

April 2004

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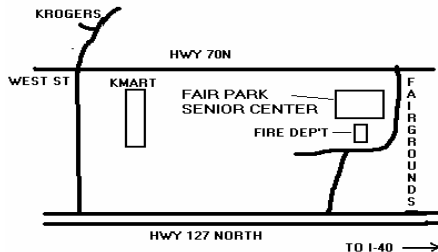
“JOIN US FOR FUN AND LEARNING AT CROSSVILLE’S COMPUTER CLUB”

Volume 11, Issue 4

THIS MONTH’S MEETING

April 19th at 7:00 P. M. at
FAIR PARK SENIOR CENTER

From downtown Crossville: Take West St. North past Kmart and the old Avery factory. Turn right at sign “Community Complex” and the Senior Center is the first building on the right.



“Computing Development in a Developing Country”

A personal trip through time and distance to South India.

Share the experiences of Dick Riesz, as he worked and traveled in India. Get acquainted with the development of computing and the young persons who use them. See the great and beautiful scenes Dick experienced last month. Learn how to share your expertise with young Indians.

This will be a pictorial presentation that will thrill you!



6 pm Monday, April 19th at the Fair Park Senior Center “Stump The Experts” followed by the presentation above.

Don’t miss!

From the President’s Desk



We are now back to Monday evening general meetings until at least the new year (which starts July 1). Pete Kaufmann is hard at work with Jim Buxton and Dick Riesz getting a slate of officers and board members for next year. If you can possibly serve in any capacity, please let them know as soon as possible. The website, ppcuginc.com is loaded with features and benefits for everyone. This is one of the real values of membership. Please check out the website the next time you are on line.

Our membership is leveling off at about 300 members. Please look around and see if there is anyone you know that you could invite to attend a general meeting or SIG presentation to determine if they would benefit from being a member in the group. We need membership to maintain the quality of the club.

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Club Information



“FREE” Table

We have set up a table at our member meetings to share our “extra” goodies with other club members.

If you have something to give away, bring it in and put it on the FREE table. It’s first come, first served. If you see something you want, help yourself.

Membership Dues and Expiration Dates

Membership dues are \$25 a year for a family, \$20 a year for an individual, and \$10 a year for a student 21 years of age or under. Your membership is valid for 12 months from the month you join (or renew your membership). Please pay your dues to the treasurer before the last day of your anniversary month. Anyone who is 30 days or more in arrears with membership dues cannot participate in the door prize drawings.

Corporate memberships are \$25 a year for the first two memberships and \$10 a year for each additional membership from the same company.

Our Club cannot exist without you, the members. Remember, you and your membership dues are important to keep the club functioning!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS DISCLAIMER

All members of the Plateau PC Users Group are willing to help one another in the area of advice and tutorial instruction over the phone. If you should require more involved services or instruction, we have a few members who are very knowledgeable in several areas. As a responsible consumer, it is up to you to discuss, before retaining a member, any and ALL charges for repair services and time consuming tutorial activities.

It is not the desire of this Board of Directors to set fees for individuals for services rendered, nor the responsibility to intervene between members who enter into a contract among themselves

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NEXT MEETING

UPCOMING MEETING May !!!

**The next General Meeting of the
PLATEAU PC USERS GROUP**
Will be May 17th at 7:00 P. M. at
FAIR PARK SENIOR CENTER

"Digital Video Editing"

Bob Hoyt will bring us up to date on computerized video editing. Bob has lots of experience in this work and has been involved in video production at FFGs Channel 11. He will help us understand what equipment and software we need to do digital video editing and then demonstrate the process and the results. Editing involves getting rid of the junk and enhancing what's left, adding transitions between scenes and overlaying the whole project with music and narration. He can show us how to take those old video tapes of the kids and turn them into dramatic digital video that can be distributed to the whole family on DVDs. Don't miss this presentation, given by a real "pro".

Fun With Windows XP

By Don Lewis

This month we will take a look at the Windows Media Player. You can use Player to play and organize your digital media files. The Player also provides the ability to listen to radio stations from all over the world, play and copy CDs, create your own CDs, play DVDs, and copy music and videos to portable devices, such as portable digital audio players and Pocket PCs.

The Media Player has a few quirks, but it comes free with your computer and does have many useful functions. Bundling the Player with Windows has gotten Microsoft in trouble with some government agencies. They may be forced to change this policy.

