

New Style



Newsletter of the La Crosse PC Users Group

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July Meeting

By David Donskey, Member

The presentation was on how the School District of La Crosse is using technology, presented by Tom Ward, Director DoIT for the La Crosse School District. Tom explained that DoIT is short for their motto "Do it right". He has been with the School District for 14 years. Having work 10 years in administrative computing and the last 4 years as Director of DoIT.

He explained that the focus of the district's use of technology in the classroom is preparing students for the work place of tomorrow. Using technology as a tool rather than an end unto itself.

Today's graduates started kindergarten in 1990. We discussed the changes in technology since 1990. Back in 1990 there was no Internet or e-mail, as we know it today, hardware was much slower etc.

What about kids entering kindergarten today? What will the world be like when they graduate? This is the question schools are focusing on now. It is becoming a technology driven world; we can do our taxes, banking, education etc. all online.

Tom told us that businesses have told them that, the skills they are looking for in entry-level employees are:

- Positive Attitude
- Strong Work Ethic
- Good Organization Skills
- Team Player
- Problem Solver
- Independent Learner

Tom explained the changing role of teachers. He described the old model as the "Sage on the stage", the teacher knowing all, teacher centered education. The focus now is student centered learning, where the teacher acts as coach. This helps to foster higher order thinking. Students address real problems and develop their own solution to the problems

August Meeting

August 27th, 7:00pm

Lutheran Hospital Overholt Auditorium

Installing a Second Hard Drive and Using Norton's Ghost

Dr. Ernesto Brauer, Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center
and
Jack Storlie, Computer Consultant

Information Literacy is fostered though the use of online project that teacher can use with their class to incorporate technology skills. The state has set standards for what students should know as each grade level. The La Crosse school district exposes students to computers starting in kindergarten, about 20 min a week and increasing more and more in higher grades.

The School district offers a variety of technology education such as class in:

- Cisco Networking
- Microsoft Office
- Computer programming – Math Department
- C+
- Visual Basic
- Techno Art – Art Department,
- Media fusion – Music Department
- Web design - Dreamweaver
- Computer construct and maintenance

In addition to incorporating technology in other classes, the school district concentrates investment in technology in the high school, and then it filters down from there. This is to get the most benefit for every dollar spent.

La Crosse PC Users Group (LCPC)

Treasurer's and Membership Report - July 2003

Dick Dahlby, Treasurer and Membership Chairman
ddahlby@cs.com

Income received in July was \$60.00 from three membership renewals. They were: Robert and Mary Pluntz, Robert and Delaine Stolpa, and Peter Schaettle. Thank you all for your continued interest and support.

July expenses were: \$50.00 for our annual renewal to APCUG, and \$13.19 for 25 copies of our July Newsletter. The LCPC checking account balance as of 08/15/2003 is \$1,160.95.

We presently have 50 enrolled members in LCPC.

Members whose annual membership renewal fees (dues) are presently past due are: (July) Darrell Garner.

Membership renewals due in August are: Barb and Keith Barghahn, LaVonne Buchner, Dick Dahlby, 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 either of the following addresses, or paid to me at the August 27 meeting.

La Crosse PC Users Group
P.O. Box 2991 501
La Crosse, WI 54601-2991

Dick Dahlby
Olivet St
La Crosse, WI 54603-1318

Reminder to all members: If you become more than three (3) months delinquent in paying your membership dues, you will be subject to removal from the ListServ, and from LCPC. So please, be prompt with your renewal fees.

Also, 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.

Q: How many MicroSoft vice presidents does it take to change a light bulb?

A: Eight. One to work the bulb, and seven to make sure that MicroSoft gets \$2 for every light bulb ever changed anywhere in the world.

LCPC PROGRAM IDEAS FOR 2004

By: Jack Storlie and Shane Lambert

It may seem early to be thinking about this subject, but we would like to let you know what ideas we have put together for next year and to request some input from you members. We are especially interested in new ideas or extensions/modifications on the ones listed below. These ideas are not necessarily in chronological order, since much will depend on the schedules of potential presenters.

