

ACPCUG Newsletter

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May 2004

Akron-Canton PC Users Group

**From The DealsGuy for June,
2003, by Bob Click, Greater Orlando
Computer Users Group**

Thanks for your messages about my income tax problems. At my reader's suggestions and my own curiosity, I returned to the AARP volunteers to see what was wrong. Since I took the printout of my TaxAct version, they quickly compared the numbers and found that the one prepared by their person was incorrect. She had miscalculated the ratio of income to Social Security received and we actually did have to pay on some of our SS income. I was glad to know I had made the right decision. Anybody can make a mistake and I'm just glad I checked it all out before I sent it in.

I've had great response from my doctor item. Two of them were PAs and it is unfortunate that they missed the entire point of the item, which was that I feel a patient should be completely informed about who they are going to see and be completely aware. I didn't mean that PAs and NPs are incompetent. They both did agree that they are NOT doctors. Many readers completely agreed with my view, but surprisingly I also had many negative responses about doctors in general. A few were soured on doctors and preferred seeing their PAs, and knew the status. The messages have been very interesting.

***Beware If You Remodel A Dell**

I read this in the Macon Users Group's newsletter and thought you might like to

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know about it. Dell computer is a very popular choice and many people own them. What if you decide to upgrade your Dell's power supply or motherboard? You could easily fall into a trap if you are inexperienced since these parts in a Dell are proprietary. Seems that several wiring connections are reversed. You are advised to do your homework. Either get the parts from Dell, or replace "both" the motherboard and power supply if you use non-Dell parts. I hope this information prevents somebody from encountering a serious problem had they not known.

***As for the deals,** I have been busy this month and simply don't have much. Two vendors I tried to contact didn't respond. I've been working on my Web site a lot and my deadline crept up fast. I have a mixed bag thanks to my readers. Last month's deals from Gene and Linda Barlow are good indefinitely [<http://www.ugr.com/order/>] and the Metlund hot water pump deal is still good this month [<http://www.gothotwater.com>].

***Need Memory? I Think I Do, But Can't Remember**

Lots of people purchase their memory on the Web and a very popular place is from Crucial. Did you know that they have a special deal just for user group people? Neither did I. Thanks to Russell Albach of The Alamo PC Organization, I can pass his information on to my readers. Head for [<http://www.crucial.com/usergroups>] and you'll find yourself eligible for a 5% discount. However, if you took advantage of the exceptionally good user group special offer from Intel for APCUG Comdex attendees, you won't get any help from Crucial though because they do not carry RDRAM. If you need memory, many consider Crucial highest in quality. I checked with their sales department before writing this up and they said to go ahead. As far as I'm concerned, we need all the help we can get when making a purchase.

***Plenty of Choices For An Office Suite**

In the past, I have mentioned several office suites that were either free or low cost. This is just a reminder list for your perusal. I realize that they may not have all the features that you would get in MS Office, but you can save a lot over purchasing the big names. It is a known fact that most office suite users only know about 30% of a program's capabilities, so why be captive to a big name? Below are some alternative office suites:

<http://www.gnome.org> (Windows & Linux)

<http://www.hancom.com> (Windows & Linux)

<http://www.gobe.com> (Windows & Linux)

<http://www.thinkfree.com> (versions for Windows, Mac & Linux)

<http://www.staroffice.com> (not free any more, but not expensive) (Windows, Linux & Sun Solaris)

***Mac Sources**

I'm sure I don't have many Mac readers, but many user groups are multi-platform so I'll include this sent to me by a Mac user. It is said to offer lots of goodies. Check out [<http://macsupport.about.com/mlibrary.htm>]. Unless I miss my guess, most of the Mac users already

know about this one, but I'm including it anyway.