The Player is a large and somewhat complex system. When looked at separately, the functions are simple. This month we will look at playing audio CDs on the computer.

When you insert an audio CD in the CD drive, a dialog

box appears. It provides the choice of playing the CD or copying music from the CD using the Windows Media Player. If you have other players on your system, it may also include them in the options. To play the CD, simply click the option of playing in the media player. The Player will start the CD. If you are connected to the Internet, it will access a database to provide information about the CD. It shows the album name, artists and song titles as well as the album art. It will remember this information for subsequent playing. It also has a button to purchase the CD. I have not tried that yet. Why would I want to buy another copy?

The Player is controlled by a set of icons at the bottom left hand in the mode. The controls provide for playing, pausing, stopping, moving to the next or previous track, changing the volume and muting. The icons are similar to those on a tape or CD player.

Skins are software that changes the appearance of the Player on your system. It comes with a number of these and you can download more. Skins range from the funny to the ridiculous. In addition you can convert to the mini mode that appears on the task bar. In the Full Mode there are many visualizations available and you can download more. Visualizations are plug-ins that display splashes of color and geometric shapes that change with the beat of the audio that is playing. There is a full screen mode that fills the screen with this visualization. Press the ESC button to return to Full Mode. The View drop down menu has many options for customizing the appearance. Customizing the appearance has little affect on the function, but can be fun to explore.

All of these controls work the same way when playing any files in the Player. The files may be on an audio CD, or on your hard drive in most of the major formats such as wma, mp3, or wav.

Next month, we will look at copying CDs to your hard drive and how to play them.

PCI Express: Say Goodbye to AGP and PCI Slots

By Timothy Everingham, TUGNET
teveringham@acm.org

Those of you who have been around personal computers for a while might remember plug in cards slots referred to as ISA, EISA, Microchannel, and VESA Local Bus. ISA, EISA, and Microchannel were replaced by PCI. VESA Local bus was primarily for video cards, which was replaced by PCI, then AGP slots. It was a fun time during these card slot transitions because many times you could not use the plug in cards from your old machine in your new computer or motherboard or if you did it could slow down the entire system. Well guess what, its time to do it all over again. Intel has come up with a new slot standard PCI Express, which will start to show up in computers/motherboards this spring.

PCI came out in 1992. Today these slots and its data bus technology are used for things not envisioned when it was under development over 12 years ago. PCI has its limitations and the PCI pro slots never became popular. The limitations are coming to the forefront in delivering multimedia content and Gigabit Ethernet. Of course getting higher frame rates at higher resolution and quality for video games also is an issue. PCI has been evolving over time increasing its speed to five times the original, but it has reached its limits of development. Many say that stretching out the AGP to 8x speed might be pushing at its limit too.

First let us look at the current PCI architecture you will find on most motherboards. The CPU/Microprocessor communicates with the first of two data bridges, normally referred to as the Memory Bridge or Northbridge. The Northbridge not only communicates with the CPU; but also communicates to the AGP port, which is where your main graphics card is (usually the only graphics card). It also communicates with your RAM. The fourth thing it communicates with is the second data bridge, known as the Input/Output (I/O) Bridge or Southbridge. The Southbridge also communicates to your plug in slots/cards, drive controllers, and USB, Firewire/1394, parallel, serial, game, keyboard and mouse ports. The theoretical speed limit of the Southbridge communication to I/O including the PCI slots is 133 MB/second. All of the communications in the system are parallel with none of the data having any priority over any other.

Blocks of data have to be sent one at a time and cannot be done concurrently. Therefore the data is transferred from one section of the motherboard to the next section based on the order received, not the importance or whether a piece of data arriving by a certain time to its destination is critical.

PCI Express, instead of using a parallel bus architecture, uses serial networking typology with only two wires for each direction. At higher speeds, it allows concurrent transfer of data while having a similar look and the same type of Northbridge/Southbridge architecture as currently in desktops and laptops.

However, in servers the Southbridge is eliminated producing greater data throughput. The PCI slots initially have a 250 MB/second throughput, but the scalable width technology (increasing the number of wire pairs) enables slots and cards to communicate at 32 times that speed in later implementations using longer slots. But the typology can also use network switching type technology, giving data priority and quality of service functions. Hot plug/swap of components is a native part of the architecture.