A combined presentation on TurboTax and Tax Cut. This will involve two presenters and we are aiming at March for this particular one. We have had one Tax Cut turndown and urgently welcome volunteers for that. We have asked Steve Anderson from Trane for the TurboTax portion. That is virtually an LCPC tradition. The speakers may veto the idea of a combined meeting for reasons of time constraints, in which case we will have to use both February and March - hopefully not.

Home/small business networking. An overview of the hardware and software needed to build and manage a home network. Topics to include but wired and wireless networks as well as connecting the network to the Internet.

High Speed Internet. Have one or more of the high speed Internet providers explain how High Speed Internet works and what the benefits are. Topics should include how to set up and use the connection and what hardware and software is required. This may have to be in different meetings to avoid conflicts between providers.

Update on Digital Cameras. No reflection on Dr. Grant, but looking for a speaker that can cover the entire spectrum of using digital cameras and working with the resulting photos.

File Extensions. Program to speak on the many different file extensions (.pdf, .exe, .dll, and .whatever). Which ones to know something about, which ones to ignore, and which ones to never do anything with!

Configuring a new computer. What software and hardware to delete, add, and/or modify.

Home/small business security. Firewalls, hackers, viruses, and malicious use by users.

Tutorial on Word and Excel. We need to have a beginners meeting and a more advanced meeting about this topic. Possibly also compare with other options (Open Office, Star Office, MS Works) Recent member Mike Torris comes to mind readily.

As you can see, this leaves us with one or two program vacancies, depending on how many are combined, since there is no November meeting and December is "Toys".

We really urge you to contact us via the listserv with your comments and suggestions for new ideas and for possible presenters.

Anatomy of a Newsletter

By Mike Torris

What follows is my contribution to the LCPC Club newsletter. I was asked to whip together an article; maybe something on assembling a newsletter, since I was Editor of our local Harley Owner's Group (HOG) newsletter. But let me digress. To become an editor of anything, you either have to volunteer or be drafted. I chose the former. The club was in desperate need of a new editor since the old one was giving up his post. I had the time (I only work part-time), and a keen interest in utilizing computer applications for things such as newsletters, flyers, and the like. Next, it was making sure I had the proper tools for taking on such a task. I had a fairly smooth running computer with plenty of memory and storage space, loaded with the Microsoft Office Suite. I had a digital camera, printer, and scanner. I thought that should be enough to at least get started. Finally, I needed to know just how much time this would take and how hard it would be to get it going. I was assured by the former editor that once I got into a routine putting it together, it should not take more than a few hours a month. What he didn't realize of course, was that I am a perfectionist at heart, and would not be satisfied with the final product and not allow it to go to press until it was something I'd be proud to put my name on.

Thus was my humble beginnings as a newsletter editor. Since then (I've been at it for almost a year), I have to admit its kind of fun and it's been a good experience learning how the process works. We post our newsletter to the web; so the club bought me the full-blown latest version of Adobe Acrobat for converting the file to something that could easily be accessed on the web using the free Acrobat Reader download. I am also responsible for the printing and mailing of this publication to all our snail mail patrons. Of course I am reimbursed for all expenses, so it does come down to allotting personal time towards this project. I figure all things considered, I put in about six hours of my time a month to pull this off.

