

ACPCUG

**MrExcel.com, Mr. InkJet and TurboTax & Alternatives
Triple Header Program February 4th!
"This program alone, was worth a year's dues!"**



**"You can save 90% on your inkjet ink expenses by reloading your own cartridges"
David Kluter.**

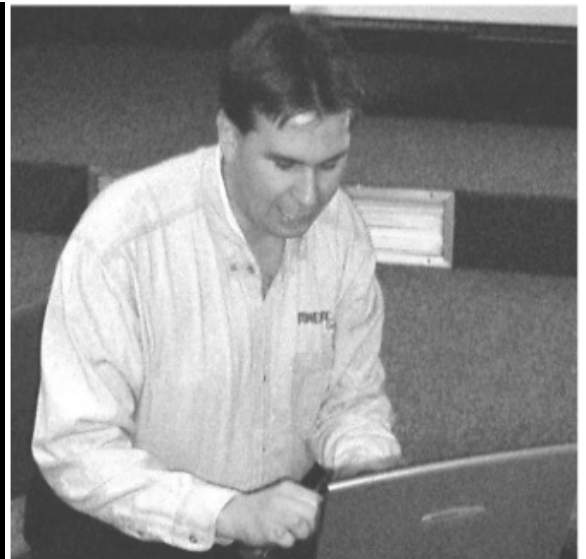
**"Lot's of good choices for little cost right here in the Sunday ads."
Rick Lubinski, ACPCUG, (not a CPA).**

The major ins 'n outs of MS Excel Spreadsheets. "That's cool," MrExcell, Bill Jelen of MrExcel.com, a web site we all should visit!

March 4, 2002

**Stark Technical College,
North Canton, Ohio**

**MS Publisher & This Newsletter - Art McRowe
MS Knowledge Base, CD & Live - Frank Ramsey**



The DealsGuy by Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

*I like Caligari software for the unique effects it offers. Last year they began sending me e-mail marketing messages for their products, often a special offer. When they came out with iSpace, I bought their introductory special. Two months later they introduced an updated version of iSpace, but if I wanted it, I had to buy it. I was upset and didn't buy it. I complained, but to no avail.

Several months later, I purchased a special they offered on version 5.1 of trueSpace with some plugins bundled (how soon we forget). Not even a month later, they introduced trueSpace 5.2, an updated version that I would have to pay \$99 for if I wanted it. I thought that was unfair and complained to their marketing department, saying that other vendors usually have a grace period for a free upgrade if you have just purchased their software, but it fell on deaf ears. I feel their marketing tactics are very unethical and I have now written off buying anything more from Caligari. I just thought I'd alert you to my experience.

Lots of Feedback

I was very surprised by the response I received from my comments about the Sept. 11 tragedy and the aftermath. My thanks to everybody who took the time to say they agreed with my comments about profiling. I was surprised at how many (or a family member) were directly affected by profiling.

New Group Listing

The Islander Computer User Group is using this column and is now listed on my distribution page. They are a small group located in Lake Havasu City, AZ. No URL so far though. Also, Santa Anna Valley PC Group has added their name to the list of groups carrying the Deals column on my distribution page. If your group is not listed there please let me know, even if you do not carry my column.

Still Good

Word Smith for the Palm is still good. Go to [<http://www.bluenomad.com>] to order. The Omega Frame should still be good. To order, e-mail your request to George Johnson [jenco@pacbell.net] and mention the "DealsGuy column." By this time, I'm sure the eVe st deal is dead because it was only good until supplies lasted. Unfortunately, other offers helped to deplete their inventory fast, so I'm sure most of my readers missed out. I don't understand why it was just for the present supplies, but that was the rule.

He did not tell me it was a closeout, and I've not received a new offer to replace the old one under the circumstances.

Two readers had problems with PC Pinpoint. Be SURE to type DealsGuy (one word) in the password box for the discount. They tell me they are very committed to resolving your problem or your money back. Keep their techs at it until they get it fixed, if a fix is possible.

Not A Good Month For Deals

Vendors completely ignored me this month except for one who contacted me about an offer. What I thought were some good leads for deals from vendors I talked to at Comdex are duds so far. Four vendors I've since tried to contact have completely ignored me by not returning my phone calls or e-mail. Another marketing manager hung up on me when I was trying to explain my column to him. I guess they don't need any help.

Reminds me of a vendor I was making my pitch to at Comdex. His product was a solution called "Wipe Out" to repair scratches on CDs. He quickly interrupted to show me write-ups in several magazines saying he already has lots of exposure and the last thing he needed was more media exposure by (insults withheld). It didn't take me long to exit that vendor's booth. It was one thing to tell me he was not interested, but quite another to impugn my integrity and use those comments in front of my wife. A friend standing near was also dumbfounded.