The PCI Express Graphics Port, replacing the AGP Port, will have a 4GB/second transfer rate in its initial configuration, double that of the current 8x AGP ports. For laptops units there will be a new plug-in card to replace PCMCIA called ExpressCard. It will come in two forms, one that more looks like a PCMCIA card referred to at the 34 module form factor (34 x 75 x 5 mm) and a more oversized L looking card called the 54 module form factor (54 x 75 x 5 mm). This new architecture is compatible with existing operating systems. Also the new PCI Express slot is capable of being placed alongside current type PCI slots so a choice can be made which type of card can be used in a motherboard just like was done with ISA slots and current PCI slots. The standard PCI Express slots being put in motherboards this spring (1x) will be a lot shorter than the standard PCI slots.

All of this will mean that a lot of issues having to do with multimedia on desktop and laptop computers will have been solved. It also opens wider use of Gigabit Ethernet on local area networks. It also enables the prospects of new motherboard form factors and computer case designs. As the transition from ISA to PCI was an

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interesting transition with computer buyers having to do more research and planning on their purchases, the move from PCI to PCI Express will do the same. However, as was with the previous transition, the performance and capability increases of computers will be profound. Further information on PCI Express can be found at www.express-lane.org.

Timothy Everingham is CEO of Timothy Everingham Consulting in Azusa, California. He is also Vice Chair of the Los Angeles Chapter of ACM SIGGRAPH and is also on the Management Information Systems Program Advisory Board of California State University, Fullerton. In addition he is the Vice President of the Windows Media Users' Group of Los Angeles. He is also part-time press in the areas of high technology, computers, video, audio, and entertainment/media and has had articles published throughout the United States and Canada plus Australia, England, & Japan. Further information can be found at <http://home.earthlink.net/~teveringham>

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.

Meritorious Service Award



Stephen Morgan

The Plateau PC Users Group, Inc. a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation with over 300 dues paying members, honored Steve Morgan at its monthly meeting in March for his years of distinguished service to the organization. The Plateau PC Users Group, Inc. provides a variety of training and information services on computers, software and related technologies to the community

Steve lived for several years with his wife in Fairfield Glade where he continues to operate a travel agency. Steve is originally from Minnesota and is a graduate of the University of Minnesota, where he earned degrees in accounting and economics.

Steve is one of the founders of what is now one of the

largest computer clubs in the country. Steve has played a key role in every aspect of the club's development. He has been active in the national user group organization of computer clubs while helping to install various key parts of the existing local club. For years he was the program chairman for monthly programs. He was a key teacher when the Club started learning centers. Steve gave unselfishly of himself in special training modules called special interest groups where he saw the need very early to provide specialized training and assistance in the Internet and email.

March 20, 2004 General Meeting Minutes By Cindy West, Secretary

President Larry Drake welcomed guests and members. A reminder that April's General Meeting will be on the 19th at 6 pm, FPSC.

Steve Morgan was awarded the fifth "Meritorious Service Award" for his years of distinguished service to PPCUG Users Group. Steve is one of the founders of what is now one of the largest computer clubs in the country. He has been an active participant in all aspects of the club's development and is now involved at the National level as well.

Alan Baker and Colin Hurd presented "Computer Games". Alan gave the history, types, and ratings of games, along with websites for more information, which members received on a handout for future reference. Colin, a Crossville High School student, demonstrated current games he plays on his X-Box, which connects to the TV screen. The X-Box, we learned, is really a powerful computer. In short, gaming has advanced a long way in the past few years. The program was a learning experience, which will help us with the young people in our lives. A special thanks to Colin for sharing with us.

Winners of the door prizes were;

Val Williams	Flight Simulator
Don Lynn	Links
Karen Drake	Flight Simulator
Joyce Morrow	Flight Simulator
Pete Kaufmann	Atari
Al Teft	Atari
Dick Riesz	Pinball

Meeting adjourned at approximately 12 pm.

Product Review Page

This page will be devoted monthly to reviews of computer products chosen by our Product Review Coordinator Pete Kaufmann. The Editors encourage PPCUG Members to “get a product” from Pete, evaluate it and write a review. The product then becomes yours!