***Fed Up With Doubleclick cookies?**

I don't remember where I saw this, but some of you may have noticed that if you use AdAware or another spyware sniffer, it usually finds a cookie by Doubleclick on your machine. Take it off and it will be right back. They actually provide a way to opt out of that situation. Point your browser to [<http://www.doubleclick.com/us/corporate/privacy/privacy/ad-cookie/>]. One click at the bottom will do it, but be sure to read the caveat on their Web site. After opting out, it tells you which cookie NOT to delete; otherwise you have just defeated your objective.

***Free Photo Editor**

GIMP (GNU Image Manipulation Program), which boasts many of Photoshop's features without the high price tag will create layers, feather, manipulate text, and even animate. You'll find handy floating palettes just like in Photoshop as well. One drawback noted in the write-up I read is no support for GIF files. Download it at [<http://www.gimp.org/~tml/gimp/win32/downloads.html>].

. **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 any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [Bobclick@mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns. I have also been busy putting up some interesting new articles on my Web site so take a look.

Getting to Know Google

by Billy Mabray, Oklahoma City PC Users Group

These days, whether you consciously choose it or not, your Web search engine is probably Google (<http://www.google.com>). That's because most search sites, whether they admit it or not, are powered by Google. And, why not? Google rose to the top of the search engines because its formula provided more relevant search results than any other. Also, its deceptively simple page makes it fast and easy to use.

I say deceptively simple because, underneath that friendly, colorful logo is a powerful search system that can accept queries as complex as you want to make them. Many people don't realize that if they do not find what they want on the first try, there are techniques they can use to improve their results. There are also ways to search Google that are more appropriate for certain specialty queries. And, Google is hiding a few extras that take it beyond a search engine into an amazing reference tool.

Let's start with an example. We're cooking dinner tonight, and we need a recipe for spaghetti sauce that does not use sugar. We might go to Google and type in this:

no sugar spaghetti sauce recipe

Google tells us we have about 56,000 results to wade through. A daunting task, considering the first page doesn't seem to contain anything relevant. The first thing we will try is grouping our search terms into phrases, using double-quotes. This tells Google that certain words should be searched for together. So, we try this:

"no sugar" "spaghetti sauce" recipe

That certainly narrowed things down, didn't it? This is a good technique to use when your search contains a lot of common words that could appear together in different contexts than what you are looking for. Unfortunately in this case, our first page of results is still not as relevant as we would like. The next thing we will try is searching for pages that do not contain a certain term:

-sugar "spaghetti sauce" recipe

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This tells Google that we want pages that are about “spaghetti sauce” recipe, but specifically do not contain the term sugar. That seems to have done it—our first page of results is chock full of spaghetti sauce recipes that don’t use sugar. “Subtracting” a term can also be useful when what you are searching for has multiple meanings. For example, if you are re-searching the “Holy Grail,” you might want to add

“-Python” to your search to eliminate all the references to the movie Monty Python and the Holy Grail.

Now, maybe spaghetti sauce is too specific—we might want to also consider marinara sauce. In that case, we use Google’s or syntax:

-sugar “(spaghetti | marinara) sauce” recipe

When there are multiple words that will satisfy our search, we can group them with parentheses and separate them with the “pipe” character—a vertical line that is most likely on the right-hand side of your keyboard. Google will then search for references to “spaghetti sauce” or “marinara sauce.”

At this point, we’ve become so intrigued by what we can find with Google, we’ve completely forgotten about dinner. Now we are interested in just how many different chicken casserole recipes we can find. Here’s one way:

“chicken * casserole” recipe

Notice the asterisk. This is called a wildcard. It tells Google that we don’t care what word comes between chicken and casserole, but there should be something there. This can be particularly useful when you know most of a title of something, but are unsure of all the words. This particular search brings back all kinds of chicken casserole recipes. Something tells me we better just eat out tonight.

Besides its standard Web search, Google has many specialty searches that are triggered either by a keyword or simply by what you are searching for. For example:

site:microsoft.com “Internet Explorer” patches

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This searches for references to “Internet Explorer” patches on micro-soft.com only. If your favorite Web site does not offer a search function, this is a pretty good substitute.

