

Ken's Korner

Postal Service Plans E-Projects, Including Permanent E-mail Addresses by Ken Fermoye

Anticipating that electronic bytes will take bigger and bigger bites out of first-class mail in future, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) is readying new and varied electronic mail services for Americans. A major one would assign e-mail addresses to most people.

One of the new services could notify customers by e-mail about an incoming bill or package, which they could then reroute to another address. Another proposal, set to begin a three-year consumer test in September, would allow customers to send e-mails to a post office to be printed and delivered as first-class mail. A third program, already available, lets customers pay bills online through the Postal Service's Web site.

Postal Service spokeswoman Sue Brennan called the e-projects "a way for customers to choose how they want to get their correspondence."

The new services will be added

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From the Dealsguy, by Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer User Group

Well, the Best Buy story is over, but I can't talk about it. In order to settle, I was required to sign a nondisclosure agreement that my attorney says is standard. I refused at first, but finally agreed because of a conversation recently with another attorney who told me something disturbing.

He mentioned that our Florida lawmakers have passed legislation preventing you from collecting for attorney fees if you sue and warned that I'd better take what I could get. If this is true, it's like the song says, "there goes the little guy." I decided to settle the best way I could if it was within reason. I disliked the length of time it took, and the attitude I received (I have letters) until settlement day, but it's over.

You Dirty Rat - er -- I Mean -- Spy

What if there's "Spyware" hidden in your computer sending out information periodically about your Web travels. That can happen and the spy can actually be hidden in a shareware program you might be using, or might even be placed on your hard drive unbeknownst to you while you were on the Web (without a firewall).

Some shareware programs containing Spyware are named in an article written by Don Singleton in "APCUG Reports" about "Aureate." He suggests you go to Steve Gibson's Web site [<http://www.grc.com/optout.htm>] and download OptOut to look for and clean that garbage from your hard drive. By the time you read this, there may be a charge for a newer version that finds more, but it's worth it in my opinion. It found nothing on my machine.

Users Group members might enjoy reading the quarterly APCUG Reports I spoke of. It's interesting, so log on to [<http://www.apcug.org>] to find it. You need the Acrobat Reader. **New Web Pages on My Web Site** [<http://>

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September 11, 2000

Stark Technical College,
North Canton, Ohio

6 PM: E-Bay & Online Auctions by Sandy
Davis; 6:45 Q&A

7:30 PM: Accessing Your E-mail Away
from Home by Gerry Schaefer

The Deals Guy, Bob Click

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www.dealsguy.com]

I sometimes get product announcements and feel their interest might be limited, so I tend not to use them all in the column. I have uploaded some new pages to my Web site containing some of these announcements for your perusal. Take a look to see if there is anything that catches your eye.

They are edited a bit (originally meant for users groups) because of a Web site's availability to the general public. I'll keep updating for a few weeks until I get them caught up. Some are older, but I thought they might be of interest. Remember that these are just announcements I received; however, there may also be a "deal" there from time to time, but ending too soon for the column.

What's That You Say - High-speed Web Service For Free?

How many of you have checked out [<http://www.freedsl.com>]? Dave Gerber of the Sarasota PC User Group sent the URL to me, but has not replied telling me if he tried it. I checked the Web site and it looks like it's nationwide with no monthly fee, although it looks to me like you must buy the modem for \$199.00.

Of course you realize that DSL is not available in all locations because of phone line limitations. I didn't see details about the installation. I've heard there is a catch, so if you check it out, look carefully.

Game Addicts - Attention

Ken Winograd is the author of a game called "Hang 2000" and is offering user group members a special discount. It's a new take on the classic hangman word-guessing game you may have played when you were kids. It features colorful, nonviolent graphics, digitized sounds, dozens of built-in word categories, thousands of words, unlimited lists of your own words, and much more.

Hang2000 is "secretly educational." It has a new "knowledge area" including information associated with the guessed word or phrase. For example, if the word chosen is from the States or Countries category, the knowledge area will show the capital of the State or Country. If the category is Authors or Composers, the knowledge area will show facts about, or famous works of, the author or composer. You can also make your own lists (unlimited in number) and include your own associated information.

There's more info and I have the "secret" URLs

for users group people. Mums the word on these URLs. Users group pricing and other details are available there. Since I'm not a game person, I have not tried it.

For Windows Users Group Members:

[<http://www.winograd.com/pcug.html>] Or for more info (available to everyone):

[<http://www.winograd.com>]

Internet Call Waiting, For Cheapskates With Only One Phone Line

BuzMe is Internet Call Waiting enabled with callerID and voicemail. It lets people with a single phone line receive incoming phone calls while online and tells them who is calling. It does that by deploying a small pop-up on the user's desktop. They can then type a reply that is read to the caller, disconnect and take the call, send the call to voicemail, or reject it.

