New Style

Newsletter of the La Crosse PC Users Group

Volume 23 Number 9 September 2003

What's Inside

August Meeting

By David Donskey, Member

The presentation was on how to install a second hard drive and use Norton Ghost to create a clone of your drive, presented by Jack Storlie, Computer Consultant, and Dr. Ernesto Brauer, Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center.

To install a second hard drive you must connect it to the data cable inside your computer. Hard-drives are connected to the motherboard by a data cable. This cable has 3 plugs. The longer end connects to the motherboard, the other end connects to the master drive, and the middle plug connects to the second (slave). The data cable has a red stripe indicating pin 1, which should be next to the power connector.

Jack stressed the difference between a clone and an image, an image is a backup that needs to be restored while a clone is a working copy of your drive with all the settings you have setup.

A simplified version of how to ghost a drive that Jack presented follows (be sure to check Norton's web site at www.symantec.com for tutorials and advice before trying this yourself.)

The drive to be clone should be the master drive, the "blank" drive should be installed as the Slave. Jack started by showing us that the new drive had nothing on it by installing it as master and showing the computer would not boot up. Then he reinstalled the original drive with the operating system and data as the master and the empty drive as the slave. (Jumpers and/or cable position determine which drive is master or slave)

Norton Ghost must be installed on the computer. (Ghost is a windows program). Jack's Demo was done with Ghost 2002.

1. First run ghost and create "boot" Floppy.
2. Power down computer.
3. With the original drive set as master and blank as slave reboot computer with floppy in floppy drive (this will cause the computer to boot from the floppy (may need to change boot order in bios)
4. Write down the license number when it comes up as you will need to enter it later.
5. Enter license number when prompted

September Meeting

September 24th, 7:00pm
Lutheran Hospital Overholt Auditorium

THE CHANGING WORLD OF SPAM

Scott Finch

IST Computer Specialist

City of La Crosse

1. What is SPAM and what variations are being produced today?
2. Steps to take to protect yourself that have nothing to do with software settings.
3. Things that can be done within the Outlook family of software to protect yourself.
4. Netscape and AOL variations
5. Are there third party products or services that are available free or otherwise that are worth using?

6. Ghost will copy all data from the original drive to the empty drive (There are options to do this over a network, USB, LPT; etc Jack's demo was done with a direct connection).
7. After the copy Ghost can perform a check procedure to verify all was copied correctly.
8. After the copy, power-down computer.
9. Remove the floppy from the floppy drive.
10. Take the master drive out of the machine.
11. Install the new drive as master.
12. Reboot the computer - Everything that was on the original drive including all settings should be the same…this is the proof it worked.
13. Once it is verified that the settings are the same power-down the computer.
14. Remove (new) drive store in safe place.
15. Reinstall original as master.
16. DONE

AN INACCESSIBLE WEB SITE

By: Jack Storlie

Who among us has not attempted to go to a favorite web site and gotten a message informing us that the site is not available? Often the answer is an incorrect URL, but sometimes that site is only temporarily unavailable and will return at a later time. Perhaps more often when this happens, the entire web is unavailable and there is something amiss in the modem - or some other malfunction that requires some trouble-shooting.

Recently, some friends of mine were unable to reach a Favorite Place using Internet Explorer – even after repeated attempts over a period of time. Many other sites were readily accessible. Strangely, their acquaintances were able to access that site consistently. I received a call from them and typed in the URL and that site appeared immediately. During that phone call it was pointed out that this disappearance began about (accent on "about") the same time as they had switched from dial-up to cable modem and added a wireless network and this was the source of some uneasiness to them. The host system was a Windows 98 platform and the client was a notebook loaded with Windows XP. Both stations were using Internet Explorer 6.0.

Nothing about the situation rang a bell with me since just that one web site was not available, so before going to the residence, I started my own research including a posting on the LCPC listserv.

There were quite a number of tips that came in and I added them to, or modified, my own list of remedial actions that I would investigate. The most likely solution was to remove the power from the modem and network router so that they could recycle themselves. Failing that there were a number other options to pursue.