Maybe we want to know which sites on the Web link to the OKC PC User’s Group Web site:

link:okcpcug.org

We can also tell Google that what we are looking for is in an Adobe Acrobat PDF file:

filetype:pdf refrigerator manual

Google pays attention to what you are searching for, and offers helpful services based on what it thinks you want. For example, have you ever noticed Google shows your search words in the blue bar above your results? The search terms that are underlined link to a definition of that word at dictionary.com. If you spell a word wrong, Google will prompt you with the correct spelling and ask if you would like to search for that instead.

Google has many tricks like this up its sleeves. Search for a phone number, and Google will do a reverse lookup on the number. Search for a name with a city and state and/or zip code, and Google will look up their phone number. Search for an address and you will get links to maps of that location. Include a zip code with your search terms, and Google will offer you local results—Web sites for locations near the zip code, ordered by distance. You can even type in a shipment tracking number, and Google will figure out who the shipping company is and give you a link to the tracking information.

Google offers some services that have nothing to do with searching. Try this:

$68.12 + (68.12 * .2)$

The Google calculator will return the result of this computation. Fun, although, admittedly, not particularly useful. The Google calculator can be useful though, for things like conversions:

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68mm = ? inches

You can do all kinds of conversions using Google—a handy tool whenever you get around to making that spaghetti sauce.

Google is much more useful than most people realize—we've only scratched the surface of what Google can do. If you are interested in more, check out *Hacking Google* by Tara Calishain and Rael Dornfest. It includes many more search tips, and information for programmers who want to include Google search results in their applications. As you explore what Google can do, you will probably discover that Google feels like more than just a Web site.

In fact, Google is your friend.

Billy Mabray and his wife, Angela, own Smart Goat, a local software development and web design business. They are members of the OKCPCUG. Comments or questions on the article are welcome and can be addressed to: billy@smartgoat.com.

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THE INTEL PC USER GROUP WEBSITE

<http://www.intel.com/go/pcug/>

"A portal to a wealth of information"

By Steve Peyrot peyrots@bellsouth.net

APCUG Treasurer

APCUG Board of Advisors – Region 13

Vendor Relations Director – East Tennessee Computer Society

We members of user group communities throughout North America have a tremendous resource within a few simple keystrokes as we surf the internet. This resource is the web site developed by Intel® for the purpose of educating and facilitating the transfer of highly desired information into the hands of PC User Group members.

Let's face it, every one of us wake each day with more and newer technologies being developed and introduced so rapidly that it's quite a challenge to keep up. As user group members we are continually challenged not only with knowing about new technologies for our own use but also because many folks within our circle of acquaintances, colleagues at work, neighbors, and other members of the community rely on our expertise and knowledge to assist them with numerous hardware and software issues.

The web site that I will be discussing with you has been developed by our partners at Intel to assist us in tackling our everyday challenges through a vast portal of information and knowledge. They have always realized the importance of user groups and are providing us this repository of information and support. Follow me over the next few minutes as we tour The Intel PC User Group landing page.

The Home Area

When a user logs in to the Intel PC User Group page for the first time, it does not look like there is much there, being so unobtrusive and uncluttered. However, once the user begins his journey through the few pull-down menu tabs that are easily accessible at the top of the screen, it becomes clear just how much information is available on this web site.

From the home area, a number of pull-down menus and some single

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items are available to the user. The first thing I would recommend to every user is that they look on the left side of the page and click on the area that allows the user to sign up for the Intel® Tech Wire, an email formatted newsletter delivered free on a regular basis with a wide variety of the latest personal computing information. The information delivered includes product information, articles and information on customizing your PC and maximizing your PC experience, application software, recent news, tools and resources, technology trends, human interest stories, and much more.

