MOTHERBOARD

A Publication of the Computer Users Group Of Redding, CA

YOUR C.U.G. PRESENTS

Tuesday, December 20, 2005

Annual Christmas Holiday Party

Lucky Ticket!

Members who bring a goodie to share will receive six tickets.

One free ticket to each member at the door!

Club Business and Program Presentation 7 PM, coffee and tea available
Check at the Greeting Table for your name tag *and please leave it in the Tag Box when the meeting is over.*
General meetings are at the Palo Cedro Church Of Christ, 21895 St. Francis Way, Palo Cedro, CA.
Official Website: **http://users.snowcrest.net/ibmpcugr**
For more information call any Board member listed on Page 2.

Future Presentation:
January - Presentation of SIG Activities by the hosts
February - Pro Show Gold Program with Paul Colligan and Darold Wright

CUG Calendar

CUG Board Meeting
No Board Meeting In Dec
at Jack-In-The-Box, Dana Drive

MULTI-MEDIA
10 AM, Saturday, Dec 17

DTP SIG
2 PM, Wednesdays
Dec 14, 21, 28, Jan 4, 11

WINDOWS & MORE
11:30 AM, Wednesdays
Dec 14, 21, 28, Jan 4, 11

SEE BACK PAGE FOR MORE SIG INFO

In This Issue Of The Motherboard...

Club Information

Club Website: http://users.snowcrest.net/ibmpcugr
Members volunteering to help members!

Club Mentors

New Users	**Dorothy Kirk**	**MS Word, MS Power**	**Jane Quinn**
PaintShop Pro	246-9661, Anytime	**Point, MS Movie Maker**	365-0825
	dak75@sbcglobal.net	**Digital Image Pro** & **DVD Software**	
New Users	**Bob Rice**		jquinn@charter.net
	357-2143, Anytime	**MS Windows:**	**Bill Ball**
	ricerl@snowcrest.net	**98, ME, XP**	bcard9@charter.net
MS Windows	**Darold Wright**	**Hardware, Software**	275-4632
Photo Delux	222-1781	**DTP;**	**Judi Ball**
	daroldlwright@yahoo.com	**Graphic Prgs**	275-4632
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Motherboard Newsletter Policies and Deadlines

The *Motherboard* newsletter is published monthly by the Computer Users Group of Redding, PO Box 494778, Redding, CA 96049-4778. The CUG is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Subscriptions are included in the $25 annual membership fee. The purpose of the newsletter is to inform members of upcoming events and provide information about the use of IBM compatible computers.

Disclaimer: Neither the CUG, its Officers, the Editor, nor the newsletter contributors assume any liability for damages occurred due to the use of information provided in this publication. **Reprints:** Articles from this newsletter may be reprinted by other user groups if credit is given to both the author, CUG and the *Motherboard*. Mail a copy of the newsletter where the article is reprinted to the Editor at the address in the first paragraph of this text.

Personal Ads For Members:
Requirements are:
1. Advertiser must be a member.
2. The item must be computer-related.
3. The ad must be received by editor J. Ball by the *monthly date of the board meeting.* Sorry, no exceptions. Sorry, no exceptions.
Other terms must be approved by the club's Board of Officers and Directors.

Article Submissions: All articles and reviews must be submitted to J. Ball by the *Monday of the monthly Board meeting (see Page 1 for date.)* Sorry, no exceptions. *Motherboard* **Editor** reserves the right to make corrections and deletions in all articles in the interest of grammar, style, and space.

President's Message

It's your club. Your input is of value to us…

As the outgoing President of the IBM/PC Users Group I wish to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

I, along with your Officers and Board Members, have attempted for the last year to come up with programs that the group might find interesting. Our goal was to make the Club interesting enough that current members would tell their friends and neighbors about the Club and they would join.

The declining membership of the club indicates that we were not able to do that. This trend also is indicative of the problems other clubs and organizations are having in retaining their membership. We try to offer programs that address the needs of the those folks who spend time on their computers as a hobby and provide special interest group forums on a regular basis.

My personal view is that the folks in the Club who teach or moderate the SIGs are very giving of their time and knowledgeable about the subject they are teaching. It is one of the many resources available to Club Members. It seems well worth the cost of belonging to the Club, particularly when you consider the annual fee covers the entire family!

If we are not able to increase the membership the Club will dissolve. I think that would be a shame.

I have enjoyed the office of presidency and believe Paul Colligan will do a fine job over the next year.

Darold L. Wright

Editor's Corner

Creativity kicks in once in a rare while, and mine appears to have done so as I've changed the face (front page) of the Motherboard. I hope you find it attractive, clean and efficient.

In late summer we began using a printer in Florida and have been more than satisfied with their business ethics, timeliness and printing quality. Recently they (Creative Technology of Sarasota, Inc.) informed me that printing a 12 page newsletter would cost no more than our 10 pages do. So, in the future, if there are enough articles with useful information, I will gladly make use of a larger edition.

November Meeting

Frank Tona of Crown Camera has always been a pleasure when he gives a presentation. And members at this last meeting were as entertained and interested as ever.