Probably the most important consideration to assembling a newsletter is its format and layout. What are you trying to achieve? Something that looks like a newspaper editorial page, something fun and entertaining to read, or something resembling a flyer to be posted on the local grocery store bulletin board? Maybe, a combination of all those things would produce a good product. Do you want articles that are spread across multiple pages of the publication, thus forcing the reader to continuously thumb through the pages looking for where the context is continued? How personal do you want the publication to be? Should it list births, deaths, and anniversaries? Should you allow want ads, classifieds, or advertisements? How about pictures? How many are too much? What about the picture quality? If the photo will be grainy and unpleasant to look at, is it worth posting? As you can see, the 'how' of putting a newsletter together can be the most daunting task of all. Fortunately for me, I had a model; a template if you will, to follow and maintain the design of our newsletter. Yes, I did

make some changes, but they were trivial and minor. After all, you want to maintain the look and feel of a publication if it is working well already. You don't have to reinvent the wheel. Most readers would prefer if you didn't anyway.

How does one maintain the consistency of a publication? Keeping the length consistent is a good start. Ours is ten pages every month, but that is driven more by the US Postal Service than anything (you are allowed to mail up to ten 8.5 x 11 pages for a single stamp). Having enough articles helps too. Fortunately again for me, I am not required to submit an article every month just because I am the editor. I do submit a monthly 'joke piece' of humorous sayings or antidotes, but nothing serious. It helps to have a good team of writers in the wings to provide that much-needed context to put a good newsletter together. It also behooves you to use headers, logos, and page numbers at the top of every page to keep the look consistent. Schedules and minutes and things like that appearing every month should be placed in about the same location of the publication from month to month. If you are going to introduce a new look/layout, it might be to your advantage to actually have an article about that one month preceding its unveiling.

Then there is the issue of political correctness. You should know your audience and their tastes. One offensive article could ruin an entire newsletter. You have to ask yourself whether having an article just for filler's sake is really worth it if it ends up offending your readers. Are you running an opinion page, or a newsletter?

I enjoy using Microsoft Word to do the bulk of the article editing. I like its ease of use and available tools for correcting typos (spell check), substituting words (thesaurus), and its cut and paste features (drag and drop). I actually assemble the physical newsletter in MS Publisher however. There is no substitute in my book for its use of text and picture boxes, text panels, zoom feature, page editing, and so on. I could go on with another article just listing all of its features. Finally, I use Adobe Acrobat's print distiller feature to convert the file to .pdf format for web posting.

I have to admit, my understanding, knowledge, and grasp of the Microsoft family of tools and the features within their programs has made this whole process much easier. Being Master certified in MOUS doesn't hurt either. It helps, in other words, to know how to work with the different types of picture formats, how to edit them, how to enhance text, how to use borders, tables, artwork, graphics, clipart, drawing tools, and the like. You can't imagine how much a plain block of text can be enhanced with the right kind of border, background, artwork, etc. Of course, knowing about them and how to use them doesn't necessarily mean you *have* to use them. Too much of a good thing can spoil the stew, as they say.

So ends my dissertation on newsletters. Here's hoping you gleaned some tips and pointers from all this, and my best wishes on your next endeavor for a well-liked and well-read newsletter.

The Curse of Norton

Four Hours of Torture!

By: Shane Lambert - Frustrated and Fedup!

OK, I know you remember me talking about Norton Anti-Virus at the July meeting - do you all remember what I said? Well, I have an even better reason to say that, and it all started at 9:00 pm on July 31st and wasn't over until 1:00 am the next morning.

Take a walk through the dark side of Norton with me....

Over the past two months I have been evaluating a different anti-virus tool since my Norton subscription was about to expire, and I was tired of it not being able to remove simple viruses such as BugBear and SoBig. Earlier this year someone mentioned Panda Security (<http://www.pandasecurity.com/>) anti-virus tool and the online "Active Scan" tool. After running the tool and removing many viruses that Norton missed, I made the decision to switch to Panda after my Norton subscription expired. Until then I would run the "Active Scan" tool once a week to clean up what Norton missed.

The day finally came (July 31st) that my Norton subscription ended so it was the day I chose to make the switch. I didn't even think twice about starting late at night - it's just software right. I figured I would be done in a half hour or so - but I couldn't have been farther off. Of course, once I started I had to finish no matter how long it took - I'm not the kind of guy that can leave a computer in a nonworking state for any length of time.

