

ACPCUG

June 2000

From The Dealsguy, Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer User Group

I receive infected e-mail attachments more often than you might think from unknowing people. Recently, I received one called PrettyPark.exe from a friend. What might have fooled me is that I know the sender has McAfee on her machine, and I have Norton Antivirus. No virus alert was issued by mine. I checked with that person later, and as I suspected, she didn't even know she had sent it, but by that time she found she had a virus. The problem --- neither of us had updated our virus protection that month, but my precaution of not opening a .exe file attachment saved me anyway.

A friend swears by F-Prot as his anti-virus protection and it is free for home users. Since I hadn't deleted the suspected virus I downloaded F-Prot. After installing F-Prot, it found PrettyPark immediately and gave me the option to delete it. F-Prot can be found on various download sites. His favorite site is [<ftp://ftp.telusplanet.net/pub/simtelnet/msdos/virus/>].

Find the current F-Prot file starting with fp and ending with .zip. For updates, go to [<http://www.complex.is/f-prot/Download.html>].

I was hesitant to change, so I ran Norton's live-update, but my subscription had expired. Next morning Customer Service immediately updated me at a cost of only \$4.95 for the year and gave me a confirmation

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Arm Hurt? Back Ache? Check That Monitor

If you're like most developers, you probably devote at least eight hours a day to the care and feeding of your programming. That's great for your career, but not always so terrific for your body.

By Joanne Eglash

How many hours a day do you spend at your computer? Five? Eight? Ten?

You're smart enough to know these terms: carpal tunnel syndrome, repetitive stress injury—even tennis elbow (which my Silicon Valley physician now calls "programmer's elbow"). If you haven't experienced one of these computer-related pains yet, consider yourself fortunate. If you have, well, let me express my sympathy. In either case, consider whether it's time for some improvements in your computer setup. It's important to note, however, that individuals have different needs in terms of what type of setup works for them. You may want to see if your company is willing to bring in an ergonomic specialist who can advise you on matters such as exactly what keyboard style and positioning is best for your needs.

Let me give you a personal example. When new employees and visitors walk by my cubicle at work, they glance in—and stop and stare. Their reaction isn't caused by my appearance (unless I'm having a Hideously Horribly Bad Hair Day). It's my computer setup. You see, I work standing up: my adjustable desk is raised waist-high; my arms rest on my desk, with my wrists resting on a

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June 5, 2000

Taylor Memorial Library

Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio

6 PM Membership Survey

by Rick Lubinski; 6:30 Q&A;

7 PM: Maintaining Your PC

by Gerry Schaefer

From The Deals Guy, *continued from page 1*

number. I signed on right away using that number to update my Norton Antivirus. I think that's cheap protection for a whole year, but granted, a free one is also very good.

Many people sending a virus don't know it happened because some viruses run in the background using the address book. Virus protection is so cheap, even free. Do your friends a favor and acquire the protection --- PLEASE. People don't realize that a virus does not always inform you that it's there. Some even initialize your modem unbeknownst to you and send to every address in your address book (one version of PrettyPark does so every half hour. Happy99 sends an extra email containing its virus, without your knowledge each time you e-mail someone. Be very cautious of ANY .exe attachments to incoming e-mail.

In last month's specials, I thanked PowerQuest for the deals that also listed "Open Linux." I'll bet some folks cringed a bit on that one. I was reminded that it's by Caldera. It didn't say Caldera on the price list. Sorry guys. By the way, the PowerQuest items and the Wizcom pen scanner in last month's column should both still be good.

I'm Featuring Some Reader's Feedback This Month.

I e-mailed Dave Teschner of Hilton Head Island Computing Club after reading his virus article in their newsletter. He acquired a tough version of PrettyPark.exe. He answered my questions and sent me a government site on viruses that you might find interesting --

[<http://www.nipc.gov/nipc/nipcaaw.htm>]. It has information on 40,000 different viruses. His version of PrettyPark (there are three) didn't yield to the normal virus cleaners and required special cleaning instruction acquired off the afore-said site. Dave is experienced, but used a Microsoft certified technician this time.