November Election Of 2006 Officers
by CUG of Redding

President	**Paul Colligan**
Vice President	**Belva Sullivent**
Treasurer	**Mario Quinn**
Secretary	**Margaret Martinovich**

Welcome Renewals

Wayne Doerning
Jerry Drennan
Frances Hannsz
Pat Liebert
Mary Montague
Larry Owings
Shirley Parker
Charles Rider

Congratulation Winners

Marie (Tonie) March Won the Microsoft Keyboard

Bruce Roth Won the Labeling Program

Donna Jones Won the MS Encarta Encyclopedia

EDITOR'S CORNER
Continued from Page 2

REMINDER

As a member, you are invited to submit articles to the Motherboard applying the requirements as stated at bottom of Page 2 under Motherboard Policies. The articles can not be used if they are copy protected, such as tips from Kim Kommando, etc. But if you have a tip, an idea, or experience you would like to share, please send it to me in your own words as an .rtf format via e-mail at jebed@charter.net.

PARTYTIME!

It's party time again, so bring your family and friends and a refreshment to share in the feast and gifts.

See you there…   Judi Ball

Put Your PC To Use With The Evaluations/Review Prg.

Don't forget to check out the Evaluations Program offered by this organization! If there is an application you would like to have, put your request in and a company/vendor will be contacted to see if the product is available for review. If it is, it will be ordered for you.

This could be a new program to you, or the latest version of a one you already have.

When it comes in, you will have at about three months to install the program, learn to use its most prominent features, then write a review that will be published in this newsletter and sent to the company to complete their requirements.

Evaluations Contact Person
Jane Quinn, qjquinn@charter.net

In Memory Of

Ed Parker

Our thoughts go out to Ed's wife Shirley and their family. Shirley has continued on as an active member, and hopefully her computer friends and computer interest will help her during this sad time.

David Stone

David had attended the Shasta Lake SIG classes only days before he passed away quite suddenly. It was a shock to his class hosts and classmates. We wish the best to Billie and David's family at this trying time.

Multi Media S.I.G. Update

by Jane Quinn

Saturdays Palo Cedro Good Times Pizza, 10 am, Dec 17, Jan 21, Feb 25, Mar 25
Thursdays Anderson Senior Center, 1pm. 2081 Frontier Trail in Anderson.

LEARN HOW TO

- Acquire photos from your scanner, digital camera or a photo CD-ROM
- Improve poor photos, retouch, enhance, clone portions of photos
- Understand and work with photo selections, photo layers, and special effects
- Create slideshows of photos using several programs; MS PowerPoint, MS Movie Maker 2.0, Photo Story 3, and MS Digital Image Pro Software all versions, Roxio Suite all components including Sound Editor, other DVD creation programs
- Work with videos, learn the 8 important steps to creating a DVD video
- Learn how to transfer footage to your PC, rip an audio track, split your clips, and put it all together with special effects.
- Burn DVDs, create music CDs and data CDs
- Learn about internet free tools and websites to create photo albums to share with family and friends

MULTI MEDIA MONTHLY TIP

Why Save An ISO File Image

Creating DVD movies from your sources (captured footage, added music, special effects) usually takes a significant length of time to burn the DVD movie to disc. Depending on the amount of data your movie effort takes it can be as long as 60 minutes to compress and produce your finalized DVD movie version. If you have an option during the burning process to save an ISO file image of the movie, choose to do so. This is a copy of the finished DVD movie (your precious 60 minutes). If you ever need to recreate the DVD movie, or need a backup of your DVD movie, this is the answer. To retrieve the movie and burn another copy, simply choose to copy a DVD and locate this ISO file as the source. You will only need one tenth of the time to recreate another DVD copy.

Contact Jane Quinn at qjquinn@charter.net or phone 365-0825, or Anna Horton alhorton@sbcglobal.net

Bits And Pieces

by Rush Blodget; IMB/PCUG of Redding, rblodget@snowcrest.net

REBATES

Business Week Magazine for Dec. 5, 2005 ran a featured article entitled "The Great Rebate Ripoff." They state that nearly one-third of all computer gear is now sold with some form of rebate. They comment that some 400 million rebates are offered each year with a face value of $6 billion. They state that 40% of rebates never get redeemed because consumers fail to apply for them or their applications are rejected. This represents $2 billion in additional income each year for retailers and their suppliers. Lower redemption rates are found during the Christmas shopping season when consumers are frequently too distracted to file for rebates on time. State and federal authorities believe that companies design the rules to keep redemption rates down. Companies are said to count on complex rules, filing periods as short as one week, multiple copies of receipts, and long delays in sending out checks to discourage customers. Frequently the check when it does arrive looks so much like junk mail that it is inadvertently discarded.

Purchases by consumers who never file for rebates are called "breakage" while "slippage" is the term applied to rebates that are never cashed. One processor has gone so far as to brag to potential corporate customers that they could expect only a 10% response on a $10 rebate on a $100 product and 35% on a $50 rebate on a $200 product, and that they could achieve a 20% less redemption rate then a competitor.

