux machines in the office and at home. In three years I have locked up one Linux box three times, all of which caused by me changing settings I shouldn't have. My 6 Linux servers never lock up, and one of those currently serves 215 web sites. A Windows based machine would quickly choke on that many sites - I've seen it happen.

Am I saying Linux is better than Windows? The answer is both Yes and No. Catch my next article "Pros and Cons of Linux" in the next issue!

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New Style is published eleven times a year, monthly January through October with a combined Nov-Dec issue. General meetings are held in the Overholt Auditorium at the Lutheran Hospital on the last Wednesday of January through October with a combined November-December meeting on the second Wednesday in December. A list of our upcoming meeting topics is available at our web site at <http://www.lcpconline.com>. 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.

Membership Dues are \$20 and cover an annual period following the month of payment. Membership entitles you to attend meetings, tap into the corporate wisdom, receive special user group discounts from publishers and others, and receive (and contribute to) this newsletter. You may also obtain software provided by publishers for review of the product.

The monthly newsletter is printed the Wednesday before the meeting, please submit advertisements and articles by the 13th of the month to editor@lcpconline.com. Unsigned articles are written by the editor. Other user groups are welcome to reprint with proper credit to the La Crosse PC Users Group and must include our web page address. Please contact the Newsletter Editor for commercial advertising rates. There is no fee for non-commercial advertisements placed by members.

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