Just above the area for signing up for Tech Wire is PC User Group Tools. This is an area that expands out and is where a user group officer can order and schedule one of Intel's "Seminars-in-a-Backpack," or anyone can download some of the best Intel seminar materials available to user groups. Complete PDF presentations and associated materials are available to download free of charge. I would recommend that users check this area out at least once a quarter for the newest subjects and tools available.

Finally on the main home page of The Intel PC User Group Web Site are the centralized main menu pull down tabs conveniently located along the top center of the page. These menu tabs contain tremendous amount of information, neatly compiled and sorted into five simple categories. Let us briefly go through each of these pull-down tabs in sequential order:

Resource Centers

The Resource Centers link sends the user to an area where they can easily access usable information on Personal Computing, Business and Enterprise, Hardware Design, Software Development and the Intel Reseller Center. For example, under the Personal Computing Center, there are tools to help you find the right notebook or the right desktop system for you, learn how to build your own PC from Intel-validated, quality components, and compare performance of various processors. And that's just one of the Resource Centers!

Products and Services

The menu tab for Product and Services leads the user to an area that lists just about every Intel product there is. Here one will find information about motherboards, processors, memory, flash cards, adapters, chip-

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sets, controllers, servers, software, mobile, media centers, and so much more. This area also provides links to highly requested information such as The Intel Processor Roadmap; a vision into the future of processing technologies. When visiting Products and Services, I can highly recommend exploring the Intel SOFTWARE COLLEGE accessible through the "Software" tab. Some of the best training resources available worldwide are found by following this link!

Solutions

The Solutions web page is a very informative area specializing in hardware, software, services, and tools. This area provides information and answers for a variety of solutions for business needs and technical challenges. Here one can find answers and solutions from not only Intel but from other third party providers. Listed also in this area are announcements of seminars and developer conferences or forums. This is the optimal resource to locate solutions and answers.

Technologies and Trends

This web site area is certainly one of my favorites; I could stay logged on here for a long time! Here, you can dive into the Intel Technology Journal, read the Technology @ Intel Magazine, find out about the latest research and development news, catch up on the latest developments involving wireless technologies, the digital home, digital media adaptors, Intel processors with Hyper-Threading™ technology, and much more. In a nutshell, if someone wants to know the latest information regarding any of the newest technologies, this web page is the place to come first.

Support and Downloads

Last but certainly not least is the Support and Downloads page. If you have a product with the name Intel on it, chances are that you will find complete information, product support, and a host of software drivers and patches. This web page also provides product information and technical research support regarding a wide array of Intel products.

This web site provides complete support for motherboards, notebook products, processors, network cards, communication products, graphic cards, chipsets, controllers, flash memory, pc cameras, and many other pc accessories. This area of the web site is of significant value to all us

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owners of Intel products. The high level of support available on this web site clearly exemplifies the commitment by Intel Corporation to its users.

As we close, I want to invite you to log on to www.intel.com/go/pcug and explore the areas I have mentioned plus the dozens more I have not had the space to discuss in this article. Our main philosophy as user group members is for users to help other users, so we are very fortunate to have a company such as Intel support our User Groups the way they do and provide us with so many resources and so much information. At Intel's user group support site, Intel stands ready to help us in this quest of educating our communities and furthering our knowledge into the future.

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Virus Attacks Continue at Record Rate

By Ira Wilsker, **APCUG Board of Directors**

As most computer users have noticed, the number of attempted computer attacks from viruses, worms, and Trojans has increased to a record level. According to antivirus software publisher Panda Software, the average daily number of new viruses and variants appearing for the week ending April 16 was 122 a day, a rate that has been steadily increasing over the preceding few weeks. It might be of interesting historical note that on average, more new viruses and variants are now appearing on a daily basis than appeared during an average week just two years ago! For those who still follow the old, but now quite obsolete strategy of updating their anti-virus software on a weekly basis, the likelihood of becoming infected by a virus is near certainty.