The convoluted nature of the rebate process has brought about an increase in complaints to regulators and to the State of New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer who recently forced Samsung Electronics to pay $200,000 to 4,100 consumers who were denied rebates because they lived in apartment houses. Their rebate forms did not provide for the entry of an apartment number with the result that applications for rebates by apartment dwellers were rejected based on a rule of allowing only one rebate to the same address. The Attorney General of Connecticut has also entered the fray as have officials in Massachusetts. Young America, a leading rebate processor

located in Minnesota, has been charged with keeping $3 million in uncashed rebate checks. The article also stated that California State Senator Liz Figueroa introduced legislation that would require companies that offer rebates to give consumers at least 30 days to apply for a rebate and 60 days for the rebate processor to return the check. This bill passed both the State Assembly and Senate, but was vetoed by the governor. It is said that the bill will be reintroduced next year. The entire article can also be found on the Internet site, www.business weekweekend.com. Caveat Emptor

I recently bought a wireless modem for which I filled out the rebate slip in a timely manner and after several months received a check with the name of the issuing vendor on it. What I did not notice was that it said, "void" after a certain date which happened to be about 3 weeks after receiving it. Normally a corporate check will show a 4–6 months period before becoming "stale dated" and hence many persons may let such a check lie on their desk until their next visit to the bank. The initial presumption is that the requirement for payment by the issuer is lost, however a bank officer informed me that this obligation still exists. One must, however, contact the issuer to remake the check. Very few of us will take the trouble and be involved in the hassle to do this for a small amount of money.

On the plus side, I decided to investigate the price of an identical modem (model number, etc. on-line). Interestingly enough all but one or two of the on-line discounters were selling the product at the same price and with the same rebate amount as the local store. One advertised it for a few dollars less, but with a hefty shipping and handling charge. The bottom line is then that we can save money with rebates if we are scrupulous in attending to details and have studied for the finals in "Rebates 101."

Crimeware: James Derk of Computer Central warns us that when we click on e-mail attachments, receive an infected instant message, or visit an infected web page that we may fall victim to a key-logger that will record all keystrokes (passwords, bank account data, etc.). He

User Group Offers by Bluequirrell and Laplink

The following offers are good through December 31, 2005.

Blue Squirrel is offering the products below for $79.95. If you were to buy them separately at the usual 50% User Group discount, they would cost almost $120 ($250 retail).

Visit www.bluesquirrel.com for product description.

To order the products, please fax the attached order form to Blue Squirrel at 801.352.1551. You can also place your order by calling 800.403.0925 — don't forget to mention it's the 50% **User Group Discount Offer**. You can download all of the programs or pay an additional $6.95 for Shipping & Handling and receive the CDs.

The Blue Squirrel programs are: *ClickBook, Click2PDF, Spam Sleuth, WebWhacker, WebSeeker, PopUp Stopper, BlueSync,* and *Snapture.*

LapLink is offering 50% discounts on PCmover or Laplink Everywhere 4 (or both).

PCMover is a solution to the problem of automatically moving all your files, settings, and even applications from an old PC, even if the operating system is different on the new PC!

Laplink Everywhere 4 is a secure, browser-based remote access utility. Get "Anytime, Anywhere Remote Access to Your PC." Laplink Everywhere 4 is like GoToMyPC, except it offers great extra features such as extended PDA compatibility (Pocket PC, Palm, and Smartphone) and it's half the price!

Laplink Gold is Laplink's flagship remote support product. Now you can connect automatically through firewalls, transfer and synchronize files faster than ever, and offer remote support to friends and colleagues.

Visit the following link for more information on Laplink Everywhere 4. http://www.laplink.com/products/lleoverview.asp

Any Member Interested in the precedeing products, contact Jane Quinn at qjquinn@charter.net.

Corel Painter IX

by Debby Hamman, Member CUG of Redding, dhamman1@earthlink.net
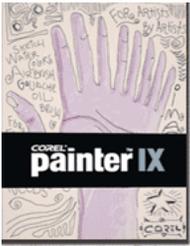
Corel Painter IX is a digital painting program. This program is for anyone that likes to draw whether he are a novice or a professional. As a novice, I found Corel Painter IX to be a very exciting program with seemingly unlimited boundaries and possibilities.

In the beginning, I had a hard time opening the 10 free lessons from lynda.com because they have a .PAL extension, with which I am not familiar. However, with the expert help of Corel Product Specialist Tanya Lux and my dear friend and mentor Judi Ball, I was soon able to get the program up and running. Then the adventure began!

First I printed off most all of the Users Guide, all tutorials and tips that came with the program. I did this so I could read about the program and get a handle on it before I actually began. However, being the impatient and ambitious person that I am, I started exploring the program on my own.

It did not take very long to realize what a large and thorough program Corel Painter IX really is. The more I explored, the more I got excited and the more fun I had. I whet my appetite just enough to realize that I would have to stop exploring and take the time to read the Users Guide and tutorials further to continue on with my adventure.

I have a graphic's tablet and pressure pen that I installed to use for sketching. Corel mentions the use of a graphic's tablet with this program, and I was fortunate enough to already have one. However, it is not a necessary tool to have, it just enhances the fun. And Corel Painter IX has a selection feature in the edit menu that accomodates the tablet by allowing you to change the pressure of the pen as needed, plus the ability to change other pen functions.

It took a while for me to get used to positioning the tablet so that my sketching looked halfway decent on the PC monitor. That will take more practice in the future. I really like the concept of being able to draw my own pictures to use with the individual exercises of the program.

Now, with or without a graphic's tablet, Corel Painter IX offers many ways to create a picture. There is chalk, liquid ink, oil painting, watercolor and charcoal. Each feature offers about 33 different brushes with as many different nibs and erasers for each brush. There is a safety feature built into the program so that only the proper brushes and nibs can be used for whatever feature is selected, the rest are blocked. There is even a feature that allows you to combine brushes or even make a brush for yourself. There is also a slide rule for sizing the nib or zooming in as well as using for adjusting other functions. Another feature the program offers is Image Hose and Pattern Pens. I will talk about that later.

Please! Keep in mind that I am a **novice** and not even one of the most talented either. So, bear with me as I show the following pictures that I created. Besides, with this program I am certain I will improve with time. That being said, let's get on with it.

I selected *Oil Painting* for my first venture. I found it to be very easy to use. The Paint Mixer Pallet allows you to select and mix your own colors. There is a tool bar on the bottom of the pallet that offers some brushes or a pallet knife to allow you to mix the colors or use multiple colors in the same brush stroke. I tried all of the brushes and nibs to see the different effects. This is what finally happened:


Next, I tried Water Coloring. Again I tried all of the brushes and nibs. I have never done any water coloring, so I was pleasantly surprised that I liked it so much (it covers up a lot of imper-

fections). Another fun creation is the one I have drawn on paper for years for children. It was doubly fun on screen:

Then, I explored the Image Hose and Pattern Pens. To my delight, I found by combining several of the images and textures offered, I could actually create a picture from them. What fun!
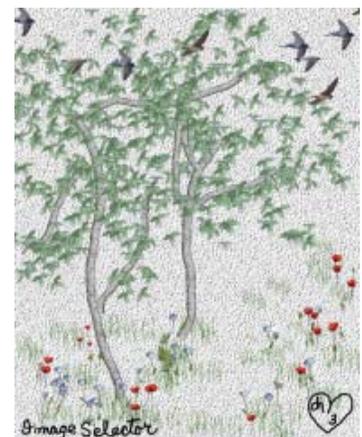
Corel Painter IX offers *Quick Clone* which changes a photograph into a painting with great speed. One of its functions is Tracing Paper that allows you to clone all or part of a picture by tracing it. I must confess that this part of the program was the hardest for me to do. I was completely intimidated. However, I kept reading the Users Guide, tutorials and all of the tips and it finally started making sense to me. There are so many different ways to clone an image, not just point to point. There are many brushes that can be used for different effects. Once I got over my fear of all the features, I actually enjoyed it.

There is also a KPT Filter Collection. When used, it allows you to enhance and change the total look of the image. I tried all of the filters and was amazed
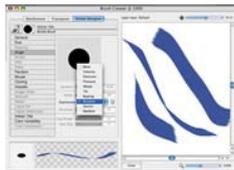
COREL PAINTER IX

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at the results I could achieve with them.

I have very much enjoyed working on and learning about Corel Painter IX. As a novice, I now realize that I have just scratched the surface of this wonderful program and still have a lot to learn (which I will happily do).

Two examples of Painter's screens.

Corel Painter IX sells for $429.00 (boxed) or $399.00 (download). The upgrade is $229.00 (boxed) or $179.00 (download).

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Windows 2000 or Windows XP (with latest service packs)
Pentium® II, 500 MHz or greater
128 MB RAM (256MB at the least
Mouse or tablet with pen
24-bit color display
1024x768 or more monitor resolution
CD-ROM

Locked Out Of Your Computer?

by Vinny LaBash, Sarasota PC Users Group, FL, labash@spcug.org

Some time ago one of my students came to me with what appeared to be an insurmountable problem. She had lent her laptop to a relative who changed the password allowing her access to the hard drive. A dispute developed between the two, and the relative refused to disclose the new password. Upon boot-up, a message appeared that the hard drive was now password protected. She asked me, "How can I break this password and access my computer?"

I had mixed feelings. Most people ask me how to protect their data and equipment, and prevent unauthorized access. I was now being asked to break into a machine. Even though the woman was the legitimate owner of the laptop and the data recorded on it, it felt strange to be on the other side of the fence. After dusting off my notes, we tackled the problem.

Before revealing what actually worked, let's examine what you can do if you are ever locked out of your own computer.

We started with the presumption that the password was embedded in the BIOS, which stands for Basic Input/ Output System. Your BIOS is a set of instructions that tells the computer who it is and what it has. Imagine that every morning you woke up with total amnesia and someone had to tell you not only who you were but how to walk, talk, read, and how to use your brain. The BIOS is like that.

To make things more obtuse, the settings in the BIOS are dynamic. They need some kind of electric power to work. If you take out the battery on your motherboard or let it drain, the BIOS settings are lost. What saves you is that the BIOS resides in ROM (Read Only Memory), which is not battery dependent.

Try resetting the BIOS to its defaults. This can be done by removing the CMOS battery after turning the computer off. The CMOS battery is about the size of a five cent piece, and you'll find it on the motherboard. Some motherboards will let you reset the BIOS by using jumpers. Your owner's manual may be helpful. If you don't have an owner's manual, go to the manufacturer's web site, and look for an online version. Some sites list the default BIOS password. Don't hesitate to call the manufacturer and ask for help. Sometimes the company will have a master password, but you will need to provide the serial number of the machine. If you're dealing with a laptop, the manufacturer may have more stringent requirements for proof of ownership since theft is a serious issue with these machines.

Many people use dumb passwords like their pet's name, child's birthday, anniversary or birth dates, employer's name, brand of car, etc. Generic passwords like these examples can be easily defeated. Don't forget to try "password." I never cease to be amazed at how often this works.

The other two most common passwords are God and love.

BIOS manufacturers have their own list of passwords. This website may be helpful, http://www.elfqrin.com/docsbiospw.html.

There are cracking programs that will reveal passwords in many cases. If you decide to go this route, make sure you check for viruses. You can find free programs at the following sites:

http://www.cgsecurity.org/
http://www.11a.nu/
http://natan.zejn.si/rempass.html

Before accusing me of giving lessons on how to hijack computers, keep in mind that the bad guys already know these tricks and a lot more. There is nothing immoral or illegal about trying to retrieve your own data.

More drastic steps would be to take your machine to a computer repair shop and have the BIOS replaced. You could also have the hard drive replaced, but this would mean losing all information on the disk, and you would need to reinstall your operating system and applications.

What finally worked? The woman baked her cousin's favorite pie and sent her daughter to deliver it as peace offering. The password was shortly forthcoming. Go figure.

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.

BITS & PIECES

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also reminds us that it is safer to enter an e-mail address directly rather than clicking on a "link."

UNSUBSCRIBE

Federal law requires that consumers be allowed to unsubscribe to marketing e-mails. A recent article by one of the technical writers for the Wall Street Journal tells of the woes of clicking on "unsubscribe." She states that only a few vendors will let you unsubscribe instantly. Most require you to send a user name and password and/or to input detailed information about your account. Inasmuch as the "phishers" have now started to use unsubscribe as one of their ploys, it is now dangerous to click on this icon not knowing if you are really providing information to an identity thief.

Google Gmail

by Dr. Herbert A. Goldstein, Editor, Sarasota PC Monitor Sarasota FL PC Users Group (www.spcug.orgpcug@comcast.net)

Gmail is a new, free, web based email service from Google, the people who brought us that remarkable search engine. Gmail, as offered today, is an experiment in a new kind of email. Similar to Hotmail, it has some important differences. Its foundation is the concept that emails need never be deleted, and you should always be able to find any message at any time by searching for it.

There are several major reasons why Google's concept of how email should work is suspect. You get one gigabyte of storage space for your Gmails. No other Internet Service Provider offers even one-tenth of this amount. With this quantity of space available, deleting mail seems less urgent.

In Outlook, when you delete an email message, it really isn't deleted. You're simply transferring it to another folder. Deleting it permanently from that folder requires confirmation on your part. Outlook doesn't make you go to the Recycle Bin to finish the job, but some Internet Service Providers aren't so considerate.

With Gmail it seems much easier to let the messages accumulate, and use the search feature to find what you want when you need it. Even if you decide to delete the message, it may not be gone. Google says that deleted messages will remain on the system, and they will be accessible at the company's web site for as long as Google cares to keep the information.

Because of a new law in California, Google was forced to admit that the company will be pooling any information you give them from any of their services. They will keep this information not only as long as they wish, but they reserve the right to give it to whomever they wish. Don't worry, however. Google probably has confidence that its intentions are good. Its corporate motto is "Don't be evil." It says so in their corporate IPO filing to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Upon close examination, Google's privacy policies aren't any different from Amazon, Microsoft, and others. Their good guy image derives from their unconventional corporate culture coupled with their astonishingly successful search engine.

Most people have no idea what's in the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, and why should they? Most people aren't legal scholars. One of the Act's provisions says that after 180 days, e-mails are no longer protected. Their status reverts to just another record in a database. Any level of government, from local to national, can force Google to release your records armed with nothing more than a subpoena.

Google has never issued any statements about its relationships with other countries, and this should give you cause for concern. Check out the language in the agreement you have to make with Google when you sign up for Gmail. You are giving permission for Google to release your Gmail records to any official from any government, U.S. or otherwise, who requests it for any reason. Would you even want to send an email to someone who has a Gmail account, knowing that your email may be examined by a foreign government?

Google has also stated that your email will be scanned so that you can receive advertising and links to relevant web sites. This applies to both incoming and outgoing email. Nothing in any of Google's policies or public statements applies to those of us who don't have Gmail accounts. There is nothing in Google's privacy policy that would prevent them from storing a list of keywords scanned from incoming email, and associating these keywords with the incoming email address in their database. Google has promised their advertisers won't receive any information that would allow personal identification, but what's to stop Google from keeping this information for some other future use? No one except Google knows if the company has deleted any of the data they've collected since going online. The cookie they dropped on your hard drive doesn't expire until 2038, and it's kept track of every search term you've ever used. How's that for scary?

We don't know for certain if Google will build a colossal database derived from keywords associated with email addresses. If that does turn out to be the case however, there is incredible potential for abuse. The RIAA has sent out thousands of "John Doe" and "Jane Doe" subpoenas to Universities and Internet Service Providers to identify people who download MP3 files illegally. If the RIAA can force AOL to comply, they can do it with Google.

Would an intelligence agency make anything sinister of keywords like "Send us the secret Martha, it's only a recipe, not a nuclear launch code?" Much more ominous would be combinations like jihad coupled with assassination. All kinds of patterns can be generated from keyword combinations. We're beginning to sound like paranoid conspiracy theorists, but the potential for abuse is real and should not be ignored. What makes Gmail appear so suspicious, sinister, and frightening is the enormous storage capacity that Google offers, combined with its super efficient search engine.

There is also the problem of inappropriate ad matching. Stories abound about online merchants who send themselves email for testing, and discover that something in their emails generates ads for their competitors. The "Backspace" section of the October 5, 2004 issue of PC Magazine shows a juxtaposition of an advertisement for an all-inclusive vacation in the Caribbean along with an ad that says "Just say no to all-inclusive."

Gmail was launched presumably as a response from Google users complaining about the poor quality of their current email services. Be careful what you wish for.

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.

New Year's Resolutions For Computer Users

by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Board of Directors

This is the season when we are often asked about our New Year's resolutions. We may want to lose weight, be a better worker, better family member, or other virtuous improvements, but we should also resolve to be better cybercitizens and practice "Safe HEX."

Here are some suggested resolutions:

1. Update antivirus software at least daily – new viruses, worms, and Trojans are appearing at a rapid pace, with an estimated 12,000 new ones appearing in 2004 alone. New viruses can spread around the world literally in minutes, so antivirus software that has not been updated at least daily may be worse than no antivirus software at all. We may have a false sense of security using non-updated software, believing that we are protected from the current crop of viruses, so we click on any interesting email attachments, and insert that questionable floppy in our computers, a dangerous practice. Considering that there are a variety of free antivirus products available, and commercial antivirus software is reasonably priced (especially after rebates), there is absolutely no reason why not to have current antivirus software that is updated at least daily.

2. Spam mail – Delete them without opening them, period. As 2004 came to a close, estimates are that up to 80% of all email is spam. Never purchase anything that is advertised by spam email. Never click on a link in spam email, as many links may load Trojans on your computer, or result in identity theft. Never disclose any personal information such as account numbers, passwords, social security numbers, PIN numbers, etc. in response to an email, even if it says that your account will be threatened if you do not click on the link. This illicit and criminal practice is a method of identity theft called "phishing." Many who market via spam mail are scammers and thieves who make unverifiable claims about their products, sell pirated software, or who will take your hard earned money and send nothing useful back in return.

3. Never click on a popup ad. While many are legitimate sellers, many are also scams. As long as we click on them, and sometimes make purchases, the popup purveyors will continue to plague us with their material.

4. Practice good email etiquette, also called "netiquette" – If forwarding emails to others, do not simply hit "forward" and enter names from your address book. Having a lot of headers, those lines of others' email addresses and routing information, as well as a lot of ">" (greater-than) symbols makes email difficult to read. Strip off any useless header by highlighting and deleting them, and delete the ">" greater than symbol.

Another beneficial piece of netiquette is to be sure that attachments are reasonable in size. Since many newer digital cameras can take poster-sized images; users should reduce the size of emailed images to a reasonable size, such that they can be easily viewed. It would also be a good idea to save the image in the universal JPG or GIF formats, rather than the sometimes-default BMP format, as the JPG and GIF formats greatly compress the file, making it a much smaller download. I sometimes resent receiving a digital photo taken at 2560x1720 or larger, when trying to view it. Recently, someone proudly sent me a 4 megapixel photo of his new grandchild to view on my 800x600 monitor. When I first loaded the image, all I saw was a huge eye, and with red-eye at that. Not just was the file size huge, and slow to download, but the image was several times the size of my screen, requiring me to scroll to see the image.

5. Do not forward Hoaxes and Urban Legends – These may be cute, or we may feel that we are really warning others about some perceived threat, but please check out any email which says "forward this to everyone you know" as it will most likely be a hoax or urban legend. Sites such as www.snopes.com are excellent resources to debunk hoaxes and urban legends. Be aware that you can not get rich, or get gift certificates by forwarding emails, and that the poor dying kid in Georgia wanting postcards has long since recovered. Save yourself some potential embarrassment and email bandwidth, and refuse to forward these messages without first verifying their authenticity. Smart people can be duped too, so do not automatically trust the sender.

6. Kill Spyware – According to many cyber security experts, spyware, software that can gather and send information of the users' activities, may be a greater threat than computer viruses. Spyware is used to steal passwords, account numbers, and other personal information, as well as generate obscene popup ads, redirect purchases and searches, and several other undesirable acts. Also referred to as "malware" spyware is dangerous. Microsoft, never first on the bandwagon, is now in the process of attempting to purchase one of the anti-spyware software companies. While there are several decent commercial anti-spyware products on the market, there are also some excellent free ones, such as Spybot Search and Destroy (www.safer-networking.org) and Ad-Aware SE (www.lavasoftusa.com). Never respond to the scam popup ads that tell you that your computer is infested, and click here … many of those supposed anti-spyware products are scams themselves. Install legitimate anti spyware software, update it and run it at least weekly.

7. Participate in National Cyber Security Awareness Month, October 2005. Put it on your calendar and go to http://www.staysafeonline.info/ to find out how you and your User Group can participate in this important event.

All of the resolutions above are necessary, and easier to keep than losing weight.

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Necessities For That New Computer

by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Board of Directors

Recently, I noticed a lot of people were buying new computers for the holidays, either for themselves, or for gifts. In overhearing some conversations at a variety of local stores, it appeared that some computers were intended to replace older models, and others were for "first-time" users, both youngsters and senior citizens. If the new user, as well as the experienced user, would follow some simple steps and obtain and use some necessary hardware and software, then he will likely have several years of happy computing. If the user fails to heed safe computing guidelines, he will likely result in dissatisfaction with the new machine.

First, do not plug that new computer directly into the wall socket. It is imperative that the new computer is plugged into either a surge suppressor (the minimum protection) or a good uninterruptible power supply with automatic voltage regulation (UPS-AVR), of appropriate capacity, which would be ideal. Users need to be aware that the warranties of most new computers do not cover damage from power related problems, and plenty of users have had their new computers "fried" by power surges or spikes. The resistance to power surges and spikes is measured in joules, and generally the more joules the better. A good UPS with AVR that has adequate capacity to power the computer for several minutes generally offers far superior protection to a surge suppressor. If a surge suppressor is selected, be sure that it has a UL1449 rating at a minimum. Some users think that a common inexpensive power strip is adequate, but other than maybe having a circuit breaker, a power strip offers no protection from power problems.

Once the computer is assembled, plugged into an appropriate protective device, and turned on, other threats and needs appear. First is antivirus protection: many new computers come with a short term trial version of an antivirus program, installed with the hope that the user will pay the annual registration fee prior to expiration. I have had users tell me that they do not need antivirus software because they never go online with that computer, and that can be a dangerous misconception. Computer viruses can also be transmitted by infected floppies, CDs, and DVDs, necessitating an updated antivirus product. Several antivirus products are available at retail and by download. Before purchasing antivirus software, consider the free antivirus software available from a variety of sources, including the free antivirus software that some of the internet service providers give their subscribers. One decent free program is the EHZ Trust Suite, consisting of antivirus software, a firewall to restrict hacker access, and a popup blocker, can be downloaded at www.my-etrust.com/microsoft.

Relatively few users do not go on line, and since almost all do, Internet access will be required. Almost all new computers come pre-installed with a variety of software from several national internet service providers (ISPs). Microsoft tries to push users into using its MSN paid Internet access, and AOL, EarthLink, and others are commonly installed and featured on the desktop. The smart user desiring dial-up Internet access can probably save money and get superior service by using a local ISP for Internet access (such as Eonet, or EXP), rather than the big national carriers. If the user subscribes to a local ISP, then the directories containing the software for the national carriers can be safely deleted from the hard drive. If the user will be using the Internet extensively, then high speed "broadband" Internet access would be desirable. Choices of broadband providers include cable, DSL, and satellite broadband. They are generally price competitive with each other, but some offer better service then the others, and this varies locally. One warning, be sure that you understand any contracts that may be required, as some broadband providers have a hefty cancellation fee for terminating an account prematurely.

A printer will be necessary to print documents, photos, and other items. Almost all modern printers will do a decent job for household use, but be aware of what new inkjet or laser cartridges can cost. The user can save a lot of money by recycling and recharging his used inkjet and laser toner cartridges (such as from Laser Recon), or by purchasing re-filled or generic cartridges. Be aware that inexpensive but good quality generic cartridges are generally available for some brands (Epson, Canon), but difficult to find for others (Lexmark, HP). A good deal and a high rebate on one brand of printer may turn out to be a false economy when the cost of replacement cartridges is factored in to the overall cost.

The user replacing his old computer with a new one may want to move files and programs to the new computer. Data files can be copied to CD, or moved via a direct network connection, but program files can generally not be simply copied from one computer to another. It would be best to reinstall desired programs from the original discs, but if they are not available, a utility sometimes included with new computers, or a utility such as "Aloha Bob" can move program files properly.

Enjoy that new computer, but be sure to practice "safe hex."

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Informative Tech News

by Bob Elgines; CRCC Editor; elginesz@rraz.net

More Free Spyware - There is another one out there like Spybot called SpyBlaster which can be downloaded at : www.javacoolsoftware.com . There is a slight catch, you will need to manually update, unless you pay $10 for an automatically update sub-scription. This unlike Spybot will prevent installation of spyware.

PCI Express vs AGP-8X Graphic Cards - Are they here to stay? The PCI-Express cards are about the same speed and

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<u>Not A Renewal Reminder</u>

TECH NEWS
Continued From Page 10

higher in price. So don't run out and change your Mother Board to accommodate the PCI-Express. The only difference right now is the Bandwidth, but there are not programs out there to use this advantage. It's main use would be used in Gaming.

Windows 2000 Info! Microsoft released an update containing a collection of previous patches. The final service pack for Windows 2000 is SP4, which was released in March, 2003. Support for Windows 2000 will end in 2010.

What is "Windows XP N?" Windows XP N is a version without the MS Media Player. Windows XP Home (the standard version) sells for the same price.

What is "Windows XP Media?" Basically the standard home version with all of the latest photo, music, and movie enhancement pack. This includes such things as Plus! Photo Story, Media player, Movie Maker, etc. These items can be downloaded from Microsoft for free in most cases.

New Microsoft Windows Software. Microsoft's new operating system called "Longhorn" has been officially named "Windows Vista", and is set to be released

to the public in 2006. The three new goals are summarized as Clear (new methods), Confident (better security) and Connected (seamless) by Microsoft developers.

New WD Hard Drive. Western Digital released a new high-class series of Caviar drives and announced a new high capacity drive of 400 GB SATA (Serial). This drive has a speed of 7200 rpm, 16 MB of cache, and a transfer rate of 150 MBps. The WD Caviar SE16 400 GB is priced at approximately $280 with a 3 year warranty.

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Why Join A Computer Club?

1. Benefit from a common interest in a personal (and costly) investment: Your business or personal computer.
2. Enjoy more of that investment by learning more about it.
3. Share tips and tricks, as well as new and old ideas.
4. Become exposed to a variety of new hardware and software without sales pressure.
5. Receive an informative monthly newsletter.
6. Have access to various club functions and all Special Interest Groups (SIGs).
7. Find out that no one needs to be alone and helpless with today's computer technology.

Multi-Media SIG

Includes Digital Cameras, Burning Music CDs, and Creating QuickTime Movies.
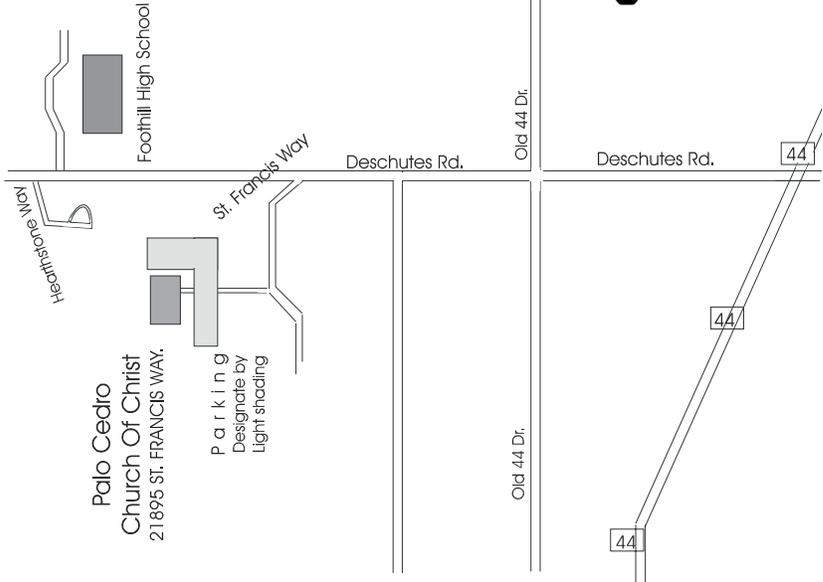
Saturday — 10 AM,
Dec 17
Good Times Pizza
Pala Cedro
Call Jane for directions

Jane Quinn 365-0825
qjquinn@charter.net

Windows & More SIG

Wednesday — 11:30 AM
Dec 14, 21, 28, Jan 4, 11
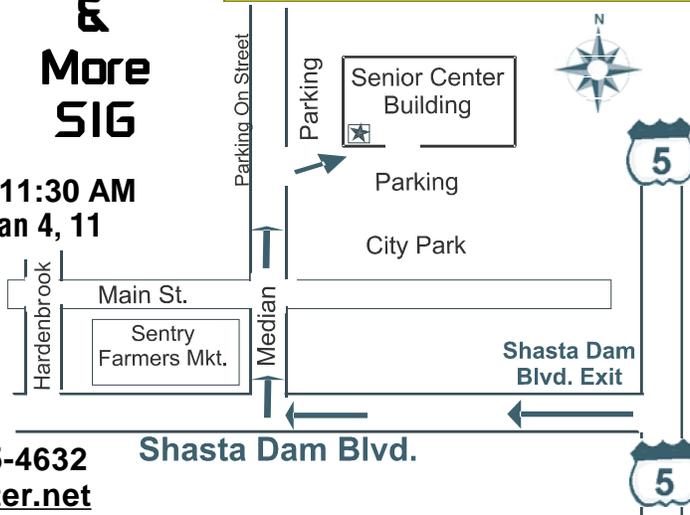
Bill Ball 275-4632
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P.O. Box 494778
Redding, CA 96049-4778

CUG'S MEETING PLACE
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21895 St. Francis Way.

Foothill High School

Heathstone Way

St. Francis Way

Deschutes Rd.

Old 44 Dr.

Deschutes Rd.

44

44

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City Park

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Main St.

Hardenbrook

Median

Sentry Farmers Mkt.

Shasta Dam Blvd. Exit

Shasta Dam Blvd.

5

DTP & Graphics Art SIG

Wednesday — 2 PM
Dec 14, 21, 28, Jan 4, 11
See map to left for meeting place.

Judi Ball 275-4632
jebed@charter.net