When I got there I powered down both computers and unplugged the power from the modem and router and waited for about ten minutes. The modem and router were repowered and the computers were booted up and – VOILA – the web site reappeared on both stations.

The moral of the story I guess is that unplugging modems and/or routers and re-booting the computer(s) is one of the first remedial actions to take when web access malfunctions in any way – at least in the world of cable modems, but one suspects that DSL would be the same. *Editor's Note: This is considered "Power Cycling" and these problems affect both Cable and DSL modems.*

This particular situation was unique in one aspect. As it turns out, none of the kind LCPC listserv respondents had ever experienced this particular phenomenon i.e., where a single site is affected. It just goes to reinforce what many of our members have commented on, and that is that the world of the personal computing is a strange, frustrating, frightening, and, at the same time, a wonderful one.

La Crosse PC Users Group (LCPC)

Treasurer's and Membership Report

August 2003

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

Income received in August was $80.00 from four membership renewals. They were: LaVonne Buchner, Robert Guggenbuehl, Darrell Garner, and Dick Dahlby. Thank you all for your continued interest and support.

August expenses were: $10.00 to State of Wisconsin for renewal of the organization's non-profit incorporation status, and $10.81 for 25 copies of our August Newsletter. The LCPC checking account balance as of 09/15/2003 is $1,220.14.

We presently have 50 enrolled members in LCPC. Members whose annual membership renewal fees (dues) are presently past due are: (May) Stub Johnson, (August) Barb and Keith Barghahn, and Leon Wolfe.

Membership renewals due in September are: John Benton, May Borgedahl, David Donskey, Betty Mullenbach, Eileen Temte, and Arlene Wiese.

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 September 24 meeting.

La Crosse PC Users Group	Dick Dahlby
P.O. Box 2991	501 Olivet St
La Crosse, WI 54601-2991	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 (membersonly@lcpconline.com) 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.

The Old Man and the C: prompt

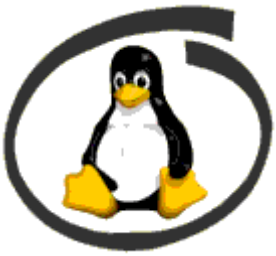
There was once a young man who, in his youth, professed his desire to become a great writer. When asked to define great, he said, "I want to write stuff that the whole world will read, stuff that people will react to on a truly emotional level, stuff that will make them scream, cry, howl in pain and anger!"

He now works for Microsoft writing error messages.

The Linux Files

"What's the Big Deal with Linux"

By: Shane Lambert



I want to welcome you to the first entry in my new column, "***The Linux Files***", which I hope to include in every issue of "New Style". As an avid Linux user I want to help you understand why Linux is slowly becoming a better alternative to Windows and how it has advanced in the last few years. I'll keep it simple to start and invite you to read each article even if you have little or no interest in the Linux operating systems, and there are many to choose from.

What is Linux? Linux is an operating system. An operating system is the basic set of programs and utilities that make your computer run. Some other common operating systems are Unix (and its variants BSD, AIX, Solaris, HPUX, and others); DOS; Microsoft Windows; Amiga; and Mac OS.

Many Linux users have touted Linux as the replacement to Windows, but I prefer to think of it as an alternative to Windows. In fact, on many of my systems I have both Windows and Linux so I can choose which OS to use at boot up. I will talk about setting up a dual boot system in a future column. I would prefer to use Linux exclusively, however, many of the applications I like to use, including the one I use to create this newsletter, do not work in Linux. In fact, most Windows applications do not work in Linux without an emulator, such as Wine, that is very difficult to configure. So for now I must have both, but that may change with time.

Getting Linux. Unlike Windows, there are many different versions, or distributions, of Linux. Some of the more popular ones include RedHat, Caldera, S.u.S.E., Debian and Slackware. You can find a list of Linux Distributions at DistroWatch.com which includes information about each distribution. Choosing a Linux distribution is very difficult and researching several is important to make sure the distribution you choose to suit your needs. I have always liked RedHat but have also used Debian, Mandrake and Slackware. The DistroWatch.com has information on many of the distributions and will help you decide which one to use. Remember, almost all of these are free so you can play with different ones until you find the one you like.