BuzMe's free voicemail box provides the same features as a voicemail offering from a telephone company. There are both free and \$4.95/month levels of service. If you would be interested in trying BuzMe service, visit their Web site at <http://www.buzme.com>], register and download it. The full service will be free to users for 30 days.

Free Software for Linux - From "Corel"

The following are excerpts from a "Corel Clips" received recently, Corel's e-mail newsletter. "The Latest on Corel & Linux(R)

Free Download of Corel PHOTO-PAINT(R) for Linux(R) now available -- CorelDRAW(R) for Linux Coming Soon!

We're happy to announce that Corel PHOTO-PAINT for Linux), Corel's photo editing, image-composition and painting application, is now available as a free download. It lets you create incredible special effects with Artistic Media brushes, filters, precision retouching features and more. Whether for print or the Web, your images will be captivating! Download Corel PHOTO-PAINT for Linux at <http://www.linux.corel.com>].

The exciting features included in this download are just a hint of what will be included in CorelDRAW Graphics Suite for Linux, slated for release after this summer. Stay tuned for more details in the near future. I checked and these files are very large.

Relax In Your Hammock While Your Lawn Is Being Mowed

What's that you say, professional lawn care cost too much!! No, no, no, that's not what I'm talking about. It's a "ROBOT" lawn mower. You know how much I love gadgets.

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Ken's Korner

Electronic Postal Service

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to Internet-oriented offerings the Postal Service already has in place. It began testing a kind of certified e-mail service in 1998. Called PostECS, it sends electronic receipts for contracts and other important documents transmitted over the Internet.

Online Stamps Popular

Last year, USPS rolled out its heralded system that makes postage available online. The Postal Service says 280,000 customers have printed \$22.6 million worth of "online stamps" since July 1999, but the service has yet to deliver a profit.

Both of these existing services do show promise for future growth, however, which may be critical to the USPS in coming years.

Considering that e-mail will soon take huge bites out of USPS first-class business, these moves, and more, are needed to move postal service into the 21st century. The post office itself predicts that in 2003, first-class mail service, now a \$35 billion business and its top revenue producer, will begin an unprecedented decline at the hands of booming e-mail and online billing services.

Benjamin Franklin, our first postmaster and a great innovator himself, would surely applaud these new efforts, but probably would be critical of the Postal Service's slowness in facing up to challenges of new technologies. Banks, credit unions and many other private services already offer bill-paying services, and have for some time. Is it too late for the USPS to capture a piece of this pie? Judge for yourself.

Under its own online billing system, the Postal Service charges customers \$6 per month to send 20 electronic transactions, or \$2 per month and 40 cents apiece for unlimited transactions. How does that compare with bill-paying services already available to you?

The e-mail-to-paper system would cost about 41 cents per message - eight cents more than current 33-cent postage. Is it worth it? My personal opinion is that it might be in some instances, but it would depend on how much faster the Postal Service can get time-critical correspondence to recipients than would be the case with normal first-class mail.

(Mail2000, a Bethesda, Md., company (mail2kinc.com) already offers a service that translates e-mail messages into first-class mail, plus a variety of other mail-related services. Aimed more at businesses and other volume mailers than indi-

viduals, it claims it can save time and money, compared to the USPS.

Your Own 'Mailbox'

The e-mailbox proposal, whereby virtually every American would be assigned a free e-mail address corresponding to his or her street address shows more promise.

Under this system, customers could simply link the service to any present e-mail address they have, or opt for a special online postal box. Customers could then get an e-mail address using their initials, followed by their nine-digit ZIP code and the last two numbers of their street address - with "usps.com" tacked at the end.

For instance, John Doe, 1234 Main St., Los Angeles, CA 91365-4004 would get the e-mail address: jd91365400445usps.com. I know, it's cumbersome and tough to rattle off from the top of your head! But it also is unique enough to minimize duplication problems. This would eliminate the need to change addresses when you change Internet Service Providers, but using e-mail services such as Bigfoot, Hotmail or Altavista mail provide a similar benefit.

It's no news that Americans are avid e-mailers. A new study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that more than 90 million people have Internet access. Of those, about 84 million use e-mail regularly, while 16 million have used some sort of online banking service.

E-commerce gurus have mixed feelings postal e-mail proposal. "They're in catch-up mode," was a typical reaction. Several experts I talked to pointed out that most people apt to use the service already have e-mail - and that many of the rest probably wouldn't log on for the tracking service.

"As schemes go, this one isn't bad," said one representative of a Santa Monica, Calif.-based technology research firm. "It absolutely makes sense - the Postal Service's business, and expertise, is mail delivery, and e-mail is just another form of mail. If the USPS ignored this new mailing technology it would insure that it would become obsolete eventually. Any steps it can take to work within the new framework should help it survive."