Many of the other former "truisms" about virus infections are also no longer true, such as "you have to click on an attachment to catch the virus". Virus authors have become more sophisticated and improved their programming and infection techniques. Although Microsoft released a series of patches over two years ago to close an Outlook and Outlook Express vulnerability, there are still millions of computers that remain unpatched and vulnerable. Several of the very common Netsky variants, some released as recently as last week, take advantage of this opportunity, and can infect a computer by simply having the email message appear in the preview pane of any unpatched version of Outlook. As is now common with many of the current crop of viruses and worms, once infected, any antivirus and firewall software installed on the computer is effectively killed, and ports are opened on the computer allowing continued access to the infected computer from persons unknown. Just because an icon for your antivirus and firewall software appears next to your clock, and it may also appear to update periodically, does not mean that your antivirus software and firewall are functioning. It is good security practice to periodically check all computers for virus infection and open ports by running one of the many free and reliable online virus scans and firewall checks. Personally I use Housecall (housecall.antivirus.com) for a free online virus scan to verify that my computer is indeed clean, and Shields Up (www.grc.com) to verify that my firewall is fully functional.

Our personal computers are being infected at a massive rate, estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands to millions, by innocuous files loaded onto our computers without our knowledge. Many of these new crop of viruses are designed to slip through our antivirus and firewall de-

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fenses. One method that unfortunately has been successful has been to rapidly create and disseminate many variants of the same virus payload, and quickly flood the net, primarily by email, with the variants. By spacing each variant by a few minutes or hours over a day, it becomes extremely likely that we will encounter several virus bearing emails before our anti-virus software is updated. The belief that updating antivirus software daily is an adequate defense is no longer sufficient to provide protection, considering the lag time between the discovery of a new virus, and the release of updated data files by the antivirus companies. The former holy grail of antivirus software publisher, "continuous updates" which many publishers commendably have now reached, is no longer adequate, as a new virus found right now may massively spread unchecked for several hours before updates are available. This lulls us into a false sense of security, believing that our frequent updates will protect us, while in reality dozens of new viruses will spread and infect countless computers before the next update can be released. It only takes one virus to slip through our protection, and we may be left defenseless from further attacks.

The other method of infection that has been around for years, but now becoming even more common is an attack by a virus or worm through our network or internet connections. All computers have "ports" or pathways into the computer. A good firewall should close all open internet or network ports except those being actively and intentionally used, and protect the open ports from unauthorized access. Many of the current worms and viruses try to impersonate legitimate data to penetrate firewalls, or will probe almost any connected computer looking for vulnerabilities. It is not at all uncommon for a home computer to be probed for open ports over 100 times per hour, which is the explicit justification for a firewall to be installed on all personal computers. Home computers, especially those using dial-up internet access, which had been in the past somewhat ignored by hackers, have now become prime targets for hackers and worm generated probes looking for vulnerabilities.

This has already created a very real security threat at all levels from our own computers to the national infrastructure. Many of these new viruses flooding our email boxes, or attacking us through our internet or other network connections, contain a "zombie", a small program either scheduled to launch a cyberattack at a predetermined time, or to silently wait for some external signal which will launch a cyberattack. It is not just possible, but now considered a near certainty that sometime in the near future we will be subjected to massive attacks on our critical infrastructures by millions of zombie infected computers, almost all of which will have anti-

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virus and firewall software installed, but possibly neutralized. This is not just science fiction or some possibility, but a very real threat, as demonstrated in the past by the infamous CodeRed and Blaster attacks, among others.

It is absolutely imperative that we all have antivirus software and a firewall that is updated as frequently as possible, and verified to offer us protection.

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Is DOS Really Dead?

By Charlie Paschal, PPCC

Microsoft official made the break with DOS with Windows 2000. Although it tried to "fake" out the public by saying that Windows ME did, it wasn't true. With some information off the Web, a true bootup diskette can be made that will access ME with a floppy.

That's not true with 2000 and XP, which makes a true break with DOS -- you can't start either operating system with a boot disk. You can, though, bootup an ill-acting system with a boot disk that contains the correct files out of your root directory.