Other Interesting Feedback

Bob Wexler of Western NY Computer Society tells me that PC Connection and Mac Connection (mail order catalogs) have a policy of offering free ground UPS shipping to all legitimate members of a user group if you mention that when you order. I checked and it's true. Phone 1-800-800-5555 for a catalog.

Murry Davis of the Akron/Canton Users Group sent me the following:

"[www.bargaindog.com] is featured in an article in the Circuits section of the NY Times on page D4 (4-20-00) as a source of hundreds of deals on many, many items."

I checked it out and there are all kinds of interesting items, not just

computer stuff, and I assume things change all the time. It will even do comparison shopping for you.

Feedback In The ISP Dept.

Melvin Turetzky of the Boca PC Users Group e-mailed me a Web site that he says gives unbiased evaluations of ISPs -- [www.dogwolf.seagull.com]. Mel agreed with my good opinion of Mindspring until lately. Since the merger with Earthlink, his confidence faltered because of problems accessing his Web site, but their tech support came through

again. Now I'm having similar problems they have yet to solve.

John Chmura of HAPCUG in Daytona Beach gave me this URL --[<http://nzlist.org/user/freeisp/index.htm>] -- and tells me he has found no less than 48 free ISPs available in the Daytona Beach area with local access numbers. He tried the free Juno service, but says he gets disconnected a lot, which I've heard before.

And this detective work from John Hedinger of Manatee PC User Group:

Concerning K-Mart's "BlueLight.com;" by following and snooping behind the links, it appears that this service is part of [www.spinway.com] free ISP service. Besides [www.bluelight.com], Spinway seems to be providing the software, or engine (and perhaps the advertising) behind a number of free ISP's, including [www.collegeclub.com], [www.nettaxi.com], and [www.webland.org]. Try [www.alladvantage.com]; they actually pay you to be on the Net. And the beat goes on."

Mike Ungerman of Central Florida Computer Society in Orlando sent me this. "FINALLY, there is a FREE Internet access service with e-mail accounts without any banners, pop-up windows, floating bars -- you name it. It works nationwide (in US) with a great amount of local access numbers. How do they do that? Tell you the truth, I do not know. But yes; no banners, no ads, no floating bars -- unlimited and stable connection. So, go grab it!! [<http://freewarehome.com/services/internet.html>]. And while you're at it, the link to the Freeware site which also has some great free downloads. Note I said 'free' and not 'shareware.' There are no registration fees required using the programs located at [<http://freewarehome.com/>]."

Mike also sent this URL for checking out virus alerts and hoaxes --

[<http://www.911viralalert.com/home1/home1.html>].

Want To Plan The Perfect Trip?

This is a subscription service by PlanetWare, but there is some free stuff here too. For the traveler, it can be a great help in planning your trip, especially overseas. The PlanetWare Travel Encyclopedia, the largest, searchable source of travel attraction data on the Web, is on-line at [<http://www.PlanetWare.com>]. The PlanetWare site helps travelers search for travel gems related to their special interests, provides visit decision details and serves as a one-stop source for making judgments about the relative merits of tourist attractions

The PlanetWare Travel Encyclopedia is probably the largest site of its kind on the Internet with over 110,000 pages of attraction data. While the bulk of data is available by monthly subscription at a cost comparable to that of a single paper tour guide book, about 10,000 pages are free. The free data includes all photos, complete details of a featured city of the month (currently 550 attractions of London, England with maps), lists of the top-rated sites, suggested walking and driving tour sequences, plus lists of the 8,000 towns currently featured on the PlanetWare site.

All PlanetWare maps are interactive. Cursoring over a map shows attraction names. Similarly, rolling over a list of attraction names pinpoints each site on the map. Clicking either the name or the pinpoint on the map brings up attraction details.

There's more, but my readers can get a two-month subscription for the price of one month (\$20.00 US). The minimum is two months, maximum is twelve months. If this catches your attention,

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From The Deals Guy, *continued from page 2*

e-mail [info@planetware.com] and provide:

1. The secret word 'dealsguy' in the subject line to qualify,
2. An e-mail address where they can send the password,
3. The name on the credit card you are using,
4. Visa, MC or AmEx,
5. Card number,
6. Expiration date.