The evening started with the usual task of "Start - Control Panel - Add/Remove Programs" and selecting the Norton Anti-Virus program. It didn't take long at all of that to remove, after the notice that Norton had quarantined some files which will no longer be protected. That didn't matter, I was going to install Panda later and that would eliminate the virus. After Norton was gone I also removed the Live Update and Live Reg tools that are used to download updates to the software and virus data files. So it's gone and the computer was rebooted.

So you think I am ready to install Panda, right? WRONG! I use Charter Pipeline at home on several computers and have all of them connected to a router. During boot up all of the computers request an IP address from the router, but now this one wouldn't get one - and I couldn't get on the Internet without it. No problem, just reinstall TCP/IP and that should fix it - but there's a problem, in Windows XP, TCP/IP is a core component and can not be removed and there was no Reset option.

I tried everything from changing the network card to the cable, even tried a different router. All of these steps failed so it was off to the second computer to find a way to reset the TCP/IP connection. It didn't take long to find a page on the Microsoft site with the information I needed. Windows XP has a tool

called Net Shell (netsh) that will do this, and the command '*netsh int ip reset reset.log*' should do the trick. This is supposed to reset the Registry entries for TCP/IP and DHCP (the tool that assigns IP addresses to the computer). The Microsoft page even included a sample log file to compare with, and the log generated by the command matched the sample log file. OK, reboot and . . . same problem.

So now it's nearly midnight and I am getting frustrated. I decided to try and determine which program caused the problem, and since I was using Windows XP I could use the System Restore utility to go back to a time when the computer was working. This utility can be found easily in the 'msconfig' tool and works wonders when you crash a system. I restored the system to a point before I removed Norton and rebooted. Of course now I was able to get an IP Address and connect to the Internet. Did I stop there? Of course not, I still had Norton on my system!

Now let's take this step by step. "Start, Control Panel, Add/Remove Programs" and remove Norton Anti-Virus. Again, didn't take long and of course gave me the same message as before then I rebooted the system. Can you guess what happened? Right, no IP address again. Then I remembered Chuck Walen talking about a program from Norton to remove Norton registry entries and the anti-virus program. But, I couldn't get on the network to get the file - so System Restore came in handy again.

The program I needed was called Rnav2003.exe (Click here for web site). However, this tool only works with Norton Antivirus itself, and not with NIS or NSW - there is a separate tool for those. I downloaded the program, ran it on the system - accepting all of the warnings designed to keep you from removing their software, and rebooted. So you're thinking, "Did it work?" Much to my relief it was and I literally danced the jig after the successful reboot (no, I will not demonstrate this at the next meeting).

To make sure all the Norton (Symantec) tools were gone, I went to the Add/Remove programs and found the Live Reg and Live Update tools still there. I removed those and rebooted the machine - with no problems.

So now I have a machine with no anti-virus, which of course I had to remedy right away. I had a demo download of Panda Titanium on the system and, crossing my fingers, set out to install it. It was fast, about 2 minutes, didn't require a reboot and worked the first time. This is how software is supposed to work. I even uninstalled it, rebooted the machine, reinstalled it and tested it with no errors or problems. Now to get a hold of Kevin Blum to get my licenses...

The moral of the story? None, I just had to share this remarkably annoying experience with everyone so you all know why in the future I will never buy, borrow, support or endorse any product bearing the name Symantec or Norton. Thanks for bearing with me and good luck with your install!

Ad-Aware by LavaSoft

Awarded PC World's "Best Software Product of the Year" and "Best Freeware" for 2003

By: Shane Lambert

At our last meeting we discussed a program called Ad-Aware from LavaSoft (<http://www.lavasoftusa.com>), a program designed to search and remove adware and spyware programs on your computer. Turns out, the product was awarded the "Best Software Product of the Year" and "Best Freeware" awards from PC World magazine. Of course, I have been using the program for quite some time and the limited discussion at the meeting prompted me to tell everyone why they need this program.

