

New Style



Newsletter of the La Crosse PC Users Group

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Holiday 2003

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MY RAMBLINGS ON COMDEX 2003

Jack Storlie

Attendance was about half of what it was in 2002, but considering the rumors that there would be no convention at all, that is an improvement. Since the rented space was also about half what it was last year that still presented a challenge jostling around 60,000 people – many of whom must have had metallic elbows.

My favorite keynoter was from Sun Microsystems – mostly because he came decked out in jeans and a tie-less white shirt, although his presentation was interesting. I did not attend Bill Gates keynote partly because it would have meant getting a decent seat in a very large crowd. My main enjoyment was in wandering around the booths and people-watching anyway.

My favorite booths were the Open Systems and Wireless areas, but there was an awful lot to see and hear that it was an enjoyable experience overall.

My vote for best humor was a quote during Symantec's John Thompson keynote speech. He cited Jean-Paul Sartre defining Hell as "three totally incompatible people in a small room for all eternity". According to Thompson, in today's world it is "a person with a computer problem calling tech support and being put on hold for all eternity". I sometimes wonder if I am paying the price in advance for some past indiscretions.

As one of the pictures available on the web site depicts the attendance from many countries. This was a pleasant surprise for me, although I encountered difficulty communicating with a number of the vendors, not only because of my poor hearing, but because they spoke in their native tongue – and I am monolingual at best.

Some interesting predictions that I ran across:

- Wireless access speeds will allow people to access their data via the Internet as fast as they do now from their hard drives. As a result, CD's, DVD's, flash drives and floppies (which are already disappearing) will become obsolete in the next few years and data will reside elsewhere.
- There will be one terabyte (a trillion bytes) of data storage in a cellular phone by 2007.

December Meeting

December 10th, 7:00pm

Lutheran Hospital Overholt Auditorium

LIVING ROOM OF TOMORROW

Presented by Best Buy

The La Crosse PC Club is pleased to announce that the Best Buy Store will host its annual CHRISTMAS TOYS program at 7:00 PM, Wednesday, December 10th in the Overholt Auditorium of the Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center. Best Buy technicians will be installing a virtual panorama of technological gadgetry in advance of the program.

The program will feature live demonstrations of what life can be like using technology that is already available. There will be a Media Center with a Plasma Display that will demonstrate the integration of living area with office space including a computer-based VCR, photo album and television. Also included will be computerized music players with slide shows with DVD's

A wireless office will be featured wherein one desk with notebook computer can communicate with the entire home, including printers and Internet access.

Imaging and sound techniques will be demonstrated with a Digital Rebel Camera and MP3 player.

3. The database is dead. Smart file systems from storage vendors will emerge in 2004 that will be intelligent enough to access more easily than today's techniques.

Again, I was pleased by the courtesy and efficiency of the airline personnel and the security people who made every effort to minimize the traveler's inconveniences. The need for increased security is understandable and some level of patience is a cheap price to pay for that.

Editor's Note: Jack has provided many great photos from the event, but to save space in the newsletter and your precious download time I have decided to place these images on the Web Site at <http://www.lcpconline.com/comdex.php>. Thank you Jack for keeping us up to date on Comdex, and I hope they continue to hold this very informative event.

Treasurer's and Membership Report October - November 2003

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

November 18, 2003

Income received in October was \$80.00 from three membership renewals and one new membership. The renewals were: Stub Johnson, Art Osborn, and May Parnow. Our new member is Judi Fischer. Please see the Meet the New Member column for a brief "bio" from Judi. Income received in November was \$40.00 from two membership renewals, those being Barb and Keith Barghahn, and Lita Bower. Thank you all for your continued interest and support.

October expenses were: \$14.80 for stamps, and \$13.19 for 25 copies of our October Newsletter.

The LCPC checking account balance as of 11/18/2003 is \$1,404.16.

We presently have 51 enrolled members in LCPC.

Members whose annual membership renewal fees (dues) are presently past due are: (September) John Benton.

Membership renewals due in December are: Bill Brockmiller, Ted Latham, and Ed Lietzow. Also due for renewal in December are the following recipients of the free six-month memberships awarded in June. Shawn Dunn, Dave Huebsch, Marilyn Shiftar, Mike Torris, Scott Wales, Tami Wolden, and Joe Wuensch.

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 December 10 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 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

Meet a New Member, Judi Fischer

Dick Dahlby, Membership

Following is a brief "bio" from Judi Fischer (jafischerlax@hotmail.com). Judi joined LCPC at the October meeting. Welcome Judi, and thanks for sharing a little about yourself with us.