They'll then send you your secret password. If you take a two-month

subscription to plan any trip, it should more than pay for itself. I think \$20.00 for two months is cheap for what they offer.

Does Your Computer IQ Fit This Category?

Below is a note from Marcia Laughry, author of the book "Active Directory for Dummies."

"Intimidated by Windows 2000's Active Directory?

"With all the media hype surrounding the release of Windows 2000 Server, you may already be a bit intimidated by the prospect of working with Active Directory. You've seen the presentations and articles discussing trees, forests, sites, and namespaces. Not only must you assimilate a new technology, but you must also pick up an entire new language just to understand what everyone's talking about. But Active Directory doesn't need to be difficult! In this book (Active Directory for Dummies), you find out in clear and simple language what Active Directory is, what it does and what benefits it brings to your organization - and to your job.

"To Order, simply type WIN2000NEWS in the referral field on the Shopping Basket Checkout page.

[<http://www.fatbrain.com/shop/info/0764506595>] from=XUU975]. This is good for 10% off the online price of \$19.95."

That's it for this month. Thanks for all your wonderful feedback. Looks like I've exceeded my word count again. Sorry Editors! Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [dealsguy@mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns.

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either of these will be the case. Modern hard drives are plenty fast, and most manufacturers have remedied the thermal recalibration problem.

Another hard disk problem is fragmentation. As a new hard drive is used, and more and more programs are installed and uninstalled, files created and deleted, and data copied to and moved around on the disk, the drive becomes fragmented. This means that a file or program is not stored on the hard disk in contiguous sectors, but is spread out over several different areas, and must be reassembled before it can be used. When many files or programs are not contiguous on the disc, the disc is "fragmented". When your system accesses the data you want to write to CD, the hard disk heads must move around a lot to pick up the pieces of the fragmented files to assemble them for transfer to the CD, and this slows down the rate at which the hard drive can transfer data, possibly resulting in an underrun.

Other problems, too, can originate from the source drive. Windows and BIOS power management features may be good for the global environment, but in the CD recording environment, they are as destructive as a stagnant pool of pesticide-laced water. Turn off the power management features in your BIOS and in Windows, at least those that attempt to spin down hard disks and CD-ROM drives.

One of the features introduced in Windows 95 and carried over to Windows 98 and Windows 2000 is hard drive read-ahead optimization. Turning this feature off can help to prevent buffer underruns. Here are the steps:

1. Select Settings from the Windows Start menu.
2. Select the Control Panel item.
3. Double-click on System.
4. Click the Performance tab on the right.
5. Click on the File System button near the bottom left of the dialog box.
6. On the first (hard disk) tab you will then see a slider marked "Read-ahead optimization". Slide it all the way to the left to disable read-ahead optimization. When using a SCSI controller, always check the settings to make sure that they are appropriate for CD recording. To change SCSI controller settings, press CTRL-A as your computer is booting, or run the software that came with the controller. The settings recommended by Adaptec technical support can be read at <http://www.adaptec.com/support/configuration/cdrecscsi.html> It can be useful to check and update your drivers from time to time, both SCSI and IDE. Go to the manufacturer's Web site and download and install the latest drivers, especially if you are having problems. The card or motherboard manufacturer would not release new drivers if they did not fix some problem. However, if your recorder and other programs are all working well, there is no need to take a chance on a driver that may do more harm than good. Recording audio requires a faster data transfer rate than data recording. You may be able to record all day at 4x with data, but every time you try audio you get a buffer underrun. This is a sure sign that your data recording transfer rate was pretty close to the edge. Set a lower recording speed and try again. You can record from a network drive in many cases, but success depends on the setup (and speed) of your network. If it works, fine; if it doesn't, you'll need to copy all the data you want to record to a local hard drive.