Do Your Income Taxes FREE

It seems I always forget Tax Act at this time of year, but I'm belatedly reminding you about the free income tax software from Second Story Software. There is also an upgrade version. The paid version is only \$19.95 and does offer better features. Download your choice at [<http://www.taxact.com>] and I'd say to get it done soon.

Ink Jet Your Ink Jet

Susie McLean of Inksell.com contacted me about offering my readers a discount on their products. I know nothing about prices for this type of product, so you are on your own here. However, the Web site seems very professional and it sounds like they offer quality product. Here is Suzie's message: "InkSell.com is a discount printing Supply Company that specializes in cartridges for all makes of ink jet and laser printers, solid ink printers, copiers, and fax machines. We sell brand names, new (not remanufactured) compatible cartridges, and refill kits. Our compatible cartridge quality is certified to match that of the manufacturer and our prices are up to 70 and 80% less. We would be happy to offer your readers a 10% discount on purchases at our online store.

"A discount coupon code will be valid through

(Continued on page 3)

The DealsGuy, Bob Click

(Continued from page 2)

April 30, 2002. To redeem the 10% discount, (not valid with any other discount or offer), simply visit our site, [<http://www.inksell.com>], place your order and continue to 'check out' where there will be a blank to enter the discount coupon code (D0302). The discount will be automatically calculated. Should anyone have questions or need assistance, phone customer service at 1-800-255-0483, or send e-mail to [help@inksell.com]."

Here are more items I found in the September issue of the Macon Users Group's newsletter.

Free HTML Editor

1st Page 2000 is a professional HTML Editor that you can use to create a very good Web site. I understand there are over 450 Javascripts and it supports just about all the latest Web languages. They say it has won 14 Web awards and has been rated one of the top three HTML editors of all time. It contains a novice interface along with an expert one, and, get this ... I'm told it offers live tech support and user forums.

You'll find it at [<http://www.evrsoft.com>] where you can find more information and download it if you like.

Make Annoying Popup Windows Go Away

Popup Killer is a godsend if you hate those ads popping up all the time when you're on line. They are annoying and we can do without them. This is another one I found in the Macon Users Group newsletter. If this concept interests you, go to [<http://software.xfx.net/utilities/popupkiller/>]. It's freeware, but the article I read recommends you send the author \$7.00 to help keep him in beer and

pretzels. I'm not sure if that would be the author of popup killer or the author of that article!

Clean Up Your Mail Before Forwarding (Another From Macon Users Group newsletter)

I'm sure you've received e-mail that has been forwarded several times and filled with all kinds of annoying marks. StripMail is just the ticket. It cleans up all those angle brackets and other marks from the e-mail before you forward it on. StripMail will also format text into paragraphs and change the right margin by indenting. You'll find StripMail at [<http://www.dsoft.com.tr/stripmail>]. It's free and only 265 KB.

SPAM Punisher (From Macon Users Group newsletter)

SPAM Punisher is an anti-spam tool that makes it easy for you to find out the address of a spammer's Internet Service Provider, then generate and send complaints. If an ISP receives enough complaints generated by SPAM Punisher, he may close Internet access to a spammer. Tech TV's The Screensavers recommended it as "a free download of the day." You can download the utility from [<http://biosolutions.hypermart.net/>].

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 [Bobclick@dealsguy.com].

Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns. Also, there are interesting articles from user group newsletters on my "Articles of Interest" page for viewing or downloading.

To Be or Not USB 2? *(Continued from page 5)*

tem, it will run, albeit at USB 1.1 speed. (Blood from a turnip?) But if your system, hubs and cables are up to USB 2.0 specifications, then you get up to 480 Mb/s speed from your USB 2.0 appliances. Your USB 1.1 devices will operate properly at their 12 Mb/s rated speed.

USB 2.0 cable and hubs will be initially a little more expensive. USB 2.0 devices will have to meet tougher standards on handling the higher frequencies required. This will be mostly due to decreasing capacitive interaction between wires and devices. **So be aware of the logo for your needs.**

Note: this is the old logo of the lower speed USB 1.1. Buyers beware. I suspect that within a year or so that all hubs and ca-



bles will be USB 2.0 compliant, and we won't have to worry about it.

Cable Length: The maximum cable length is "only" 5 m. (~16.3 ft.). That includes all the hubs, extensions, etc. There is really no cheating. No amplifying boxes will work, either. It's not signal strength, but rather signal shape. The web site below recommends turning to USB translators: going from USB to Ethernet or wireless communications devices. There is also promise of other traditional long distance signal techniques that are beyond these network protocols.