As an Internet user you should be aware that your privacy is in your control - you don't have to share information you don't want to. However, your computer may be sharing information about your habits and interests with many companies without your knowledge. Software known as spyware is most likely already on your system and sending data to other people. Most spyware does not show up in your Add/Remove programs list, will not have entries on your Start menu and will not appear in your system tray. It usually runs transparently in the background and generally does not take up a lot of system resources, so you may never know it's there.

Another nuisance are popup ads, those annoying windows originally developed by AOL that pop up at the most inopportune times. Everyone hates them but until you know where they come from, you can't get rid of them. Most of the popup ads you see are caused by code inside a web site, and without a popup blocker tool you can't get rid of those, unless you disable javascript in your browser which causes more problems than it solves. But what about those popups that you see when you are working in Word or playing Solitaire? These come from software called adware, which like spyware may be invisible on your system but always running.

And there's another problem, a software called a search-hijacker that hijacks the search page of your browser. By default, when you type search terms into the address bar of your browser you will be taken to MSN search for your results. A search-hijacker changes this and takes you to a different results page - usually with a ton of popups and other advertising. While these programs are more a nuisance than a problem, some can actually download and install other adware and spyware programs without your knowledge. One of the most notorious search-hijackers is one called ShopNav and is actually difficult to remove - usually.

Finally, there are items called Tracking Cookies which actually track your activity on web sites. Most legitimate sites do not use these, but some sites, including Google and Dogpile, do. They use the results from the cookies to target advertising to you, but many people believe this is an invasion of privacy. You could eliminate this by disabling cookies, but this can limit your usage of some sites you may want to use.

What is adware? Adware is any software application in which advertising banners are displayed while the program is running. The authors of these applications include additional code that delivers the ads, which can be viewed through pop-up windows or through a bar that appears on a computer screen. The justification for adware is that it helps recover programming development cost and helps to hold down the cost for the user.

What is spyware? In general, spyware is any technology that aids in gathering information about a person or organization without their knowledge. On the Internet, spyware is programming that is put in someone's computer to secretly gather information about the user and relay it to advertisers or other interested parties. Spyware can get in a computer as a software virus or as the result of installing a new program. Data collecting programs that are installed with the user's knowledge are not, properly speaking, spyware, if the user fully understands what data is being collected and with whom it is being shared.

So now that you know all about the annoying and sometimes malicious software that are most likely already on your system, let's talk about how to remove it. You could search the Internet for lists of known adware, spyware, search-hijackers and tracking cookies and manually remove them using the Registry Editor, but who has the time. And there are new ones coming out every day, so figure on spending at least 5 hours a week doing this manually.

The better solution - LavaSoft's Ad-Aware program. Best of all, this thing is FREE (for personal use) and works great. It's updated weekly or better and removes hundreds of adware and spyware programs, search-hijackers and tracking cookies. It's a quick and easy download, installs quickly and is very easy to use - just click start and it automatically scans. It can also be set up to automatically check for updates on a weekly basis so it can remove the new stuff.

So, what to should you remove from your system? My best advice is to remove everything that Ad-Aware finds - chances are you don't need it. The results page will even provide you with some information about what the program or cookie does so you can decide if it is something you need. Some software, such as Kazaa Media Desktop, will not work if you remove certain software.

When I first installed Ad-Aware on my main system at the office, the scan found 280 items, including three search-hijackers and over 100 tracking cookies. Everything was removed. I then ran it on a system with a fresh install of Windows XP and found 40 items, including some adware and spyware programs. So if you think "I don't install software from the web so I don't need this", you are wrong. Many commercial programs, including Windows itself, include adware or spyware. So download Ad-Aware today - it's free, so what have you got to loose, except things you don't really want in the first place!

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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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