Both 2000 and XP use an NTFS file system -- if you use the native file system the system expects -- that supposedly can't be accessed with a floppy. There are certain floppies -- available on the Internet -- that can be used to access NTFS volumes.

Another floppy, also available on the Internet, allows a user to boot from it to a version of Linux that allows someone to access and change the administrator's password. It's useful for someone who has forgotten the administrator's password.

Knoppix -- A Tool for Everyone

By Charlie, PPCC

One of the greatest tools a computer technician has over a home user is the access of another computer. A second computer can be used to access the Internet and find answers to problems. When a home user's computer is crippled, it's very difficult to find answers -- except by telephone.

Although it's not another computer, a very useful tool is a Knoppix CD. Knoppix is a version of Linux that runs from a CD. If you've got a broadband connection to the Internet, such as a cable modem, it automatically senses the connection and gives you access to the Internet. It usually finds all your hardware, giving you total access to your files and information. You usually can copy files to CDs, floppies or Zip disks.

Get Knoppix at www.knoppix.org. It's a large download, about 700 megabytes, but it comes in a form that you can use to automatically make a bootable CD. If you don't have this CD, download it (or ask a friend with a broadband connection to do it for you) as a tool for a day when Windows won't start.

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Hex, binary, Decimal numbers

By Charlie Paschal, PPCC

Ever wonder what people are talking about when they mention binary and "hex" numbers? It's the way computers "talk" and the language they understand. Our system, of course, is the decimal number system, which is 10 base. Binary is 2-based, while hex is 16-based. The binary is where you get the "1s and 0s" from because that's the only numbers used in that system.

For example, the number 11 in decimal is 1011 in binary and B in hex. Since 1s and 0s can easily show numbers from 0-9, hex is used to represent numbers from 10 through 16, meaning at A is 10, B is 11, etc. Because binary numbers can get complex, hex is used because it makes it shorter to write and it's easier for humans to remember.

If you ever want to do some conversions yourself without having to learn the mathematical way of doing it, use Windows calculator. Go to View and select scientific. Plug in a number in decimal and then click on Hex or Bin to see the number in that system. For example, 999 is 3E7 in hex. In binary it's 1111100111. See? You can remember 3E7 but it's not as easy to remember the binary version.

Don't forget system restore

By Charlie Paschal, PPCC

Viruses are always a threat, but did you know that one can "return" without warning if you don't turn off one Windows XP feature when cleaning up from a virus?

One of XP's great features is System Restore that can take your system back to a time when it was running better. I've used it countless times to return an ill-acting system back to a healthy time.

What if, though, you get a virus? Because System Restore can contain system settings that will restore the virus itself, it should always be turned off before you remove a virus.

To do that:

* Right Click on My Computer and select Properties and left click. Click on the System Restore tab and check the box labeled "Turn Off System Re-

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store on all Drives."

Then, clean up the virus and reboot. Don't forget to turn System Restore back on after cleaning up the virus.

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The Music Wars

By Wayne Steen, Q BITS contributing editor, Quad-Cities Computer Society, Bettendorf, Iowa

The music industry is at war with itself and its fans. Who ever thought that a rock and roll band would sue its own fans? Talk about the ultimate in corporate greed. The music industry is full of corporate greed.

However, fear not my loyal readers help is on the way. Steve Jobs of Apple, Bill Gates of Microsoft, and Wal-Mart are coming to our rescue. I feel better already.

Apple has already introduced iTunes and the iPod. Soon, Microsoft and Wal-Mart will come out with their own online music services.

Roxio has brought Napster back from the dead. Napster was once the largest illegal file-sharing service on the Internet. Roxio has now brought it back as a good file-sharing service that pays the record companies and artists for their music.

Real Networks has their own online music service and Music Match has their own service. My head is spinning round, round, round.