USB 2.0 for networking? I'm not recommending this yet. Certainly, USB 2.0 is plenty fast enough for at least home and small office networking. But why use USB 2.0? Ethernet cards are now cheap

(Continued on page 6)

To Be or Not USB2? By Art McRowe, ACPCUG



OK, it's a corny title, but the subject is a real question with only one real answer! **YES!**

If you're running

Win95 or earlier, you can't enjoy the advantages of USB. Period. But USB, alone, is a good enough reason to upgrade to at least Win98SE. Built-in is support for USB 1.1, which is the old standard USB that got supported by so many peripherals. The excitement now is about USB 2.0 (at 480 Mb/s), which is 40-fold faster than USB 1.1 (at 12 Mb/s). USB 2.0 is even somewhat faster than IEEE1394 (generic for Apple's FireWire®).

Old (v.1.1) USB was the catchall serial port to plug in all sorts of personal peripherals and run with them. Plug them in, they're ready! Through with them, unplug 'em and they're gone! No turning off the machine and rebooting! (Hot-swapping) Finally!

Examples: The best USB device is the mouse or trackball. They're faster and more accurate than the PS-2 or serial versions. Better yet, they free up an IRQ (interrupt request), which can be scarce in modern computers. I was blown off my chair when I got my Epson scanner last year with USB. Its highest resolution took only 60 sec. to scan. Modern printers are now ALL USB capable because they're much faster than the parallel port versions. Also nice: Forget to turn the printer on *before* you rebooted? No problem, just turn the printer on at any time, and the operating system brings it online ready to print.

Gamers! USB makes your input devices faster, more accurate and detachable when you're through. Flying MS Flight Simulator, plug in your joystick or wheel-yoke (and you can get foot operated stuff for the rudder and ailerons). When you're through, unplug and you're ready for a regular PC, again. Again, you're faster, meaner and more accurate in DOOM®, etc. with a USB armament module you can plug in and out at your desire.

Portable PC or too small a box(?): We've longed for the fast add on external hard drive, CD burner or DVD drive upgrade with a simple USB plug in. But they were slow. USB 1.1 was **SLOW** for these fast movers of pixel or data. **Rejoice! USB 2.0 is here!** New motherboards have it! USB ports (some) are now brought to front of the PC for easy temporary access. New USB keyboards have a couple USB port outlets on them for easy access. Those of us without the latest and greatest need to buy a

\$30-50 card (or get it free with a high speed peripheral) and plug it into any ol' PCI slot in back of our machine.

Back to boring history! *In the beginning* there were serial ports and parallel ports. These were single device ports that controlled IO (input-output). We usually got two serial ports and one parallel port with each motherboard or computer. You were booked up with a mouse and external modem and a printer (traditionally attached to the parallel port). Then IBM came up with the PS-2 ports for the keyboard and mouse. More ports, but more IRQ's used. We could free up a serial port by using an internal modem, a good idea for a lot of reasons. But there were always interrupt request (IRQ) problems until we got PCI slot motherboards in the late Intel 486 era. Back then the only way to get high-speed connections outside the PC case was to use SCSI, which was cumbersome (to some) and expensive (to all). SCSI worked, but it was nothing more than a high-speed parallel port with 8 wires for 8 simultaneous bits of information. It also had 8 or 9 wires interspersed to give ground potential nest to each signal wire. To increase speed, they went to SCSI-2, which had – you guessed it, 16 wires for info and more wires for grounding. This is why SCSI cables are wide and flat and bulky or round but very thick and inflexible. There were other issues that come with relatively high frequency signals like termination, and with peripheral identification, etc.

History repeating itself, the engineers at Apple Computer came up with several innovations to put together a very high-speed serial connection between computer motherboard and peripherals. They got patents and called it FireWire®. It was the fastest pony in town, but if you wanted to use it, Apple wanted a significant fee. Places like Taiwan and Hong Kong were not going to pay for this without a significant demand on each and every motherboard they made. Digital Camcorders with hours and gazillions of pixels needed some relief in getting movies from camera to computer. These graphics people were a well-served niche by Apple. Expensive cameras and graphics already put them beyond the realm of an inexpensive PC.

There were many other peripherals like digital (still) cameras, external CD-ROMs and CD-RW, external hard drives, to name a few that could also benefit with faster communication than a serial or parallel port. This larger volume market was not going to pay Apple's special fee to enjoy faster information transfer.

Intel saw a market and understood the potential and the price structure. Its patents were humble and Intel made a cheap chip and a very cheap li-

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

cense for any board manufacturer to incorporate on their motherboard. Chips worked, drivers were a little loopy-goopy. Intel and their "partners" tightened it up a bit with USB 1.1, and the world has grown to love it. USB 1.1 just began to prove itself in all these input situations where the PC is waiting for us to do something.