Trying to record a damaged file may also cause a buffer underrun. Use Windows' hard disk error checking function regularly to find and repair file damage. Trying to record a file which is open or in use during the recording process (such as system files or swap files) may also cause a buffer underrun with Easy CD Creator or Toast; these software applications are not designed to handle open files. Use backup software such as Take Two (included with Easy CD Creator 4 Deluxe) to make full system backups. Recording many small files, especially if they are all in one directory, is a recipe for buffer underruns. Easy CD Creator can take care of this problem, however. Select "CD Layout Properties" from the File menu. Halfway down the General tab you'll see a checkbox with "Single data track only". Deselect that check box, and Easy CD Creator will cache all the small files in your layout to an image file which it will write to CD as a separate track, then it will go on to write the larger files directly from hard disk to CD as usual. Caveat: You will be able to read this disc on a CD-ROM drive just like any other CD, but, because it contains multiple data tracks in a single session, such a disc may not be suitable as a master for factory replication. The nature of the error correction and error detection code on CD-ROM is such that, if you are trying to copy data or audio from a disc that is damaged, scratched, dirty, or otherwise in poor physical condition, the CD-ROM drive will continue to try to reread and recalculate the data through ECC/EDC. This, too, may cause a buffer underrun.

Like any electronic device, a CD recorder can break. A damaged recorder can return many error messages, including buffer underrun, but a damaged recorder may return false messages. Don't assume that every error reported by the software is correct, especially if you suspect that the problem is with the recorder itself.

Arm Hurt?... by Joanne Eglash, *cont. from page 1*

wrist rest. If I become tired, I have an adjustable-height chair on wheels that I can sit in. Typical response from folks who see my cubicle for the first time: "Wow, that's different!" Well, yes, but guess what? Ever since my chiropractor recommended that I try this setup to ease my various computer-related aches and pains, I've felt much better. And after awhile, I've learned to tolerate the gentle teasing (such as, "Gee, I bet that really teaches you to think on your feet!").

The developer in the adjacent cubicle, who sometimes walks around with ice packs on his shoulders and elbow braces on his arms, decided to try my setup. Wrong move. "This doesn't help," he complained. "It makes my back hurt." After the company called in an ergonomics expert, Bob learned that his monitor was too low, his desk was too high, and his habit of placing his mouse pad over by the phone—requiring that he stretch his arm out every time he wanted to use his mouse—was causing much of his pain.

Such assessments from ergonomic experts may be nice for us, but what if your company won't bring in an ergonomics expert? Or perhaps you are a consultant and want to try to improve your home work environment. To find out whether there are any simple steps that you can take, I consulted Professor Alan Hedge, Director of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Laboratory at Cornell University. He gave me plenty of advice.

Monitor That Monitor

Adjust your computer monitor to avoid or reduce potential problems such as eye strain and neck aches. Check the vertical height of the monitor in relation to your eyes. Your eyes should "line up with a point two to three inches below the top of the screen (for most monitors)," said Dr. Hedge. In addition, make sure that your monitor is not tilted too far up or down, and that it is placed directly in front of you, at arm's length when you are seated.

Your Keyboard Is Key

To help prevent problems such as carpal tunnel syndrome, Dr. Hedge recommended a regular keyboard on a negative-tilt keyboard tray with a broad, firm (not hard) flat palm rest (not soft and padded). It should slope down at the angle of your thighs. You may have seen split keyboards—sometimes called "ergonomic keyboards"—but Dr. Hedge recommended those only "for touch typists who are

comfortable with this design." Your hands should be level when your fingers rest on the keys.

Don't Mess Around with That Mouse

In general, for most positions, straight mouse designs are better than curved styles. Place your mouse on a platform "as close to the appropriate hand as possible," about one to two inches above the keyboard, so that your hand is straight. This advice applies no matter what device you use, such as a touchpad or trackball: keep it close. The key is to avoid having your "mousing arm" in an uncomfortable position (for example, twisted to one side).

Play Goldilocks and Try Out That Chair

Make sure your chair feels comfortable and is the right height for your desk. Try it "for a day or two at your workstation." I asked him about the pros and cons of alternating between typing standing up and sitting, as I do. If you want to test out that method, Dr. Hedge recommended that you make certain that your wrists are straight, your neck balanced on your shoulders, and your arms are relaxed. "Alternating between sitting and standing can also help improve circulation and decrease muscle fatigue," he commented.