The Deals Guy, Bob Click

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"Friendly Robotics" makes a mower that looks like a big yellow bug running around mowing your lawn all by itself. I'm not kidding! The first thing to do is stake down a "perimeter wire" around the zones you wish it to mow so it knows where to stop, hook up the perimeter switch, charge the mower battery and you are in business. After some initial calibration, just run it into position and press start. Then sit back and relax with your favorite beverage, read the paper, have a snooze, or whatever because the lawnmower knows what to do, even if it bumps into something.

Installing the perimeter wire is easy (just stake it down on top of the ground). If you didn't do it right, it's easily changed. The machine is a 21" cut with three rotary blades and can mow a lawn of 2500 to 3200 sq. ft. on a battery charge. It starts by mowing (also mulches) around the perimeter, then back and forth for the duration you program it for. You'll find you must mow more often, but who cares, you're not doing it! You can go back inside and watch TV if you prefer. Can you spell "It's Miller Time?"

There's a "Sizzlin' Summer Sale" on their Web site ending July 31, 2000, but they have extended it just for the Deals column through September 31, 2000. Check mower details at [<http://www.friendlyrobotics.com>]. The MSRP is \$795, but this sale gets you a \$100 rebate. That's \$50 off the MSRP + free S&H. Also, a \$100 gift certificate for a national retailer or home improvement store bringing the total rebate to \$200, but I'm not sure about how long for that coupon after July. If you have a problem ordering, ask for Scott Slaughter at Friendly Robotics. Also offers a money-back guarantee.

I'm working out some problems using mine as I close the column so check my Web site for further details. However, right now it looks like a "keeper." Maybe with next year's model you can just yell, "go mow the lawn" without even getting out of your chair.

That's it for this month. 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.

WORD2000 - Addition to the FAQ Files - by Richard G. Lubinski

My copy of Word 2000 recently developed an odd problem based on its failure to communicate correctly with a Cannon BJC 5100 bubble jet printer. Each time I tried to print I got an "out of paper" error message. Adjusting the paper and amount of paper had no affect on the problem. Reinstalling the Cannon print driver file also did not solve the problem. Playing with the print driver properties did not resolve this communications problem with the printer. Other applications like MS Excel 2000, MS Wordpad all worked fine. After isolating the problem to MS Word 2000, I called MS Tech Support.

MS Tech Support tied most of the same solutions I previously attempted with the same result. We tried loading the 'generic' print driver which did not get around the problem. I finally loaded WORD directly from the Start/Run line and it printed OK since we were by passing some of the Window98 files. This determined that the NORMAL.DOT template file was corrupted. I renamed the file '1normal.dot' so it could not be found and loaded Word2000. It worked correctly from that point forward. This problem could have been solved another way by re-installing WORD2000 since it should have recreated the NORMAL.DOT file.

Print the Day or Month in English (not a number) in Excel by Art McRowe

At the July meeting during Rick Lubinski's Excel 101 talk, we stumbled on trying to express a day of the week or a month in words, not numbers.

The trick, of course (much later found), is to use the Text(myDate,"ddd") function:

```
Set myDate = 02/17/1901 then
Text(myDate,"mmm,dd, yyyy") = Feb 17,
1901
```

```
Weekday(myDate) = 1
Text(Weekday(myDate),"ddd") = Sun
Text(Weekday(myDate),"dddd") = Sunday
```

Interestingly, the Month function is good only for getting the number of the month:

```
Month(myDate) = 2
Text(myDate,"mmmm") = February
Text(Month(myDate),"mmm") = Jan (Go Figure!)
```

Have You Checked Out the Web Site?

By Frank Ramsey, ACPCUG President and web master

The title says it all, have you looked at your club's web site recently? If not, check out www.acpcug.org.

If you have visited the site recently you've noticed some changes. One change has been to introduce a consistent look and feel to the site. Click on a map and you get the map within the same look and feel page as home.

Another change has been to increase the content. We now have recent newsletters and presentations from the meetings on line. Look for more content.

Content has been moved on the home page to better catch your eye the first time.

A counter has been added to the home page to let everyone know how popular the site is. The counter is intelligent. It counts one hit per connection to an ISP. So visiting the page 10 times on one dialup connection counts as one hit, not 10.