Furthermore, USB is expandable! The protocol allows 255 devices to work together. Some devices can be plugged in serially, one after another. But most use a device called a hub. Four or 7 device hubs are common. The hub plugs into a USB socket on the PC and the 110-volt wall socket, then peripherals plug into the hub.

Going right for the jugular vein, Intel announced a faster chip and standard, USB 2.0. A year later, scoffers were still saying that Apple had the high performance market sewn up. And a cheap USB 2.0 was vaporware. I admit I had a jaundiced view myself. Microsoft still did not include USB 2.0 drivers in its recent string of new operating systems. Boy, is it nice to be wrong in this case! Even Microsoft now has a system driver for its Windows XP. (We have to use other drivers for other Windows versions.)

Why the 110-volt socket? The cool thing about USB is that it will supply up to 500 ma. (1/2 amp.) to each device plugged in. 500 ma. is plenty to run small devices like a mouse or keyboard, modem, etc. No, your scanner, 100 Gb hard drive or

CD burner will need to have its own power supply. This is a great development, because today, many devices easily run on 500 ma. I have seen kids with 3 and 5 cameras around their monitor to get a panoramic view of their ...

Please note, serial to USB and PS-2 to USB adaptors are available. But just buying one doesn't work. A number of modern devices (mice, keyboards, game controllers) come with these adaptors. It is a practice for the interim until USB is ubiquitous. (Soon, I predict!) But these devices have drivers and are setup to work with both systems. Unfortunately, my old mouse just can't smell the cheese through the USB adaptor. My new mouse works fine either on PS-2 or USB. Throw away the adaptor and plug directly into USB! *Tom's Hardware* web site has tested and found the same mice are faster and more accurate on USB (even 1,1)!

OK, you want USB 2.0! How do you get it? Buy a new system and get 4 outlets, or buy a PCI card and install it. I just noted that a well-regarded Adaptec card was available for \$45 mail order. The certifying logo to look for is  Why is this important? Because USB 2.0 is backwards compatible with USB 1.1, your USB 2.0 device will work side by side with your USB 1.1 devices. Since they will work, what's wrong? Well, if you plug a USB 2.0 device into a USB 1.1 hub, cable or sys-

(Continued on page 3)

ACPCUG PC Training Courses

Your ACPCUG is working with AMHA (Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority) in sponsoring and providing equipment and professional instruction in the use and application of IBM-compatible computers. These courses are available **FREE** to ACPCUG members on an available-space basis. February classes are filled, but repeats are available at later dates. Evening classes may be available by popular demand later in the Spring of 2002.

Make reservations by phoning 330-376-7859. Additional info at 440-248-0021.

This is an excellent reason for friends and associates to become members and get profession introduction to PC's and applications.

Memberships available by contacting ACPCUG Treasurer, Joe Krause at phone 330-454-3613

ACPCUG-AMHA COURSE SCHEDULE

Mar. 7, 14, 21, 28	9:30am – 11:30am Word Processing I (margins, tabs, columns, mail merge) 12:30pm – 2:30pm Internet II (research, freebies, comparative shopping, online greeting cards)
Apr. 4, 11, 18, 25	9:30am – 11:30am Word Processing II (create greeting cards, flyers, brochures) 12:30pm – 2:30pm Introduction to the Internet
May 2, 9, 16, 23	9:30am – 11:30am Internet II 12:30pm – 2:30pm Introduction to Computers

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**Next Meeting - March
 4th , 2002
 Stark State Technical
 College**

First Class Mail

**In This
 Issue...**

Page 1 – **TRIPLE
 Header Feb. Program
 Upgrading to Windows
 XP**, by Steve Bass
 Page 4—**To Be or Not USB2?**
 by Art McRowe

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(Continued from page 3)

enough and work well with shared IRQ's on PCI
 cards that I don't see any reason to burden a USB
 port with an Ethernet port converter. I'm just a little
 surprised that we don't see more Ethernet chips on
 regular motherboards (now I'm off the soapbox).
 Why aren't we all using USB 2.0?

I strongly recommend the site: www.usb.org
 also fish around for the more technical sub pages.

Club Officers				Future Events	
President	Murray Davis (2003)	440-248-0021	murray5050@yahoo.com	Sun., Mar. 17th 2002	Peter Trapp Computer Show, Tadmor Shrine Temple 3000 Krebs Drive off I-77 At Arlington Rd Exit 120
Vice President	Frank Ramsey (2004)	330-699-4711	aframsey@yahoo.com	Sat- Sun. Mar. 16- 17 2002	Dayton Computerfest Hara Conference and Exhi- bition Center 1001 Shiloh Springs Road, Dayton, OH
Club Outreach	Rick Lubinski (2002)	330-928-7179	lubinski@bright.net	May 17- 19, 2002	Dayton Hamvention, Hara Conference Center, 1001 Shiloh Springs Road, Dayton, OH
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