Apple

Steve Jobs and Apple are the first ones out of the gate in the online music services race. However, remember back in the 1980s when Apple was the top dog in the computer box wars? They eventually lost out to Bill Gates. Will history repeat itself or has Steve learned from his past mistakes?

iTunes is currently the world's largest online music services company. They have recently added the muscle of over 25,000,000 AOL customers to their arsenal. iTunes works on both Apple and Windows computers. You must have Windows 2000 or Windows XP on your PC in order to use iTunes.

The download is simple and without a hassle. All you have to do is go to <http://www.apple.com> and click on the iTunes link. All you have to do is enter your e-mail address and then download the iTunes software.

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iTunes does not charge a monthly fee that all the other online music services charge. However, you can only listen to a 30-second clip from the song that you are interested in. To listen to the whole song you must buy the song for 99 cents.

You can buy as many songs as you want through the Apple Music store. You will have to enter your credit card with Apple music store in order to download music from iTunes.

You can burn songs onto an unlimited number of CDs for your personal use. You can listen to your songs on an unlimited number of iPods. (I will talk about iPods in a minute.) You can play your songs on up to three Macintosh computers or Windows PCs.

You can also set up an account for your children. Kids now have a legal way to download their favorite songs with music allowance accounts. You set up the account using your credit card and then set up a monthly allotment of how many songs your kids can buy. Once they reach the monthly limit (and they will reach that monthly limit), they cannot download any more songs.

Another nice new feature from iTunes is you can now purchase audio books. At the time of this writing, Harry Potter books were not available from iTunes.

Napster

Napster is a monthly service that you pay \$9.95 a month for downloading songs. You can download as many songs as you want to your computer. However, if you want to burn the songs to a CD or digital device such as the Dell Music Jukebox then you must pay 99 cents a song.

Real Networks and Music Match also use the Napster model. I like having the ability to download as many songs as I like (or how many songs my hard drive will handle) without having to pay 99 cents a song.

If you want to burn the songs to a CD or a portable digital device then the Apple model may be more to your liking.

Problems

iTunes will only burn to CDs and Apple's own iPod. The iPod is a 15 GB device that sells for \$299.00 and will carry almost 7,00 songs. Let me

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see, 7,000 times 99 cents equals about \$7,000.00. This is a very good moneymaker for Apple.

The Dell Digital Jukebox Music Player is very similar to the Apple iPod and costs \$249.00. The math is the same, about \$7,000.00 for 7,000 songs.

The problem is that iPod and Dell do not play nice with each other. If you use iTunes, then you are going to want to buy the iPod. If you use Real Network, Music Match or Napster then you are going to want to use the Dell Digital Jukebox Music Player.

The biggest problem is that not all famous artists are available for download with one of the online service providers. Therefore, you may only be able to listen to a favorite artist of yours on iTunes and another favorite artist of yours may only be available on Napster.

Once again, the consumer is on the short end of the stick with all of the big boys wanting to use their own standards. They are telling us, it is their ball, and you are going to play the game by their rules. We have danced to this song before!

Conclusion

Who will win the music wars? Let us do some calculations.

I remember being able to buy KISS records on sale at Music Land for \$3.99. Let us do some math. Twelve songs on a typical album divided into \$3.99 equals 33 cents. Today we pay 99 cents for a song or \$9.95 for the whole album.

However, that is far better than the \$18.99 suggested retail price of CDs that are currently on sale in stores. Let me see, \$18.99 divided by 12 equals \$1.58 a song. Ouch! I do not know who will win the music wars, but I do know who has lost. The music store retailers and the consumers have lost. I am against illegal file sharing, but I am also against record companies suing 12-year-old girls.

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.

For beginners only -- Using Internet to increase buying power

By Charlie Paschal, Editor/Publisher, Palmetto Personal Computer Club, Columbia, SC Columnist, The (Columbia) State newspaper, SC

Buying on the Internet may intimidate some (not me) but the Internet can serve other purposes, such as a way to check prices against what you can find locally or in other nearby stores.