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I am the Administrative Assistant at the Cathedral of St. Joseph the Workman in downtown La Crosse. I have been there for close to 14 years. When I started, there was not a computer in the office. Since then we have had 3. Currently I run Windows 98. I have Microsoft Office and Microsoft Works. I also run a software product called COMP which is for churches. It maintains family and individual data on the members of our congregation and also allows me to print off labels from certain data such as Readers and Eucharistic Ministers, who is in what grade and who was married when, etc. It also allows me to track contributions to the Church. I also have Quick Book Pro as my accounting software. This allows me to pay bills, do payroll and keep ledgers and many reports that can be given to our financial committee. I use Publisher to do the weekly bulletin. I also have internet access at work.

At home, I have a very basic computer - an e-machine with Windows XP. My old one died last year and since I mostly use my home computer for e-mail (and pictures of my 5 grandchildren) and keeping family info up to date, I did not see the necessity to buy an expensive one.

I have no specific things that I want from the LCPC meetings or the group, just to pick up as much knowledge as I can - as I tell my family - I never want to be too old to learn something new.

Judi Fischer

Happy Holidays!



STOPPING W32.Swen VIRUS ATTACKS

By Jack Storlie

I was getting an awful lot of hits (40-50 per day) from the W32.Swen.A@mm virus. Norton was catching them, but it was about as obnoxious as a very bad Spam attack. I got no help from the Internet at Norton's support site nor from Microsoft.

For lack of anything else to do, I called my Charter Tech Support line and they forwarded my problem to a specialist along with the information on my system configuration and the fact that I was using Outlook 2000 for mail. This probably amounts to a fairly narrow spectrum of users that can use this solution in the case of persistent and voluminous virus attacks of the same or a similar variety. It might only work with Charter Cable customers, but probably with others that also offers a Web Mail option.

Here is the solution that Charter kindly sent to me via email:

Go to <http://pop.charter.net>. You'll log in with the first part of your email address, and your email password. If you do not know your email password, please contact us by phone, and we'll be happy to help you reset it. Due to security concerns, we are not able to send passwords through email.

1) Create a mailbox name "blind carbons". You can do this by clicking the button that says "create mailbox".

2) Click on Tools and then Create New. Type the name the same as the new mailbox that you created.

3) Click on Edit next to the rule you created and set it up as below:

4) For Data, select "Header Field".

5) For Operation, select "is not".

6) For Parameter, type in "To: *username@charter.net*" (make sure to have the * there, as they are important and replace username with your Charter user name.

7) For Action: select "Store In".

8) For Parameters (next to Action) type in the name of the mailbox you created.

9) Click on Update and you will get another row under Data and under Action.

10) In the next row under Data, select "Header Field".

11) For Operation, select "is not".

12) For Parameter, type in "Cc:*jstorlie@charter.net*" (again, make sure to put in the *). 13) For the next row under Action: Select "Discard".

14) Leave the Parameters field in this row empty.

15) Click on Update again.

Since I followed this recipe, I have not heard from Mr. (or Ms.) Swen or any of his/her minions.

Users still need to know more about popular, new DVD technology

by Linda Gonse

Orange County IBM PC Users' Group

DVD writers and recordable DVDs are a fairly new entry into Personal Computerland. Consequently, most of us still need to know what to look for in a DVD writer and how to record DVDs.

Almost everyone knows that a DVD is a type of optical disc that looks like a CD, but has a significantly larger storage capacity.

What you might not know is that the capacity of a DVD may vary depending on different physical formats technology, ranging from 4.7 GB to 17.1 GB. And, while CDs are recorded only on one side, some DVDs such as DVD-RAM, support two layers per side and are rewritable up to 100,000 times. (This type of DVD is enclosed in a plastic case similar to a floppy disk which protects its surfaces and provides a label area.)

Another reason DVD drives are growing in popularity is that they can read most CD media as well. With such impressive features, it isn't surprising that DVDs are expected to become the next CD-ROM. In many cases, manufacturers are even building new PCs with DVD drives instead of CD drives.

The DVD "started in 1994 as two competing formats, Super Disc (SD) and Multimedia CD (MMCD). DVD now is the result of an agreement by both camps on a single standard to meet the requirements of all the various industries involved," according to Deluxe Global Media Services (formerly Discronics). But, media formats still split into two groups: + (plus), or - (known commonly as minus; manufacturers may refer to it as dash). The quality comparison is close, and some DVD players will recognize both, while other models will only accept + or -.

Although there are many aspects of DVDs that we still need to learn, one of the basic questions people inevitably ask is, "What do the letters in DVD mean?"

The letters originally stood for Digital VideoDisc. As the technology gained in importance to the computer world, the word "video" was dropped, and the media and the technology was simply D-V-D. Later, it was given the name Digital Versatile Disc by the DVD Forum, which sets DVD standards. Most people just say D-V-D.

In addition, "The Burning Question," by Don Labriola, a detailed, comprehensive look at DVD recording with reviews on 23 products, is in the October 28, 2003 issue of PC magazine; it's also available online. For an excellent overview of DVD technology and disks, history, specifications, formats, DVD-5, -10, -9, -18, hybrid formats, file systems, copy protection, and DVD Forum, click here.

Digital Cameras for the Holiday Season

By Ira Wilsker

Whether advertising hype or legitimate analysis, many of the published pundits are predicting that this winter will be the prime season for digital camera sales. In compliance with traditional technological history, digital cameras have improved in quality and features while plunging in price. I got a "deal" on my first digital camera three years ago, with 640x480 resolution which is 0.3 (that's three-tenths) of a megapixel resolution, 10x optical zoom, slow serial connectivity, and 2 megs of memory for \$270, about one-half retail. For the record, that camera still works fine. Today our local retailers are offering technologically superior digital cameras with 10 times the resolution and 16 times the built-in memory, with fast USB connectivity, for about the same price. In many markets, digital cameras far outsell comparable 35mm cameras. Digital cameras require no film (only memory), require no processing (no trips to the photo counter with the concurrent cost of processing), and provide the instant gratification popularized by the obsolescent Polaroids of yesteryear.

Two of my daughters expressed an interest in a digital camera for the holidays so I have been shopping around. There is a myriad of techno-babble terms being bantered about in describing digital cameras that may require some explanation here so all can understand.

The primary feature being touted by digital camera makers is "megapixels", or millions of tiny dots of resolution. A "pixel" is the common vernacular for "picture element", which is each tiny dot of information that you see on your computer screen. To put megapixels in perspective, a computer monitor with the common 800x600 resolution means 800 pixels wide by 600 pixels high, or 480,000 pixels. Likewise a 1024x768 resolution, common on today's 17 inch monitors, is 786,432 pixels. If the primary intent is to email digital photos, or post them to the web, then very high resolutions are unnecessary. Someone recently sent me a huge image file as an email attachment. The picture was of a new grandchild, and taken with a 2.1 megapixel camera, at maximum resolution. The sender did not practice good "netiquette" and reduce the size of the image to reasonable dimensions (such as 320x240 or 640x480), so his large image was three times the size of the screen on my 17 inch monitor. The only way to view the unedited image was to scroll left and right, and up and down. In most cases there is little need to take photos at the maximum resolution; almost all cameras allow for smaller, lower resolution photos.

If the user wants to print the photos with a photo grade printer on high quality inkjet or laser photo paper, 2.1 megapixels, can produce an excellent quality 5x7 inch print, and a reasonable 8x10 inch print. Many of the moderately priced digital cameras are now being offered with 5 or more megapixels. With an appropriate printer and paper, 5 megapixels can pro-

duce an excellent quality 8x10 print, and a decent 11x17. The holy grail of digital cameras, 12+ megapixels, the resolution of good quality slide film, was passed about two years ago by the high-end professional models. Many professional photographers, who dismissed digital photography as a low quality fad a few years ago, are now embracing the new technology.

The ability to zoom the image in and out is a popular feature in most cameras. The two methods of zoom available on digital cameras are optical and digital zoom. In terms of sharpness, optical zoom is superior to digital, as the image itself is manipulated, rather than the pixels making up the image. The less expensive cameras typically only offer digital zoom (adequate for common snapshots), but the better cameras offer either optical zoom or a combination of the two.

The memory available to the camera determines how many images it can hold before the data must be downloaded to a computer or other device. Most digital cameras have some built-in memory, and allow for the addition of supplemental memory in a variety of formats. Some cameras minimize the need for digital memory by writing the image directly to a floppy disk or mini-CD. Since the integral memory in a digital camera can typically hold only a small number of images, it is important to determine the price and availability of additional memory in the proper format. Memory comes in different capacities and formats from tiny cards, to rectangular "memory sticks". All camera memory is not the same, and differs in speed (faster is better, but often at a price), and power consumption (less power consumption is better by prolonging battery life). According to Lexar, one of the major manufacturers of digital camera media, the number of photos that can be held in memory varies by the resolution of the photo and the capacity of the media. If the inexpensive 32meg memory card is used, at maximum resolution, a 2 megapixel camera will store about 35 images, while only storing 12 images from a 5 megapixel camera. Media of 256megs (often around \$50) can hold much more; 284 images at 2 megapixels, and 102 images at 5 megapixels. A chart showing the capacity of different media is available at www.lexarmedia.com/digfilm/index_cf.html. It should also be noted that the memory, also referred to as "digital film", can be reused indefinitely.

Almost all new digital cameras come with some form of fast USB connectivity to download images to the computer. Accessories such as docking stations, and external card readers are a convenience, but not a necessity.

As an added convenience, most local photo finishers now print photo-grade images directly from the camera memory, at prices lower than printing them yourself. Now we can have the best of both worlds.

Ira Wilsker is the Advisor for Region 8, APCUG Representative & Bylaws Chair for the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for The Examiner in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows. He also graciously shares his articles with the APCUG editors.

Computers

From the Very Beginning for New Users

*By Charlie Paschal
Columnist, The (Columbia) State newspaper, SC*

After watching my 76-year-old sister struggle with her first computer, I decided to start a beginner's series on de-mystifying a computer. We're going to start from the very beginning and if I move to fast or use terms you don't understand, please send me e-mail about it.

I hope this can make your computer more "user friendly" for you.

Even if you're not a beginner, you might know someone who is and point out this series to them. Over a period of several issues, I hope to decipher the language, destroy the myths and, perhaps, entice beginners to overcome their fears of computers and begin to use them more effectively.

First, and foremost, why would you buy a computer in the first place?

Most of us use them for little more than the ability to dial up the Internet, send a few e-mail messages and do some simple searches. Despite these small expectations, it's still a struggle for my sister to learn how to use the computer.

In watching her, here are some things I've noticed that she struggles with:

- * Clicking and double clicking.

- * The individual parts of a window, such as the scroll bars, thinking other information on a page or document is "hidden" from her or not on the page. (Remember when a small baby played hide and seek? Small children thought you actually "disappeared" until they got older. This is almost the same thing — if you don't know where to look for the remainder of the page.)

- * The difference between two separate Web sites.

- * Why certain searches don't turn up a Web site ("That's what so and so told me to search for," she says when the search turns up empty, rather than considering that she might have "bad" information.)

A computer doesn't think in the way humans do — it works in ones and zeros and that's the only way it processes data. It uses binary and hexadecimal numbers rather than our decimal system.

You might think that a computer can't reach high numbers using this system, but it can. By using just ones and zeros, a computer can count to incredibly high numbers and just loves to do so. A computer uses these numbers to "hand out" addresses to each part (such as a printer port) or program, so everything knows what street they're on when the operating system (or hardware) needs to reach them.

Ever had a program to "perform an illegal operation" or crash on you? This usually happens because one program tries to use an address already occupied by another program or piece of hardware. It's just like a bill that's delivered to the wrong address.

The operating system is the part of the computer that handles the hard work behind the scenes: Handling communication between an application, such as Microsoft Word, and a printer. When a user clicks on "print" in a Word document, it's the operating system that intercepts and tells the printer (at its address) to print the document. A "device driver," usually from the printer manufacturer, does the chore but it's the operating system that handles the communication between Word and the printer. It uses memory addresses to keep order.

Microsoft Windows is an operating system. It comes in several versions. Although there are prior versions to Windows 95, most of us only know about Windows 98, Windows 2000 and XP. Windows NT is a heavy-duty operating system and is mostly used as a "Web" server — a server (a beefier computer, with more high end parts than a desktop) that handles duties on the Internet.

Other operating systems include Macintosh (Apple), Unix and Linux, which is a version of Unix that runs on the same type of hardware that Windows uses. Unix runs on different hardware, as do Apple computers. Programs that run on Apple's hardware won't run on Windows computers and vice versa. Some special programs allow some programs that run on Windows to run on Linux.

The "hardware" part of a computer is the computer, monitor, keyboard, mouse, printer and other devices. The "software" consists of the programs and the operating system. Examples of software include Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Word, a virus checker or Outlook Express, an e-mail client.

Questions, comments: comments@askcharlie.com

There is no restriction against any non-profit group using this article as long as it is kept in context with proper credit given the author. The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Note from the Editor

Shane Lambert

I want to point out that many of the articles in this month's newsletter are provided free of charge by the Association of Personal Computer User Groups and are written by members of other clubs. I always try to provide the proper credit for the articles used in our newsletter but sometimes forget to do so. If you are the author of an article and did not receive credit, please let me know so I can provide proper credit.

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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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