FlipAlbum Suite 5 by E-Book Systems

Review by Joan Carroll

Product Information: E-Book Systems produces this photo album software program. There is also a standard edition for \$29.95; the suite 5 edition adds more features such as burning an album to a CD and a pop/play feature in a CD-ROM plus the ability to add more than one album to a CD. This edition retails for \$79.95 and is also available on Amazon.com for \$49.88 (for MAC users \$49.99) and there is a professional edition for \$149.95 that allows you to make customized photo albums with print lock options and CD Password options for commercial use of the albums. This program organizes your photos into a 3D page-flipping album that can be customized with themes, borders, annotations, table of contents (names and thumbprints) plus background colors and music. Like digital scrap booking affects that I found pretty nifty.

Requirements: All window operating systems (95-XP), a Pentium II, 300 MHz or better, 64 MB of Ram with 160 MB free hard disk space plus a 16 bit color display adaptor and 800 X 600 pixels screen area. Internet access and Internet Explorer 5.01 or higher is needed to view the photo albums online. CD burning capability (DVD if you have a video CD format for video viewing).

Installation went very well and automatically. Did not feature an uninstall option in this edition. Viewing the Flip Album sample added an icon to the desktop for the sample that was deleted quickly. Our first grandson's pictures were used to do a trial run and it was easy following the guide-I read and my sister did the operations. A second group of pictures were added a week later, and pages were added to the album to accommodate the new pictures: the program automatically adjusted the page numbers. Each picture could be sized, rotated, cropped, or retouched using the built-in image editor. You could add 3D and drop shadow effects, even add musical tracks. A thumbnail overview, table of contents and index are all automatically created and hyperlinked to the

actual photo pages. I liked adding text under each picture in different fonts and colors.

After realizing the album could be put on a CD to share with family-a quick trip to our open lab at Fair Park Senior center for a lesson by Alan Baker and a CD was made successfully. This album CD can also be played on a MAC.

The program came with a full user guide and a quick guide for layout-both were easy to use and some of the features were tried. Did not add background music, as I have no music files. Liked the program very much and will become more proficient with the features as I continue to use it. Have lots of photos to organize. Customer service was used once and replied quickly via email.

New Members

**Joyce & John Emery
Elizabeth Evangelista**

**Susan Franklin
M.H. Koucheki**

**Gloria & Tom Lusk
Marilee Mitchell**

**Janelle Overbey
Ruth Pavelchik**

Tricia Romans

Cathie & William Schultz

George Shekeruk

Marion Sherwood

Regina Williams

WE APPRECIATE OUR PUBLISHER!

This issue of Gazette has been duplicated with the cooperation and assistance of the **Pleasant Hill Community Church**, as a part of their community service outreach. They also provide the meeting-place in their Community House for the PPCUG Pleasant Hill meetings, to which all Members are welcome.

THANKS!!!

Under Attack by Cyber Worms

By Ira Wilsker

If you use email, as you most likely do, you may have noticed the recent increased onslaught of worms and viruses. Using a variety of techniques, the latest attacks are once again flooding our inboxes with dangerous content, as well as seeking out security holes in our systems and attacking us through our internet and network connections.

One insidious family of new pests is the group referred to as the "Bagel" or "Beagle" virus and worm family. Now spreading endemically, as I type this, are sixteen variants, referred to by the sequential letters "A" through "K". These nasties were explicitly designed to slip through most spam filters, and many antivirus scans by concealing their malicious payload in a password protected zip (compressed) file, which can only be opened by opening the email, and clicking on the attachment, and entering the password shown. The rapid appearance of the many variants also makes it easier to slip through our antivirus defenses, and more difficult to protect against. While most of us are reluctant to click on attachments from unknown senders, these creatures try to use "human engineering" to trick us into opening the email and activating the attachment. This is accomplished by spoofing the "From:" line and making it falsely appear to be from the management, tech support, email server, billing department, or other department of your ISP (Internet Service provider). They use an internal template to create a variety of subjects and messages incorporating the name of the ISP in order to appear to be authentic. Some of the common subject lines are "Email account security warning", "Warning about your email account", "Email account utilization warning", "Email account disabling warning", and similar subjects. The body of the message typically starts with some variation of "Dear user of (the name of your ISP)", followed by text indicating that your email account is about to be disabled, you have been sending out infected emails, the email server will be shut down, and similar attention getters. The punch line may be of the type "For more information see the attached file" or "Please, read the attachment for further details." To make it look even more legitimate and secure (and to bypass spam and virus filtering) it may contain a closing line to the effect of "For security reasons attached file is password protected" or "The password is (password)."