Some of the major distributions, including RedHat, Slackware and S.u.S.E. are available at computer retailers including Best Buy and Office Depot. However, keep in mind that you never have to buy Linux, you can download ISO files from various places and burn your own CD's. Of course, this is only recommended for those with High Speed Internet as ISO files are usually close to 700 Mb each and a single distribution can be as many as 7 disks (RedHat is 3 to 5 disks depending on what options you want).

Installing Linux. In the beginning, back in 1991 when Linus Torvalds started the Linux ball rolling, installing Linux on any system was extremely difficult, and I am not exaggerating. You needed to know everything about your computer, video card, keyboard, mouse and even memory, before you could install Linux. It was because of this that many people stayed away from Linux in its early stages. Now, almost all distributions have installers that probe your system much like Windows, and include drivers for almost every piece of hardware you can find. There are even distributions that run from a bootable CD-ROM, such as Knoppix and Damn Small Linux, so you can try Linux without changing your current Windows installation.

With the current distributions installing Linux is no more difficult then installing Windows. Place the CD-ROM in the drive and reboot the system. Most distributions have bootable CD-ROMs and most systems built within the past 5 years support booting from CD-ROM, although you may need to change your BIOS settings to support this. You can also create a boot floppy for your distribution, and you will find instructions for this on the first CD of the distribution set. (These disks are readable on any Windows machine).

I will talk about RedHat here as that is the distribution I use, however, the information below will relate to almost all of the distributions available. When you boot up your machine with the Linux installation CD in the drive, you will be taken to the Linux Installer program. This program collects information about the hardware in your system (most hardware is supported) and prompt you for settings about your keyboard, mouse and video.

You will also be asked about setting up the required partitions for your drive. Linux uses several, including /boot where the boot information is kept, /root where most everything else is kept, and /swap to use as swap memory - similar to the swap drive in Windows. You may also set up other partitions such as /home to keep user files. If you have multiple drives in the system, Linux will mount partitions on different drives and use mount points (/home is a mount point) instead of drive letters to access these drives. Even the CD-ROM (/mnt/cdrom) and floppy (/mnt/floppy) drives are accessed with folders instead of drive letters. I suggest that beginners to Linux let the auto configuration tool set up the partitions.

You will also be able to choose the "packages" or software you wish to install. I usually install the basic set of packages and add the stuff I want later. Once you have the packages selected the installer will start the installation process. Since most distributions come on multiple CD's, you will need to swap CD's a few times during the install. A standard installation will take between 30 and 45 minutes on most systems.

After the installation has finished you will have a working Linux machine. In future columns I will discuss how to configure printers, scanners and other peripherals. If you want more support for your Linux machine, consider attending the next Linux Users Group Meeting in La Crosse.

No More Video Tape

Implications of Video Cameras Becoming Tapeless

By Timothy Everingham - teveringham@acm.org

In video, we first changed over from editing with tape to digital editing with computers. Then we went to exporting the video — first to laser Disc and VCDs, followed by DVDs. As of this year we are in the transition of eliminating tape in video cameras. Sony introduced, at the Consumer Electronic Show in January, consumer video cameras that record to Mini DVDs.

At the National Association of Broadcasters, they announced shoulder-mounted cameras for news crews that record to blue laser DVDs (four times the capacity of a standard DVD). And Panasonic shocked everyone with the announcement of a TV news camera that replaced tape with solid state memory modules. This camera will be available late this year, with a consumer handheld version ready in 2004 or 2005.

What does all this mean for those at the consumer and prosumer levels? For one thing it means no more tape mechanisms eating your video. It also means longer shelf life. With videotape, significant deterioration can happen within a year and by 10 years it is probably gone. With DVD-R or DVD+R media the life is expected to be 40-250 years. With DVD rewritable formats the life is expected to be 25-100 years. The more moving parts you have, the more you will probably have an equipment breakdown.