Wondering about the cost of implementing these ergonomic improvements? "Great ergonomics doesn't need to be expensive," said Dr. Hedges. "Good products often cost less than bad products." He estimated that a negative-slope keyboard tray should cost around \$100–200 and noted that positioning the monitor correctly may require nothing more than using some old phone books to raise it. "Pretty good chairs start around \$300–400; a good mouse will be between \$50–100." And something to keep in mind: the cost is reasonable compared to the costs of an injury, which can total \$30,000 or more!

My favorite ergonomic-related activity is iVillage's "[Keyboard Yoga](#)". You can use it to relieve both physical and mental stress: Just contemplate the person or situation at the office that's irritating you the most and perform the "turkey stretch" while humming "I'm Gonna Wash That Turkey Right Out of My Life"!

Joanne Eglash is the careers columnist for Tech Week magazine and a freelancer for publications and Web sites ranging from Home Office Magazine and Shape magazine to Oxygen.com and HungryMinds.com. In addition, she is a technical writer and editor, and is authoring a book about (and for) Internet entrepreneurs. You can e-mail her at jcaree@ivillage.com.

Treasurer's Report

By Rick Lubinski

ACPCUG Cash Assets on April 25, 2000	
Checking Account	\$1,529.44
Savings Account	\$1,083.89
Total	\$2,613.33
Audit will be performed	

More Stuff on CD-R & CD-RW

By Art McRowe, ACPCUG

There seemed to be a lot of interest in CD-R and CD-RW's at our May meeting. I was unable to answer a lot of good questions, because I have not been doing much music recording. But that's just where there is a lot of interest! Duh! Well, I'm still not doing much music recording—yet.

But I still strongly recommend the Adaptec-run e-mail service. It's free, just go to <http://listserv.adaptec.com>. There are several options, and I suggest the once-a-day compendium. Otherwise, you'll get 60-80 messages a day with a lot of repetition. This is a refereed chat and bulletin board. It may make you think there are only problems out there using CD-RW's, etc. But you can get a lot of information in a hurry.

The premier software package is Easy CD Creator (EZCD). The latest version is 4.02c. If you have bought a version in the stores recently, it is probably still version 4.00 or 4.00a.

1. www.adaptec.com is the site to get the upgrades or buy the complete, latest version on CD—but no discounts or sale prices.
2. Upgrades are from 4.00 to 4.01 to 4.02 to 4.02a, to 4.02b and to 4.02c. What a pain!
3. You **MUST** use version 4.02c for **Windows 2000** and the latest highly rated HP drives.
4. If something goes wrong on any of the installations, the Adaptec recommendation is to completely uninstall EZCD (don't just eliminate files, we're talking about Registry stuff, too) and then start the installation process all over, again!
5. You can see why people bite the bullet and buy the complete CD from Adaptec direct.

Some questions and points brought up from previously mentioned e-mail program:

1. Tyvek envelopes are better than paper envelopes for CD storage. Some people like plastic baggies.
2. EZCD from version 4.01 up, does not use ASPI drivers, even if you're using SCSI drives! Nice not to have all those file references in your Config.sys file. This true for Win95, 98, NT3x, 2000.
3. While the good ol' Sharpie pens seem to work just fine for marking CD's people still talk about being safe and buying a product designed for the task. TDK has a water based-ink pen. And now, Maxell also seems to have one which is more conveniently available at the regular office supply chains.
4. Cellular phones near cables supplying audio to CD's

or external burners can interfere. Turn off phones or keep a good distance away.