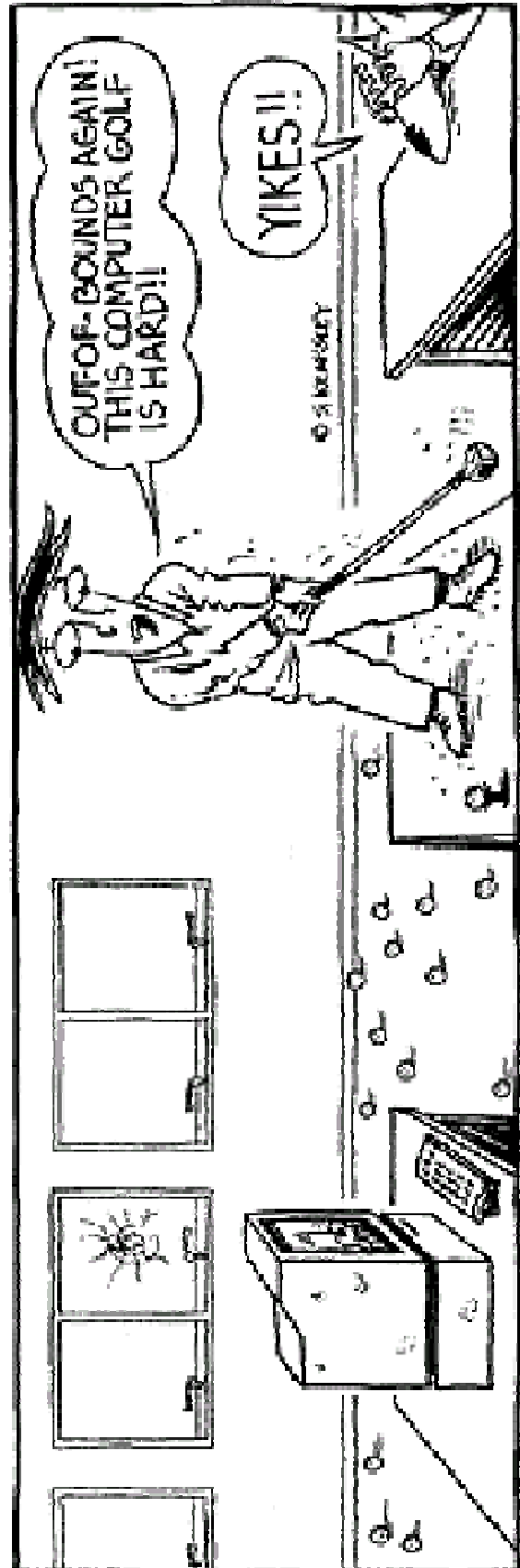
The club now accepts credit card payments for dues, either new or renewal. Click on Application for Membership on the home page. Then click on Signup by Credit Card. Credit card payment uses PayPal. PayPal is a service that allows PayPal members to mail money to other PayPal member. There is no additional cost to you or the receiver of the money for using a credit card. If you're not a PayPal member, use the icon on the Signup by Credit Card page to create your PayPal account. PayPal will credit your account with \$5.00, just for signing up for PayPal using the icon on the Signup by Credit Card page.

Behind the scenes, the web site has been re-organized to make it easier to support.

The future of the web site includes a redesign to make it easier to navigate. Look for this to happen in about two months, maybe sooner if I get carried away!

If you've got suggestions for the web site, email me at aframsey@yahoo.com.

Dedicated to Dick Lash by Art McRowe who's even worse!



Akron-Canton PC Users Group
 PO Box 2151
 Akron Oh 44309-2151

Next Meeting - Sept. 11th
 Stark State Technical
 College

First Class Mail

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October 2, 1999 Meeting,
 Taylor Memorial Library, Cuyahoga Falls
 Tentative Program
 DSL Service Provider
 Excel 102 by Rick Lubinski

All SIGs at 200 Charlotte Street (East Entrance) Annex #8 Reservations Required

Call 330-499-5623

INTUIT SIG - Reservation Required.

Subject: **Beginning Quicken**

Tuesday September 5th 6:00pm - 7:00pm

E-MAIL SIG - Reservation Required.

Subject: **First time users**

Tuesday September 5th 7:00pm - 8:00pm

INTERNET SIG - Reservation Required.

Subject: **What people do on the Internet**

Tuesday September 5th 8:00pm - 9:00pm

WINDOWS SIG - Reservation Required.

Subject: **Networking 2 PC's at Home**

Thursday September 7th 6:00pm - 8:00pm

3COM SIG - Reservation Required.

Subject: **Using a Palm Pilot**

Thursday September 7th 8:00pm - 9:00pm

Club Officers

President	Frank Ramsey	699-4711	aframsey@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Rick Lubinski (1999)	928-7179	lubinski@bright.net
VP			
Secretary	Walt Ruthenburg (2000)	283-7867	wruthenburg@usa.net
Program Chairman	Murray Davis (2000)	440-248-0021	murray5050@yahoo.com
Newsletter Editor	Arthur W. McRowe	666-3189	amcrowe@bright.net
Software Librarian	Gerry Schaefer	499-5623	schaefer@bright.net

Future Events

Sun., Sept. 17th, 2000
 Peter Trapp Computer Show at Tadmor Temple, Akron, OH