Sony has replaced a complex drive and tape feed mechanism with a more reliable optical disc recorder. Panasonic goes one step further by replacing all the moving parts of the recording mechanism with memory modules. As with DV cameras, these cameras will not have the transference problems of converting an analog signal to digital format, and their transfer rate will not be governed by the slowness of a tape deck or camera tape drive.

With Sony, the internal speed will be like that of a DVD drive, and Panasonic like that of computer RAM. So the real limiting factor will be the speed connection method between the camera or player to the device being transferred to. The random access to any part of the video within a second allows you to quickly do a rough edit to get only the portions of what you have shot that are of interest. We are starting to see instant playback of weddings at the reception, and this new technology will probably increase this type of video use.

This will make it easy to transfer video over data networks. It used to be that you had to transfer video over satellite in real time if satellite facilities were available in your area. Later you physically had to travel to a place where you could digitize the video by hooking up a camera or tape deck to a computer and then send it over a land- or satellite-based digital network at speeds faster than real time. Now you can directly transfer the video from the camera using a portable satellite dish or even the Internet very much faster than real time. (This technique was used by embedded reporters in the recent Iraq war, but the new technology should make such transfers even faster).

The average consumer with a broadband Internet connection should be able to take advantage of this too. Your video is transferred at Firewire rates or faster, so transfers of a ½ hour video from your camera to your computer can be accomplished in three minutes or less. The big issue will be to convert the video from standard DV to MPEG-4 or Windows Media. If you are using a 2.4 GHz Pentium 4 or better it should take about the same amount of time as the length of your video, but for DVD quality it should take three times as long.

The implications for professional and consumer associations and user groups, computer related or not, could be phenomenal. Take a typical 45-minute presentation. The presentation starts at 10 a.m. on the east coast of the United States. The videographer can pack up his equipment, get home, load the video into his computer, and encode it at VHS quality for transfer over the Internet by noon. By 12:30 p.m. the video is on a server ready to download by whoever knows where it is and has the password to allow them to download it. By 1:00 p.m. those in the know could have downloaded it and are on their way with their laptop, with the video on it, to an awaiting LCD projector in the meeting room of their group where the presentation will be shown. Of course 1:00 p.m. on the East Coast is only noon in Chicago, 11:00 a.m. in Denver, or 10:00 a.m. on the West Coast. It is still even early enough for an evening meeting in London, England. Associations of such groups may even set up their own video news services for the benefit of the members of their groups using this technology and possibly have a newsreel available of what has happened in the groups belonging to their association over the last week or month.

With video being stored in solid state memory modules or DVD in the camera, we will no longer have the problems of video tape. We can almost instantaneously access the portions of the video we want from the point where it is in the camera and enable quick long distance transfer of video via data networks like the Internet.

It is already starting to get to the consumer level, which may affect how we even hold common meetings and events. The effects of such technology may affect our lives in many ways in the not too distant future.

Timothy Everingham CEO of Timothy Everingham Consulting in Azusa, California. Vice Chair of the Los Angeles Chapter of ACM SIGGRAPH, the largest chapter of the Association for Computing Machinery's (ACM) Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques; member of the Management Information Systems Program Advisory Board of California State University, Fullerton; Vice President of the Windows Media Users Group of Los Angeles. As part-time press, he has had articles published throughout the United States, Canada and Australia. He is a member of several user groups in southern California. Further information can be found at http://home.earthlink.net/~teveringham.

More on Spam
Bane of the Internet

By Ira Wilsker

Recently, in the July issue , I wrote about the report from the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) citing the prevalence and deception common in "unsolicited commercial email", more commonly referred to as "spam".

According to a report recently published by Ferris Research, it is estimated that spam will cost American businesses over $10 billion this year, considering computing resources, labor costs, and lost productivity. According to the email filtering service Brightmail, in the month of March 2003, 45% of all email was spam, compared to only 16% in January 2002, a 181% increase!

The FTC has created a website with good information on spam, including tips on reducing the volume received, as well as ideas on preventing spam. This site is online at www.ftc.gov/spam, and contains much helpful information.