The infected email is signed with "Sincerely," or "Best wishes," or some nicety, and often has a tagline "The team, [http://www.\(the name of your ISP\)](http://www.(the name of your ISP))"

Attached to the email is an innocent looking file possibly with the filename (ending in ".zip") "Information", "Readme", "Document", "Message" or some other innocuous name. If this file is opened, and your antivirus software does not detect the payload, the computer will be instantly infected. Once infected, the worm will search your computer for any email addresses, and use its built-in email utility to replicate itself to the email addresses found on your computer, again spoofing the name of the recipients ISP as the sender. If you think about it, this is both a clever way to entice even a suspicious victim into opening the attachment and infecting his computer, and an insidious thing to do to countless thousands of innocent victims. One of the common payloads in the Bagel/Beagle series is a utility that deactivates many of the popular antivirus programs, and prevents them from being updated, leaving the computer open to later attacks. Some versions also open a port through a firewall (ZoneAlarm is often targeted) allowing external "backdoor" access to the computer, and broadcasting the IP address of the vulnerable computer over the Internet. Fortunately, many of the Bagel/Beagle variants have code in them that will cease their propagation between March 14 and 25.

In another trick, some of the new virus and worm writers are trying to fool us into believing that their content is safe by including a falsehood either in its subject or as a closing tagline that the message has been scanned by a major antivirus program (most often Norton AntiVirus). Just because an email is from someone you know, and contains a line indicating that it is certified as safe, do not believe it. The creator of the worm is lying to you by concealing the real sender by spoofing the "From:" line to appear that it is from an acquaintance, and including the "certified virus free" tag.

The massive recent attacks by the authors of the Netsky, MyDoom, and Bagel/Beagle viruses and worms have created a battle among themselves, indicated by messages encoded in their respective payloads. According to several antivirus companies, the code includes attacks on each other, such as when Netsky attacks a computer already infected with MyDoom or Bagel/Beagle, Netsky

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tries to deactivate them, while installing its own malicious code, and stating "We kill malware writers. They have no chance". The author of Bagel responded in a quickly released variant "Hey Netsky... Don't ruin our business. Wanna start a war?". Later variants of these three malicious products have continued the dispute.

Wouldn't it be nice if these virus authors spent more time and effort fighting each other, and less time trying to infect our computers?

FREE online virus scans are available at the following websites:

housecall.antivirus.com
www.pandasoftware.com
www.bitdefender.com
us.mcafee.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 to the author. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an international organization of which this group is a member.

What is Shareware?

by Dan Housley

What is Shareware?

Shareware is software that you can try before you buy. Software developers post trial versions of their software on websites. Consumers can then download the trial version to their computer and evaluate it. If the consumer likes the software they can purchase it. Shareware is also called try before you buy.

Today almost every big software company including Microsoft, Winzip, and AOL use trial versions or a form of shareware to market their software.

Why is shareware better than any other marketing method?

Shareware is a good way to market software. It allows consumers to evaluate an application prior to making a purchase decision. They can easily determine if it meets their business or personal needs, which usually results to a satisfied customer. In addition because shareware companies are often small they can provide personalized ser-

vice that is not found in larger companies. Shareware also allows for instant gratification, there is no need to wait for a shipment. Consumers can download and use the software immediately.

Freeware vs. Shareware.

As you know shareware is a marketing method for software. Freeware is also a way of marketing software. However, freeware is free so the developer does not ever request any money. Shareware is free to distribute but cannot be used for an unlimited amount of time, unless the developer is paid. Freeware can be used an unlimited amount of time and can be freely distributed; payment is not required. Many developers use freeware to draw attention to their shareware applications.

What is software piracy?

There are several kinds of software piracy. One kind of software piracy is hacking into software and disabling the copy protection. Software pirates then distribute or sell the hacked software. The developer does not receive any money for the software the hacker distributed. This is an infringement on the developer's copyright.

Another technique used by hackers is to illegally obtain a registered copy of software. Pirates purchase the software once and use it on multiple computers. Purchasing software with a stolen credit card is another form of software piracy. Unfortunately there are many kinds of software piracy that has slowed the industry's growth. In order for developers to continue to develop software and provide support the software needs to be profitable.

Registration Incentives.

A registration incentive is something that makes the person using the shareware version of the software want to buy. There are a number of incentives developers use to encourage users to buy. One popular registration incentive is to limit the time of the trial version. This is clever because then the user can't use the shareware version forever. It encourages them to buy the software so they can continue to use it when the trial period is over.