5. Some people claim that with Windows 2000 EZCD (v402c) works only when user has complete administrator rights, not just an authorized user.
6. Getting a particular CD-R to be readable by a particular audio machine is somewhat problematic. Trial and error is the rule. It's not the fault of the machines, necessarily, more likely the optical characteristic of the dyes used in a particular disk brand. Remember that some house brands are not from constant suppliers. So house brands may need to be tested individually. Thanks, a lot!
7. 80 minute CD's are getting more common, even more so in Europe. But 80 minute CD's are still problematic—both for burning and in using. Again, test. Make a lot of coasters?
8. ACPCUG member Dick Lash caught this info from the Adaptec e-mail system:

The Truth About Buffer Underrun

by Bob Starrett

<http://www.cdpage.com>

You've probably heard of buffer underruns, and maybe even had them happen to you, but, just in case, let's first explain what a buffer underrun *is* : Whatever speed you select for writing your CD, recording will proceed at exactly that speed until it is finished. This means that the flow of data from its source (hard disk, CD-ROM drive, network, etc.) to the recorder must be at least as fast as the selected recording speed. If you're recording data at 8x speed, your source must be able to keep up a steady data stream of at least 1200 kilobytes/second. If this speed is not maintained, writing halts, and the disc is ruined.

To help prevent this, every CD recorder has some internal RAM memory which temporarily stores data during recording, acting as a "buffer" against slowdowns in the data stream. The buffer stores a small amount of data which it can keep feeding to the recorder until the flow of data from the source resumes. If the interruption is so long that even the buffer is emptied, that's a buffer underrun, which is a major cause of coasters.

I hate to break the bad news, but on a properly configured Pentium (200 MHz or faster) with 32 megabytes of RAM, you will not suffer buffer underruns when recording a CD at 4x -- although a look at the newsgroups or support sites may lead you to believe that CD recording is constantly beset by this problem.

First off, buffer underruns go hand in hand with CD recording. They happen for various reasons and always have, even in the early days when recording speed was limited to 1x and the host machine was likely an ISA-based 16 MHz 386 with 4 or 8 megabytes of RAM. That setup might understandably underrun, although it usually did not.

Today, computers are faster, of course. And so are recording speeds. With 8x prevalent and 12x in the picture, it is easy to see that buffer underruns will continue to be a concern for CD-R/RW users. However, many buffer underruns are not buffer underruns at all, but some other phenomenon that causes the recording software to return that error. This can be the result of recorder command set errors poorly interpreted by software, or a faulty recorder.

We all know that buffer underruns occur when the computer is unable to transfer data to the recorder fast enough to keep the recorder's buffer full. Because recording is a real-time process, the data must flow in a steady uninterrupted stream to make recording successful. Many factors can affect the data stream, and slow it down or interrupt it completely. Some are true enemies of successful recording, and others are not.

Hardware, software, and source media can all affect the recording process. On the hardware side, the culprit is usually the source you are recording from, whether that is the hard drive holding the files to be recorded, or a CD-ROM drive, ZIP, JAZ, or other removable media.

A hard drive can cause buffer underruns if it's extremely slow, or (usually only if it's an older drive) it uses thermal recalibration. Thermal recalibration is a process by which the hard drive "takes a break" from data transfer to adjust itself to compensate for changes in operating temperature. During this "break" no data is transferred. It is unlikely in the modern desktop computing environment that

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Akron-Canton PC Users Group
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**Next Meeting - June 5th,
 Taylor Memorial Library
 Cuyahoga Falls, OH**

First Class Mail

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**July 10, 2000 Meeting,
 Stark Technical College, North Canton
 Special Location July ONLY
 Advanced Tech Center North of Visitors' Parking
 Lot Normally Used—use Tech Center Parking**

June ACPCUG SIGs : All at 200 Charlotte St.
 East Entrance (Annex #8) N. Canton, OH

Intuit SIG *Beginning Quicken* June 6 6-7 pm
 E-Mail SIG *First Time Users* June 6 7-8 pm
 Internet SIG *What People Do on the Internet*
 June 6 8-9 pm
 Windows SIG *Networking 2 computers at Home*
 June 8 6-8 pm
 3COM SIG *Using Palm Pilot* June 8 8-9 pm
 Beginners' SIG (Cuyahoga Falls) June 5 5-6 pm

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Future Events	
Sat., June 17th, 2000	Peter Trapp Computer Show at Cuyahoga Co. Fairgrounds, Berea, OH, west on Bagley Rd. off I-71.
Sun., June 18, 2000	Peter Trapp Computer Show at Tadmor Shrine Temple, Akron, OH off Arlington Rd & I-77.