As has been stated previously in this column, email addresses are typically harvested from websites, newsgroup postings, chat rooms, and other sources. Many web merchants also sell lists of customers, and there are also some Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and email providers that sell subscriber lists. Many of the free email subscription services offering jokes, recipes, news, and other information, support themselves by selling subscriber information. Many software publishers sell lists of registered users. Some viruses, worms, Trojans, and spyware may harvest the users' personal email addresses, and possibly even hijack an address book. Once harvested, email addresses, often millions of them, are compiled and sorted, and then sold and resold countless times.

Some spam mail is sent using even more insidious means, such as by software installed by some of the popular file sharing programs, concealing the real source of the spam. Another method, recently reported on securityfocus.com, in an article "Rise of the Spam Zombies", is the rapidly spreading use of worms and viruses as a means of sending spam mail from infected computers. One especially nasty Trojan is the "Proxy-Guzu", which makes the infected computer and Internet connection available to spammers, who can then send spam from that computer, again obscuring the real source. If the source is traced, it will point back to the infected computer. "Proxy-Guzu" may be installed on the victims' computers after the users open emails claiming to have images from an "adult" webcam, or other forms of pornography. Another backdoor Trojan worm, "Jeem", has been around for about a year, and enables unauthorized access to the victims' computers for the purpose of "laundering" spam email, again making the true source undetectable, and showing the source as the infected computers. This again emphasizes the oft-stated necessity to have updated antivirus software installed, as well as the need for a firewall and anti-spyware software.

The FTC has suggestions on making your email address less vulnerable to harvesting. The FTC suggests that your email addresses not be posted to the public. Many users have public email addresses used on websites, newsrooms, and chats, and private email addresses only given to family and trusted friends, but never publicly used. Another FTC suggestion is to be careful about submitting your email address to a web merchant or other website; read the sites' privacy statements, being sure that your email address will not be sold or used for other purposes. Refuse to give your email to any site that will not protect it, and opt-out of any sites that have previously been joined. Of course, once an address is available and harvested, it can never be totally removed from spam lists. If a site with a privacy policy also offers to share your information with "selected partners", be sure to refuse such sharing.

Many ISPs now offer some form of email filtering, which can offer a varying quality of protection from spam (and viruses). If your ISP offers it, sign up for it; some ISPs offer active filtering, while others simply subscribe to one of the many "blacklists" that block emails from all senders in a block of addresses. Many blacklists also stop large amounts of legitimate email along with the spam, and often block innocent senders who are blacklisted, as 46% of spam (according to the FTC) has forged "From:" headers.

There are now many spam filtering software products that can be installed on personal computers. Some are from the leading antivirus publishers and other major software publishers, and others are independently produced. Much of the technology is immature, and some of the products are of dubious utility, but most offer some degree of protection from spam. I have tried several, and had mixed results, none being totally accurate. The highest success rate I found when experimenting with spam filters was the commercially available Brightmail service. Brightmail is no longer available directly to individuals (used to be free), but many ISPs subscribe to its service. Emails are routed through the Brightmail server, where each message is electronically scanned for spam, and sorted. "Clean" email is forwarded to the subscriber, and the email filtered out is available on the Brightmail site for a limited period, where the user can inspect it, and approve it for receipt, if desired.

Federal legislation controlling spam is making its way through Congress, but there is a powerful lobby resisting the measure. Federal legislation will also be ineffective in stopping spam from foreign sources, but something needs to be done to decrease the rate of spam. Some pundits are currently calling spam the biggest threat to the Internet, even worse than viruses, worms, and Trojans.

LCPC Board and Officers

Marian Havlik—President 782-7958
HAVLIKME@aol.com

Chuck Walen—Vice-President 787-6678
cw@centurytel.net

Dick Dahlby—Treasurer 781-9356
Ddahlby@cs.com

Secretary — Office Open

Jack Storlie—Programs 788-6355
JStorlie@charter.net

Shane Lambert—Newsletter Editor 784-9696
shane@shanelambert.com

WWW.APCUG.ORG

LCPC is a member of APCUG

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-commerical advertisements placed by members.

LCPC
P.O. Box 2991
LaCrosse, WI 54602-2991