Ten years ago, I can't tell you the times I would buy something and then two weeks later find it for \$50 or \$100 less at another store in another city or town. After the normal fussing, I'd blame myself for bad judgment, although in those days I had no way of avoiding it.

Now, though, with the Internet, there is no excuse.

First, a couple of points to remember about the Internet:

- Items, in most cases, will be less expensive on the Internet.
- Shipping costs must always be added into the cost of an item.
- In some cases, you might save on taxes, but that depends on several factors.
- Chain stores, such as Wal-Mart, Target or Best Buy, usually charge the same for an item, even if it's in another state.
- Some items might be refurbished or reconditioned, so make sure that the item you're looking at is actually new because used items will be priced less.

There's several ways to check the price of an item, but you must do some homework first.

- Get the item's name and model.
- If you can't get all that information, get as much as you can.
- Plug that information into a search engine site, such as www.google.com.
- To get "real people" reviews of products, type that same name into www.deja.com.

Another way to use the Internet is to check the features of different models or the features of a model you're thinking about buying. This can reap dividends because while doing this research, you may find that the model you're buying might not have the features you really need.

Let's take digital cameras, for example. While using a broad search at google using only the term digital camera might bring up thousands of hits, it might turn up other digital cameras that have additional features you haven't thought about while shopping. As an example, you probably will find a site that lists digital cameras, feature-by-feature, giving you a better idea of what you need to look for in a camera.

Among those hits, too, could be information that can save you money in other ways. A good example is a modem, a device that hooks up to a telephone line to connect to the Internet. Most computers come with what's called a "soft modem," meaning it uses the computer's computing power rather than its own.

Although this might sound good, it's actually bad because these modems are cheap, cheap, cheap. If you're on a poor telephone line, you might want to get a "real" hardware modem so you can have a better chance at higher-speed connections. By reading the information you get on modems, you could learn that a hardware modem is more expensive but in the long run, will offer considerably better performance.

Sometimes buying higher quality pays dividends.

This also brings up another way you can use the Internet besides buying goods: reviews.

We all know the old saying about everyone having an opinion but on the Internet you can always find opinions and reviews of products. Despite everyone thinking the Internet is all about technology, the truth is that you can find information about every product known to man, including cars, furniture -- you name it.

The two sites mentioned above can help you find reviews of nearly every product or real time opinions about products. Remember, though, that you must weigh the opinions, reading several before making up your mind. There will be some fervent opinions on both sides.

To produce some of these, just type in the name of the product and the word review afterwards. For example, type in Ford Taurus reviews and hit search. Do this in each of the search engines to get not only reviews written by professionals but reviews written by "real people" who don't normally write for a living. Quite often, the real people reviews give you more information than the professional ones.

You don't always have to buy on the Internet to reap its benefits. Browse, search, research; all of them can make your life more interesting -- and safer.

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Note: Meeting Place:
 North Canton Public Library
 185 North Main Street
 North Canton, OH 44720
 I-77 Exit (Portage) turn *EAST*.

From Rt.77, take the Canal Fulton/North Canton Exit (Portage St.)

Head east on Portage St. (If traveling north, you will turn right. If traveling south, you will turn left.)
 Follow Portage for approximately 1 1/4 miles to a sign that reads: "All thru traffic bear left."

Do not bear left. Continue straight on Portage until it dead-ends at Ream St.

Turn left on Ream. The Library is the 2nd building on your right. Small amount parking alongside and more across the street at rear of building.

Upcoming Computer Shows: No May or June !

Peter Trapp at Tadmor Temple, Sunday, **July 18th, 2004**

3000 Krebs Drive, Akron, OH.

Exit 120 off I-77 (Arlington Rd.)

Right on Jarvis. Right on Krebs to top of hill. 10am-3pm

Please note change in contacting ACPCUG Newsletter Editor
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