Often shareware versions will have "grayed out" features on the menu that the consumer can see, but not use. Typically there is a pop-up windows in the software encouraging users to register in order to take advantage of the additional features. This is a popular registration method because if the person wants to do more things

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with the program, then they are forced to buy the registered version of the software.

Another innovative registration incentive shareware developers use allows customers to receive discounts on other software once they have purchased the registered version.

Developers also provide support incentives. The shareware version of software will have everything the registered version has, however, if a person buys the registered version of the software he/she will receive tech support, newsletters, and upgrades. Developers can also limit the number of times you can use the shareware version of the product. The trial version may expire after 10 uses meaning the user has to register if they wish to continue using the software.

Shareware now and how the term changed.

Though the meaning of the term shareware has not changed the perception of shareware has evolved since it began. At first when you had a shareware program there was a note that asked for a donation. Now you are required to pay for the registered version of the shareware program. The shareware industry has also evolved and grown into a billion dollar industry.

About the Author:

Dan Housley is currently a student interning with NotePage, Inc. <http://www.notepage.net> developers of SMS and wireless messaging software and Software Marketing Resource <http://www.softwaremarketingresource.com> .

This article may be used freely in opt-in publications and websites, provided that the resource box is included and the links are active. A courtesy copy of the issue or a link to any online posting would be greatly appreciated send an email to sharon@notepage.net.

PPCUG ISP

We wish to thank Multipro for providing a dialup ISP for use at Pleasant Hill and Fairfield Glade.

Visit the Multipro web site at www.multipro.com

Hi! I'm from the Government and I'm Here to Help Your Computer

By Ira Wilsker

Our computers are apolitical inanimate machines not influenced by our personal politics. While we as individuals may differ in our beliefs of how much the government should be involved in our personal computing, there is an increasing amount of influence government agencies are having in our routine computer utilization.

Recently the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, acknowledging the role that our personal computers have in national security, announced a series of email alert services to notify us of potential cyber attacks and other threats to our cyber infrastructure. As has been explained previously in this column, our computers and net access have become a potential target of terrorism, and can be utilized to launch cyber attacks without our knowledge. As I type this, the Utah based software company SCO, has had its net access shut down because it was one of the targets of a denial of service attack launched from countless thousands of computers infected with the "A" version of the MyDoom worm. The free alert system from the Department of Homeland Security, coincidentally announced as the MyDoom worm infected millions of machines and slowed down the net, is available both online and by email subscription at www.us-cert.gov. Warnings will be posted on this site, and emailed to subscribers as soon as they are released. The free email alerts are listed at www.us-cert.gov/cas/index.html and distributed in four varieties. Two of the alerts are highly technical versions, and two are non-technical "plain English" versions. If you decide to subscribe to these free alerts, be sure to follow the subscription instructions explicitly. In order to prevent the unauthorized "spamming" of subscriptions, a double opt-in process is utilized. When you send the initial email subscription, a confirming email will be sent by the email list server containing a unique reply code; be sure to follow the instructions exactly in that reply email in order to effect the subscription.

The "Technical Cyber Security Alerts", as listed on the US-CERT.GOV website, "...provide timely information about current security issues, vulnerabilities, and exploits." The other technical alert is "Cyber Security Bulletins" which "...provide bi-weekly summaries of secu-

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ity issues and new vulnerabilities. They also provide patches, workarounds, and other actions to help mitigate risk.”

For those interested in less technical, but otherwise current and helpful information, a pair of non-technical alerts is available. One is “Cyber Security Alerts” self-described as, “...provide(s) timely information about current security issues, vulnerabilities, and exploits ... that affects the general public. ... (and) outline(s) the steps and actions that non-technical home and corporate computer users can take to protect themselves from attack.” The other non-technical alert is “Cyber Security Tips” which “...describe(s) common security issues and offer advice for non-technical home and corporate computer users.”

These alerts will contain a verifiable electronic signature to ensure that they are really valid alerts, and not some misleading spam intended to spoof authentic alerts and mislead victims. Despite such precautions, there has been some concern that these alerts can still be falsified, leading to the type of damage that they are intended to warn about. In a recent statement released by Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY), "If I were a betting man, I'd put a few dollars down that the next virus that clogs computer networks is going to be transmitted through an e-mail that looks like one of these DHS e-mail alerts."

All four of these alerts, as well as the concurrent information posted on the US-CERT.GOV website, are intended to supplement, not replace, similar alerts already distributed by such cyber security companies as Symantec (Norton), Network Associates (McAfee), Panda, Sophos, F-Secure, Trend, and other publishers of anti-virus, firewall, and internet security software and services.

In a less fearsome mode, there is a helpful service available from the quasi-governmental agency, the U.S. Postal Service, to assist businesses, organizations, and individuals who mail items using “Priority” or “Express” mail. Small quantity users can use a free online service “Click-N-Ship” available at www.usps.com to generate and print mailing labels, complete with tracking number bar codes. Larger volume users of Express and Priority mail can download a free utility, “USPS Shipping Assistant Software” from the Postal Service to generate mailing labels on their own computers. Available for free

download from www.usps.com/shippingassistant, this interesting utility can be used to track and confirm deliveries, verify zip codes, create mailing labels, calculate domestic and international postage, calculate delivery times, create and store address books, and even generate merchandise return labels. The labels themselves, complete with barcodes for tracking, are typically printed one or two to an 8.5 x 11 sheet of self-adhesive labels. Labels are available from the Postal Service website from a private contractor, our local office supply stores, or online. I recently used both the free online label service, and the “USPS Shipping Assistant 2.2” I recently downloaded to prepare labels to mail merchandise to my kids. I found both were easy to use and produced excellent quality labels on my printer. I then used both the free online tracking on the USPS.COM website and the online tracking service integral with the Shipping Assistant software to track the packages, and both worked equally well.

Now that computers have become a ubiquitous part of our daily lives, it is inevitable that we will see more governmental involvement and assistance with our daily computing.

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.

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.

Our own PPCUG Website

Your Website is under development by the Board of Directors under the leadership of Don Lewis. It is intended to provide public outreach as well as to notify members of our programs and schedules.

www.PPCUGinc.com

Send your comments and suggestions to the Webmaster, Don Lewis

Webmaster@ppcuginc.com (931) 277-3284

The Learning Center class schedule, Gazette and Windows Tips are all available on our web site.

News of the Special Interest Groups

The PPCUG sponsors several Special Interest Groups (SIGs) tailored to meet the varied needs of our many members. Each SIG is a small group whose leader prepares material for presentation and encourages open discussion and questions. We urge you to attend the SIGs and hope you will find one or more of interest to you. Ideas for additional groups are welcome, as are volunteers to form and lead new SIGs.

New Users

Meets at 6 PM monthly prior to the general meeting. The leader to be announced.

Intermediate Users

Meets at 6 PM monthly prior to the general meeting. The leader to be announced.

Pleasant Hill Group

The Pleasant Hill group meets on the second Thursday of each month at 6 PM for an Internet session and at 7 PM for the regular meeting, with Q & A from 8 until finished — in the Pleasant Hill Community House on Main Street across from The Pleasant Hill Post Office. All members are welcome and visitors from the Pleasant Hill area are especially encouraged to come.

DOS

Meets by arrangement with Gene Doss.

Novice

Meets by arrangement with Gene Doss.

Windows

Meets at 2 PM on the first Friday of each month at the Fairfield Glade Community Church on Snead Drive. The leader is Don Droege.

Internet

Meets at 3 PM on the first Friday of each month at the Fairfield Glade Community Church on Snead Drive. The leader is Stephen Morgan.

Websites for Investing

Meets each month at a time and location to be announced by the leaders, Larry Drake and George Shields.

May 2004

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7 2 pm Windows SIG 3 pm Internet	8 10am Invest SIG 2 pm Inv com
9	10 7 pm Board Mtg	11	12	13 2 pm Inv w comp 6 pm P. Hill	14	15
16	17 6 pm New&IntSIG 7 pm GenMt	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 2 pm Int. Word	28	29
30	31					

PLATEAU PC USERS GROUP, INC.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Return this application, with check for annual dues (\$25 family, \$20 individual, \$10 student membership) payable to "PLATEAU PC USERS GROUP." Return to the club Treasurer during our meeting or mail to PPCUG Treasurer. P.O. Box 3787, Crossville, TN 38557.

Date

Last Name First Name Family Members (if family membership)

Address: City State Zip Code Phone Number

E-Mail address

I have used PCs since (year): I have belonged to a Computer Club before. Yes No

I have knowledge in the following areas and would be willing to share my knowledge with club members:

I would like to learn more about the following areas:
