

# The Personal Computer Club of Toronto

FREE!

# READLINE

FEATURING ARTICLES BY COMPUTER CLUB MEMBERS

"GETTING MORE OUT OF YOUR COMPUTER"

## Photoshop 4 for Dummies

By Joan Latchford (PCCT)

It has been said that the best way to start research is to go to the children's section of your local library and find a book on your topic of interest.

In the past, I've said some pretty nasty things about the bright yellow Dummies Series by IDG books. However, I have to admit that *Photoshop 4 for Windows for Dummies* by Deke McClelland is an excellent illustration of the KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid) principle.

I've used many Windows and even paint programs but Photoshop is something else! My usual approach to a new Windows program is to take my mouse in hand, drop down the menus/cascading menus and option boxes. This usually provides enough information to get started. But does what Preference/display and gamut, or Display and cursors/video LUT animation mean — you get the picture. I on the other hand would not have done so as easily without this book.



While I still find some of the dummies' humour forced and gratuitous McClelland's examples make their point. I particularly appreciated his comparison of pixels and their distribution in an image, to the population of Lagos, the world's most populous city at ten million souls. Or his sweeping program overview — that "every single painting and image editing function in Photoshop is devoted to changing either the quantity or colour of pixels."

As a former documentary photographer, I learnt bit by bit, mastering new techniques when I wanted or needed to

produce a particular effect. In the same way McClelland has set out the chapters in *Photoshop 4 for Windows for Dummies* so that they make sense for study on a stand-alone basis. Even so, there are handy references to chapters which offer related and in-depth topic material.

As a result of picking up this book I would have to say I was able to scan, retouch, scale and print a smashing rendition of the included image.

PS. Yes, I know Photoshop version 5 has just been released but I also know a lot of us will continue to use version 4 until we hear the bugs are out of 5 and/or we can afford to upgrade. By that time I'm sure IDG will have come through with a revision to 5 as well.

*Photoshop 4 for Windows for Dummies*  
by Deke McClelland  
IDG Books  
ISBN 0-7645-0102-X

## PartitionMagic & Drive Image 2.0 in Sept

Gene Barlow, who is well known throughout the user group community, will be the guest presenter at the Personal Computer Club of Toronto General Meeting on Tuesday, September 15th in the Burgundy Room of the North York Memorial Community Hall. Gene will be speaking about the following two exciting new releases.

PowerQuest Corporation announces PartitionMagic 4.0! With exciting new functionality and ease of use, the world's most trusted partitioning program, PartitionMagic 4.0, now puts the benefits of hard-drive partitioning within reach of everyone. Here's how...

Powerful boot management for safe, effortless switching between multiple operating systems (OSs). Graphical interface with full mouse support. Native DOS and Windows configuration.

Exceptional ease of use with wizard functionality. Batch and execute commands simultaneously. Create, resize and move partitions on the fly. MagicMover and DriveMapper utilities. Flexible functionality. Support for larger drives - even supports hard drives larger than 20 GB. Convert from FAT to FAT32 and back again. Native Windows 95/98 and NT executables. Complete support for FAT, FAT32, NTFS, HPFS and Linux ext2 file systems. Whatever the task, PartitionMagic will help you get it done.

Crash! Boom! Bang! — Your hard drive blew up. You lost your tax spreadsheets. Your addresses. That critical business proposal. Not to mention your sanity. You had your whole life contained in a few gigs.

Click! — A click of a button and you're up and running again. Which is why it's a good thing you used new Drive

Image 2.0 from PowerQuest.

In minutes you were able to make a complete backup of your hard drive on a Zip, JAZ, or almost any other removable media. When disaster struck, you simply reloaded the copy of your hard drive and you were back in business.

"Special User Group Prices" on these new products will be available only at the meeting. Don't miss it!

Bonus Offer! For the first 100 people through the door, we'll give you a copy of Microsoft's Publisher as a 30 day demo. Be early!

COMING OCTOBER 20th... Mr. Simon Witts, General Manager of Microsoft Canada will be joining PCCT members and guests for an informative evening about the state the software industry. Mark this one on your calendar!

Sept 1998 Volume 16  
Number 7

PCCT

Join us at the  
PCCT Sept 15th  
See back page for  
Free Coupon!

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## General Meeting Tuesday, Sept 15th, 1998

Admission for non-members – \$5.00

**6:30pm: Meet and discuss** - your ideas for PCCT with some of our Board members and volunteers.

**7:00pm: General Meeting** - starts with a Question & Answer session.

PCCT thanks these vendors for donating equipment to the club:

AMD – Internet Web Server, Motherboards  
Adaptec – SCSI controller  
U.S. Robotics – modem

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### REMEMBER!

**Don't forget about the Membership Drive.  
From Sept to Nov, bring in 3 new members and get a  
coupon worth \$50. Your membership is free!**

The Personal Computer Club Of Toronto (**PCCT**) is an independent, not-for-profit association for people who use PC microcomputers. Our philosophy: *Users helping Users.*

"read.me" is the newsletter of the PCCT, published 11 times a year, featuring articles by club members and members of other user groups from around the world. Opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily of the PCCT.

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**Please note:** Fees, dates, and specifications are subject to change without notice.

The PCCT does not assume responsibility for damages arising from the publication or non-publication of any advertisement in this newsletter. Acceptance of advertising does not imply endorsement by the club.

## Special Interest Groups

### The Basics SIG

SIG Leader: Frank Latchford (416) 340-0999

Learning Windows 95/98 SIG. This SIG is intended for those who are new to Windows 95/98. We will discuss how Windows works and how to use it on a daily basis. The intention of this SIG is to teach — not to entertain. We will start at the beginning and go to the end. You should have learned to use some aspect of Windows by the end of the evening.

### Daytime SIG

SIG Leader: Bob Matheson (416) 222-4628

This is a discussion group that covers a wide range of topics relating to IBM and compatible computers. It is for novice, intermediate and advanced users.

### Digital Imaging SIG

SIG Leader: Ron Caine (ron\_caine@msn.com)

Interested in scanners, photography, digital cameras and the software to run all that? Then this SIG is for you. We will go over all facets of manipulating pixels to give you the results you want.

### Genealogy SIG

SIG Leader: John Mahler (jmahler@globalserve.net)

The Genealogy SIG is for anyone who is interested in the search of the past. We delve into the family tree and cover the tools, means and resources available to those who search. If you have an interest in your past and want to learn more, come on by and sit a spell.

### Hardware SIG

SIG Leader: Clive Apps (416) 510-0020

Installing and fixing your computer hardware can be fun, a learning experience and can save you money. Find out what goes on under the hood and what you can do about it. Bring your machine and do it there.

### Internet SIG

SIG Leader: Paul Leduc (leduc@user.rose.com)

This SIG concentrates on how to access and utilize the various resources of the Internet. If you are having difficulties using the Internet or simply wish to learn more, then this SIG is for you. The first 15 minutes of the SIG are used to answer general communications issues.

### Investment SIG

SIG Leader: Ken Morgan (416) 491-1932

Analytical techniques, use of spreadsheets, graphical display of investment analysis all play an important part in these meetings. Also, considerable use is made of video training tapes on investment subjects.

### Microsoft Office SIG

SIG Leader: Jonathan Hines simple@ibm.net

Learn how to use the Microsoft Office suite of programs: Word, Excel, Access and Powerpoint. A SIG geared to helping small business make effective use of this software.

### New User SIG

SIG Leader: Henry Crane (905) 884-5443

This is a group arranged specifically for novice computer users. It holds informal friendly discussions on the essentials of personal computing. You will get clear concise explanations of computer terms on your personal level of understanding, help with what to learn and how to learn it quickly and cheaply, purchasing, upgrading and problem solving advice that can save you many hours and dollars.

### Visual Basic SIG

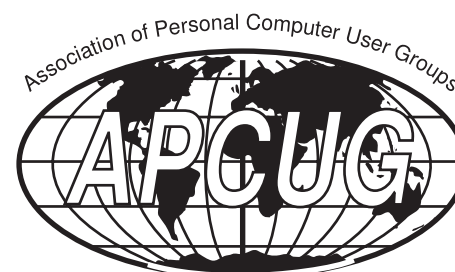
SIG Leaders: Trevor Pedley & Jim McIntosh

Learn Visual Basic, a popular programming language. This group follows a beginners level text with a structured learning environment. You can easily learn sophisticated ways to program applications in the Windows environment by attending this group.

### Windows / Win95 SIG

SIG Leader: Karl Stanley 1-905-836-5222

Here is where you can learn how to get and use the maximum from MS Windows. You will enjoy an information-packed, entertaining evening while you learn how to use all the Windows tools, and make Windows run more efficiently on your machine. You can participate in the monthly training session and become an expert user in less than a year. You will learn tips and tricks that will save you hours. You will meet many power users, see the latest Windows products and perhaps win a valuable door prize.



# Notes from the Board Aug 98

The board did meet during August, and all members were able to attend, fitting club business in between vacation time. A very detailed discussion of the operating plan for the next six months concluded with a balanced financial budget. The financial plan is based on a membership of 500. To reduce expenses the Directors have decided to downsize the purchase of software, reduce the number of e-mail links to the website and discontinue the annual volunteer party, at least temporarily.

There is real possibility that the cost of accommodation may drastically increase. The Directors may have to seek the approval of the membership for an overall fee increase at the Annual General Meeting in December. All other projected expenses can be met based on a minimum of 500 members.

A membership drive is being announced to take place over the next 3 months. This needs every member's support to be successful. As a very

tangible reward, the club will give \$50 credit to each member for introducing 3 new members.

The summer picnic was a success, and enjoyed by those present. Members and their families came and went from before noon until dusk. The barbecue was reluctant to ignite but encouraged by Doug Colquhoun and his supporters and the heckling of the crowd; some fine food was eventually cooked and consumed. Next year we hope more will be able to join us for this social time.

Keep watching the club's website. It is changing rapidly as the Virtual Web Team under Mireille Massue's direction continues reconstruction. The team has been joined by Dan ffollott among others who meet electronically to discuss and plan this important facet of the club.

More special offers are coming in from vendors; some of them have a very short time frame. These will be sent out over the e-mail distribution list, and published on the BBS. If you wish to receive

these opportunities directly please let the membership department know your current e-mail address. There is change of address forms available at the general meeting for your convenience.

The SIG leaders will announce their scheduled subjects in advance. This will enable all of us to bring one-time guests, who may be interested in a particular subject. An ideal time to show them the advantages of joining a group of helpful friendly people.

Some special subject meetings with specific vendors are planned. If any members have a particular topic or vendor that they think would be of general interest please let Dave Hanson our Programme Director or one of the Board members know.

The technical seminar by Pathway Communications was well attended. The Internet is such a large subject, only methods of connecting for a dial-up account were presented. There is much more to be covered, so we expect to run a similar seminar at a later

date.

The September general meeting will have some special rewards for those who attend. In addition to the vendor's tables there will be Steve Rakus' Tips & Tricks for Windows book available at a special price. Also we will continue with the member's hardware sales table. If members wish to offer hardware for sale, it is to be tagged with their name and the price. The seller will donate 10% to the club.

There will be at least one free gift for most members at the September general meeting. The first 100 registering will receive a copy of Microsoft's Publisher 98 and Picture It. Microsoft has donated this software. There will be special event only pricing for the software of our featured speaker. This is just the start of the new general meeting season, with your help it will continue to improve.

— Robin —

## How to Avoid Buying a New Computer

By George Yanchula (PCCT)

Is your system too slow? Is your hard drive full? Do you have software that you would like to install on your system, but can't. Do the kids complain about your system and refuse to use it? Do well meaning people take you aside and talk about your slow computer instead of your dandruff or your breath? You know its time to buy a new computer but are you ready to spend that kind of money on a new system? You can avoid or delay buying a new system if you upgrade your existing system. If you do the upgrading yourself, you could save a lot of money. But whether you do it on your own or have someone else do the job, you would benefit from the helpful tips in Myles White's book "How to Avoid Buying a New Computer".

I know what you are thinking – learning is for kids, and you only want to be a user, not a technician. But remember, you are going to be using computers for the rest of your life. Many of the things in his book are common sense, easy to understand, and can be used in troubleshooting and solving problems that may come up in day to day life.

Myles White's book talks about everything you need to know, what to consider, and what to look out for in upgrading your computer. In a style much similar to his lectures at ComputerFest, Myles comes across with humor and wit. The advantage of

the book is that he can go into much greater detail. If you install something, and it doesn't work, he lists several things that you should do that may rectify the problem.

The book, well worth its \$19.99 value, consists of five chapters. The first chapter is called "Under the Hood". It encourages you to open the case and look inside. The only tools needed are a flat head screwdriver, and a Phillips screwdriver. The book describes simple maintenance such as cleaning up the dust that accumulates on the inside. It tells how to change the battery. It gives some troubleshooting tips and information on beep codes for the different BIOS chips.

The book then devotes a chapter to the circuit boards (expansion boards) which go into the expansion slots. It goes into great detail about video cards, controller cards, SCSI cards, and sound cards, giving technical information on these devices, recommendations for shopping, instructions for installation, and troubleshooting techniques.

The book then devotes a chapter to the replacement or adding of drives. These include CD-ROM drives, floppy drives, hard drives, and also mentions other types of storage drives such as tape drives, zip drives, etc. Most people eventually become short of storage space, and having some knowledge about what to do about it is very useful.

The next chapter is titled "Adding Oomph (and Recovering from Tiny Disasters)." It covers the topic of upgrading memory, the CPU, and finally the Motherboard itself. Often, when someone purchases a computer, the amount of memory installed is only sufficient to handle the software current to the year of purchase. Two or three years later it's a different story. Many systems can be upgraded by putting in a faster CPU, and if they can't, then a motherboard and CPU may be in order.

The final chapter is titled "The Shape of Things to Come and other Rants". It covers the newest innovations that are coming, or will be coming out in the latest computers. This is useful as one should always think of the future when planning an upgrade. He also gives examples of some of the misleading marketing statements or lies that hardware manufacturers use in the personal computer industry. He gives a few examples such as the numbers used in naming CPU's, Sound cards, CD-ROM's, Tape drives, and Chipsets. In my opinion he should have gone further on this, especially in this chapter. The misleading figure of 56K in modems or 17 inches in monitors come to mind. In fact, you will find misleading information in the marketing of just about every major computer component. Perhaps the biggest gripe that I have are the half-truths used in marketing Hard drives. (Try finding the sustained disk transfer rate of any model of hard drive.)

Several places in his book Myles talks about saving the motherboard manual, and rightfully so. Those who learn to keep their motherboard manual will be able to upgrade their systems. Those who don't are in for a lot of grief. The motherboard manual will tell what kind of memory to buy when you want to buy more. It will explain what jumpers to set if you decided to put in a faster CPU. It will be useful in setting, or resetting the CMOS system settings if the battery fails. It will make it easier for a technician to repair the computer if it breaks down.

At the back of the book is a list of hardware manufacturers, their technical support phone numbers, fax numbers, BBS numbers, and web sites. There is also another interesting feature -- a troubleshooting index. This is an index of computer problems, and the pages in the book that deal with them.

Have I convinced you yet? Well if you don't want to upgrade, then you should buy Myles White's other book, "How To Buy a Computer".

*Myles White is a computer columnist and feature writer for the Toronto Star. His web site is at <http://web.idirect.com/myles> and he can be reached at [myles@idirect.com](mailto:myles@idirect.com). The book is published by McClelland & Stewart Inc.*

# AlphaSmart 2000

By Trevelyan Beard (PCCT)

You could call it the poor man's laptop and at \$349 Canadian, it's the perfect buy depending on what you use a laptop for. If you do word processing only, this machine is for you. If you do spreadsheets, database stuff and graphics then stay with a laptop.

Join me on a trip to Timbuktu, by air. After dinner, it's worktime and this entails writing several reports to my boss explaining why my sales are so phenomenal (this is fiction of course). From my briefcase I extract a small keyboard (the AlphaSmart 2000), press the 'ON' button and immediately launch into my reports. There's a small screen showing four lines of what I'm typing. As I type, the previous work rolls off the screen. It word wraps of course and now get this ... I press 'SPELL CHECK' and my mistakes immediately come to the fore. Yes, it's a regular spell checker.

But let's get into the nitty gritty. The AlphaSmart 2000 is a regular size keyboard with the normal 80 keys, so

you are not cramped for finger space. The numbers are across the top and the only thing missing is the right hand number pad. It comes with three AA batteries that will power the AlphaSmart 2000 for 300 hours and allows 64 pages of text (128,000 characters of memory) divided into eight files. The machine saves your data — and your place in the text — even when you turn off the keyboard. So you don't ever have to worry about losing a file. In other words, there isn't a save button — it's not required.

It's about 12 inches by 10 and weighs just 2 lbs. But read on!

On reaching my office, I merely plug the AlphaSmart 2000 into the keyboard socket, bring up on the computer screen a blank page in my word processor and press 'send'. The reports that I have worked on now flow gently (as the Sweet Afton) into the computer. That's all there is to it.

A little bit more of the nitty gritty: it

features Find, Password and Foreign Language Support, gives you a report on your typing speed any time you ask, gives features for special needs such as sticky keys, key repeat control and four keyboard layouts: QWERTY, left handed, right handed and Dvorak. Finally, you can input from the computer any text that you intend to continue working on while flying to Timbuktu. There is a 3 year warranty and toll-free support.

The same machine will work off PCs going back as far as the 286 model and most Apple computers.

It's a remarkable piece of equipment and the cost is \$349 Canadian plus \$20 for the cable. Yes, it will run off an adapter, but that's another \$15.

Image Media in Toronto - 800 263-1717 or in the US - Intelligent Peripheral Devices, Inc. CA - 408 252-9400.

## The Upgrade Guide for the Busy Person

By George Bowman  
(Winnipeg PC User Group)

One of the last things I received in the mail as Co-Editor of the newsletter was a copy of the book whose title heads this review. I received it from Mike Murach & Associates, Inc.

The book, written by Anne Prince is really aimed at the busy person who needs to get up to speed and producing useful work quickly.

Including the Index at the end of the book, the work is only 40 pages in length.

From "How To Use The Start Menu" to "How To Use The Index tab of the Help Topics dialog box" the information provided is simple and easy to understand. For example, in addition to showing one how to Start Windows 95, one is also shown how to Shut Down the program. All the major requirements, such as switching from one window to another; minimizing, maximizing, restoring and closing a window; moving, resizing windows and scrolling through a window's contents are succinctly explained. As well working with menus, using shortcuts and dialog boxes are covered more than adequately.

For those people who do not like working with electronic rodents and are more at ease using the keyboard, the use of keys and key combinations is thoroughly explained. Working with folders and files is explained, too. A great help for people like myself who fail to understand the rationale behind Microsoft's switch from directories and files to folders and files, is the explanation of working with folders and files.

I had already had Windows 95 on my machine for some time when I received this book in the mail. However I followed it page by page from beginning to end and found that if I had had the book immediately following installation of the program, I probably would have found the transition from Windows 3.1 to Windows 95 a sight smoother than what it actually was.

Although this book is not big, it is proof that small (short) books can be as effective, if not more so, than larger (longer) ones. A user of Win 3.1 or DOS who is now required to do his/her work using Windows 95 getting up to speed in the use of this program is essential: After all, people paid to produce useful work during their work day are forced to spend the minimum amount of time learning a new program. "A Crash Course In Windows 95" does just this.

If you have just installed Windows 95 and are having difficulty with the voluminous Help File it contains, or if you or your company are contemplating changing from either DOS or Win 3.x to Windows 95, I can recommend that this book will be just the thing to get you up and running in the minimum amount of time with the maximum knowledge necessary to work efficiently.

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Voice: (209) 275-3335

# McAfee Security Suite for Windows 95

By A.O.Schreiter (PCCT)

Sometime ago I received an offer in the mail from McAfee for a CD containing several useful-sounding utilities at what seemed a very reasonable price (\$ 69.95). I decided to buy it, mainly because one of the items on the CD was McAfee's well-reputed virus scanner, and I was not happy with the Win95 virus scanner.

The installation on my Pentium MMX computer went without a hitch. The suite consists of the VirusScan, a WebScan to protect against downloading faulty web pages, a quick backup that is supposed to run in the background and constantly back up new or altered files, a crash protector, and a program to analyse the performance of the computer and suggest improvements where appropriate.

The trouble started after I restarted the machine. Within minutes the crash protector came on and told me it was protecting me from a crash. I went along with it, but instead of "restoring" the computer it froze it solid. I restarted the machine, and everything went smoothly for less than 10 minutes, then the crash protector tried to "protect" me again, with the same result as

before. To make along story short, this process repeated itself about every 10 minutes

The suite included a program that was to clean up unnecessary registry files and generally give a performance overview with suggestions for improvements. It too froze the computer two out of three times, and some of its suggestions, when it was working, were not very useful. Because some files mysteriously disappeared from my computer, such as the WordPerfect address book, I suspect the clean up of the registry was more destructive than clean

I phoned the McAfee support number and told them of my problem. Their immediate suggestion was to uninstall the crash protector, and if that did not help, to progressively uninstall the other programs until the problem resolved itself. I asked them if this was a common problem with the suite, and after some prodding the support person admitted that this had happened before. My next question was: Why does your company continue to sell a product it knows does not perform as advertised? Instead of an answer the

McAfee person hung up on me. So much for "Product Support".

Since I had no other choice, I began to unload the programs, beginning with the crash protector. Only when I had unloaded everything except the VirusScan and the WebScan did the crash problem go away. I must say that the VirusScan and WebScan work well and problem free.

My suggestion to anyone thinking of buying the McAfee Security Suite is to save your money. Personally, I will not buy another McAfee product. I have since bought a very similar product from Symantec (Norton Utilities) and it performs without a hitch. Caveat Emptor.

# A Cold-Blooded View of Platforms

By Yves Barbero, (Blue Notes, San Francisco PCUG)

A lawyer who writes books for Nolo Press was told in no uncertain terms that they wanted his output on 3.5" high density diskettes, and would no longer accept 360 kilobyte 5.25" floppies. He was referred to me.

"You have an 8088?" I asked.

"Yea! And every time I go to a store, they want to sell me a Pentium this, or a Windows 95 that. I don't want that c\*\*p! I just want to write my books. But no one wants to install the high density diskette on my machine. One guy says it can't be done."

"It takes a special card and external drive to do it. Not really cost effective," I pointed out. My solution was to sell him a 286 that had been gathering dust on my shop floor. I slapped on the required diskette drive, moved his data from his old machine with a cable, and hit him for just under \$200 (labor and equipment included), and every one was happy. I sold a working machine I owned outright, and he got back to work without needing to re-invent the wheel. I don't expect to hear from him until something dies, or his publisher makes further demands on him.

Granted, clients like him don't make me piles of money, he is, nevertheless, the ideal computer user. He waits until he has no choice, and then does it.

Similarly, my very first client, a labor organization, has finally replaced the computer I sold him eleven years ago with a modern Pentium machine. Over the years, there had been three motherboard changes, one memory upgrade and three hard disk changes (one because the first hard disk failed during the warranty period). It started as an 8088, with a thirty megabyte hard disk and was taken off-line as a 386SX25 with two megabytes of RAM and an 80 megabyte hard disk (a good old Seagate full height, and still in good shape).

The CMOS did not always remember what hard disk it had, especially after a weekend. The secretary would routinely reset it from information written on a label stuck on the box. The monitor got fuzzy (I gave them a free replacement six months ago from the pile of monochrome monitors I have on my floor since I would have been too embarrassed to charge them). The keyboard died a month ago. The secretary complained that the new one I sold them didn't have the keys in the right place. I smiled and shrugged my shoulders. "That's the way they make them, now." I politely suggested that this machine had finally reached the end of its useful life. The head of the

organization said he had a car that was older than the computer. "So do I," was all I could reply.

What turned the trick was the need for the organization to access the Internet. Curiously, the price of the hardware was about the same \$1200 that I had charged them for the original 8088. But this one has Super VGA, a hard disk over 50 times larger, and a processor that's several hundred times faster. It also has a much better Solitaire game.

I made an interesting decision at this point. I stuck with DOS, although I did upgrade it to version 6.22 from version 5.0. And I decided to use Windows 3.11 (which can be bought for a song). The advantage to doing this was that I could keep the same interface she had been using for over ten years, a DOS/ASCII menu system, just adding WIN to the choices. Unlike most people, she'd been using Professional Write and an old flat database called Reflex bought many years ago. Even with the purchase of the Corel WordPerfect Suite 6.1, an upgrade to DOS WordPerfect that had been sitting on the hard disk unused for many years, for use when she eventually goes to Windows, I kept their costs for software to under \$200. It's possible that it'll be awhile before the switch is made to Windows programs except for the immediate need to use the Internet. When she does, there is a filter I specifically installed that'll bring in her Professional Write stuff seamlessly into WP 6.1. Planning is the heart of my business.

I knew what the organization needed, having dealt with them over many years, and their approximate resources (a labor organization rarely has the deep pockets conservative pundits claim — and why waste money?), and what they have to do. And there is the human factor. The secretary is close to retirement. Is there really a need to radicalize her use of computers at this point? The best question I asked myself was, "Is there anything they need to do in Windows 95 that can't be done on another platform?" The answer was "No!". Even Windows 3.11's limitation on baud speed (19,200) can be overcome with a third-party freebie called Cybercom. I get a full 33,600 baud in Windows 3.1X.

If things change, and they do need or want to use Windows 95 in the future, the hardware I sold them will allow the move in an hour or less.

I have another client, who in the course of a year and a half, went from a Macintosh with an external 20 megabyte hard drive she'd been using for many years, to a 486DX66, a 486DX

100, and now a nice fast Pentium. She also went to Windows 3.11 and Windows 95 (she, not being sure that the last move was necessary). All of these moves could be justified if for no other reason than this woman actually buckles down and learns her software thoroughly. She's retired and doesn't need to be as thorough as she is except for self-satisfaction. If more of my clients were like her, I'd starve.

About a month before Windows 95 first came out, I sent a newsletter to all my clients advising them to wait at least six months and not jump in. Most of them waited. Now I don't object to it on software or learning grounds (although Windows 95 still has problems). It has been thoroughly socialized into the computer community. But I don't necessarily promote it. I never really saw it as an improvement for most people. Even for me, it was a year before I put it on my main office machine. Prior to that, I had it on a loose hard disk that I'd plug into my test motherboard when I needed to look at something.

My point is that marketing hype is just that. The old chestnuts, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!" and "KISS (Keep it Simple, Stupid)" apply in spades. Microsoft is the 400 pound gorilla. I have little choice but to be dragged kicking and screaming into Windows 95 (although I have a second computer with DOS/Windows 3.11) because slowly but surely, my clients are going

there. One guy, who should have known better, went to Windows 95 against my advice. He had a 486DX50 and I warned him that the equipment wasn't up to par. The claim that Windows 95 would work on a 386DX machine is like claiming that you can move a freight car with a donkey. You can, but ever so slowly. Two months later, he has new motherboard (Pentium) and hard disk. Now it works right. But he likes the old interface of Windows 3.11 so I put the Program Manager that comes with Windows 95 in his startup. Go figure!

The beauty of computers is that they're infinitely configurable so why would anyone want to use the same platform. Americans are conformists claiming to be individualists. Bill Gates recognized this years ago and is now the richest man in America. Computers, despite the shorter life span, are very much like cars. People identify with them and it seems to make some spiritual difference that your car is blue and your neighbor's car is red. But your patriotism gets questioned if you don't own a car. Similarly, your competence as a user is questioned if you don't join the Windows 95 bandwagon, unless you're a beatnik who uses UNIX.

The cold truth about platforms is that whatever works for you or your organization is the right solution.

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# Tips for Operating More Efficiently

By Roland B. Herman (Westchester PC News)

## FROM THE GROUND UP

I have visited many homes with computers and found that most of them have a tangled maze of wires and cables coming from the computer, monitor, and accessories, and ending up on the floor. There is usually a surge protector strip with a master switch also on the floor, and the electric plugs are inserted into the strip. The owner has to crawl on his/her hands and knees to turn the master switch on and off. This is simply unacceptable. You don't crawl on your hands and knees to turn on a lamp, why do it for the computer? Just because the electric wall outlet is near the floor is no reason for having everything else on the floor. With a little planning, the wiring can be made neat and convenient to operate.

Let's start with the surge protector strip. Get some Velcro tape and attach the strip to the top or side of your computer desk or table within easy reach of the master switch. I have mine mounted along side of the base of the monitor where it doesn't waste any desk space. If the power cord isn't long enough to reach the wall socket, use a three wire extension cord. Now run the wires from the monitor, computer, printer and other peripherals in a neat bundle to the surge strip and plug everything in. Tie up the bundle of wires with wire ties (or kitchen baggy ties) and route them neatly behind the desk or table high up off the floor. Similarly, bundle the computer cables and tie them neatly also high up off the floor.

If you want to be a little fancier and spend a few dollars, there are Velcro cable ties in different colors available in the computer stores for this specific purpose. If necessary, secure a few screw-on or glue-on hooks to the back of the desk or table to hold the bundle of cables high up off the floor. It is also a good idea to put labels or color code the cable ends and the socket connections on the computer if you change peripherals frequently.

When you have completed this reorganization, you will be able to turn everything on and off with a single flip of the switch within arm's reach and the cables and wiring will be in an orderly arrangement that won't require the services of rocket scientist to make modifications in the future.

## COLOUR CODED CABLES AND JACKS

Many users now have more than one computer. They also have many peripherals, such as printers, mice, trackballs, keyboards, scanners, speakers, microphones, external modems, external tape drives and ZIP drives, switch boxes, networks, addi-

tional monitors, display projectors, laptops, etc. It is often necessary to switch components from one machine to another which involves identifying the proper cables, unplugging them and re-plugging them in the alternate location. Some cables have plugs which are designed to fit only into the appropriate jacks on the computer, but there are many exceptions. There are mice with D plugs and others with round ones. Some keyboards use the standard large round plug and others use a small round plug. Also the location of the jacks in back of different computer models varies greatly. It becomes a nuisance to find the proper cable to unplug and the correct jack into which it must go. It would be nice if the industry adopted standards for color coding all the cables and jacks. The only instance of color coding that I have seen is on a Compaq computer with the speaker cables and jacks color coded.

I have taken matters into my own hands, and have color coded my own cables and computer jacks. I bought colored tape in a hardware store and wrapped the cable ends. I also placed a piece of the colored tape next to the jack in the back of the computer, so the red cable goes to the red jack, the green to the green, etc. You can use multiple colors on the same cable and jack if you wish. I used the following color scheme:

- red for the printer cable and jack on port LPT 1.
- green for the external modem cable and jack on port Coin 2.
- black for the monitor cable and jack.
- yellow for the mouse cable and jack.
- blue for the keyboard cable and jack.
- red and green for my external tape backup cable and jack on LPT 2.

I didn't color code the speaker, microphone, or game cables, nor the power cables; however, you may find it convenient to include those also.

Now that I have the color system in place it is a cinch to change a peripheral. For example, if I want to move a printer, I just look behind the printer and see that the cable has red tape on it. I know that the cable to unplug at the computer is the one with the red tape on it, and that it will go into the jack with the red tape on the other computer.

## BABY WIPES DISKETTE BOX

If you have small children, you are

probably familiar with "Baby Wipes". These are small moistened tissues in a plastic box that parents use to clean the kids faces, etc. I also find them useful to clean my monitor. However, don't throw out the empty plastic case. It is just the right size for storing your floppy diskettes.

## FILES NAMES PRINTED ON DISK LABEL

Do you save files on floppy disks? Do you have backups on floppies of documents, letters, and utilities? Do you have floppies with downloaded files, icons, clip art, wave files, drivers, etc?

If you are like me, you have lots of them. And the labels on your floppies may read, "Icons" or "Clip Art". There may groups of these, perhaps labeled as "Icons disk 1, Icons disk 2", etc. And, of course, to actually know what is on a particular disk, all you have to do is put it in the computer and check the directory information. Not so simple if you have ten clip art disks and you are looking for a particular graphic! It becomes a real pain.

Place your disk in the computer and look at the directory in File Manager. Press the "Print Screen" key. It copies an image of the screen to the clipboard. Then the image can be pasted to other applications. Now open Microsoft Word and paste the image. That is the image of the entire File Manager window including the directory, but which is certainly much too big to print out and use as a disk label. However, the captured screen is in a graphic format. It can be cropped and sized. Crop the graphic until it includes only the directory of the disk, and size it down to the dimensions of the disk label. Print it out and paste it on the disk label or paste it directly on the disk as the label. See the manual or help files if you need information on cropping and sizing.

If you have a screen capture program, you can define the area of the screen to be captured and make the process even easier. I use one called Top Soft Panel which I purchased from the WPCUG disk library. It has a screen capture function so I just enclose the portion of the file manager screen that I want to use for the label. It is still in a graphic format and may still require some resizing, etc.

One further note. The font in File Manager can be changed. Click on Options>Font. Then make your choices. Sometimes changing to a different font or a smaller size makes a more legible label.

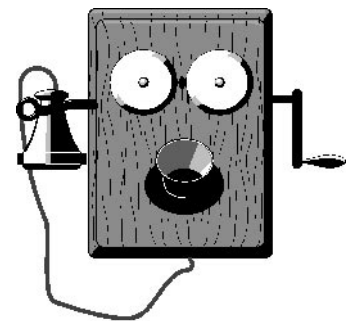
## ORGANIZING YOUR DISKS FLOPPY DISK CLUTTER

Do you have trouble keeping your diskettes in order? Do you have trouble finding a particular disk looking at labels to find the disk you want? There are programs and utilities that will catalog your disks, print labels, and print a database of your disks. The programs from the Internet, or AOL. I use one called Disk Manager. One nice little feature of Disk Manager is that when printing out a label, it prints a title that folds over on the top edge of the disk. Then when you look inside your disk box you can read all the labels right on the tops of your disks. This is very handy and makes finding disks easy.

If you don't wish to use a disk manager, just print out the titles of your disks in a small size font at about eight or ten point size. Cut these out and paste them over the tops of your disks. Now when you look inside the box, you can see all the titles at a glance. It isn't as handy as having a complete cataloging system, but it does remove some of the frustration when you are looking for a particular disk.

*(Roland Herman is our esteemed WORD SIG leader. He's a fountain of knowledge on WORD and ways to simplify your computing life.) Reprinted from Westchester PC News.*

## INFO LINE!



Find out what's going on at the PCCT each week by calling the club hotline at **(416) 633-6971** for the latest news on meetings. The new message is changed on Sunday for the following week. Check for last minute changes. If there is a last minute cancellation of a SIG meeting, the message should be on our phone line or BBS.

# The Logitech MouseMan +

By Trevelyan Beard (PCCT)

Along has come a mouse that makes my work on the computer a great deal easier. The Logitech MouseMan + activates commands so effortlessly that my concentration on the work-in-hand does not suffer. It has four buttons and a central wheel and most of the commands that I use, I can assign, leaving me free to actually think what I am doing.

There are 31 commands which can be assigned to any of the buttons and I got a lot of fun trying out several combinations. My final choice has made my work a great deal easier. Gone are some of the aggravations of positioning the arrow when it doesn't want to go there.

The small wheel is the best feature. Just roll it to and fro and the text scrolls accordingly. This is many times more easy than moving over to the scroll bar.

The middle button is very useful - I set it for what they call HyperJump.

One click and up pops a grid of eight squares, each one a set function. Just briefly these functions are a Pop Up Menu, Minimize, Close Window, Recall Last Active Window, Start Menu, Jump to Size Grip, Jump to Vertical Scroll Bar and lastly Jump to Horizontal Scroll Bar.

The right button, I chose to set for Content Menu which is a drop-down menu of the most useful functions of the particular program being used.

The last button is activated by the thumb and I chose Auto Scroll which lets me move the entire contents up and down and side to side. This finds a great deal of use in graphics programs such as Adobe Premier.

At under \$100 anywhere, this mouse is worth every penny. It has certainly removed a lot of the tedium caused by maneuvering that arrow around.

# Ultimate Modem Handbook

By Frank Latchford (PCCT)

Isn't it thrilling when after you've purchased a new modem, installed it in your system, configured it with your software, and it works flawlessly the first time and continues to work -- until you get the itch to upgrade again. You think to yourself "why would I ever need a 400 page book on modems?" There is no real answer to that question. Sometimes installation does not go smoothly (translation: the damned thing won't work no matter what I do to it). At that point a book on modems can almost seem like a good idea. "The Ultimate Modem Handbook" is one of those good ideas.

The book covers selection, installation, troubleshooting, and optimization of modems. Troubleshooting software is included with the book as well as USENET which lets you find names of Internet Newsgroups, out of over 18,000 in which you may be interested. A short glossary of modem and communication terms is also included. This book covers all of these in a fair amount of detail.

The troubleshooting section is quite extensive. The author used Joan's article written for read.me in the October 1996 issue to illustrate the many things that can be tried to get a dead modem to work. When you have read this book you will have a thorough understanding of what modems are, how they work, how to trouble shoot them and what's in store for us in the future.

*The Ultimate Modem Handbook*  
By Cas R. Lewart  
Price \$56.00  
ISBN 0-13-849415-0  
Published by Prentice Hall  
[www.phcanada.com](http://www.phcanada.com)

# Penny Pincher

By Joan Latchford (PCCT)

There are a great many activities I enjoy pursuing in a semi-recumbent posture and writing has always been one of them. Advancing years and the use of computers has improved my spelling and ruined my handwriting, so I have often wished for a true laptop for writing in bed without being able to justify the expense.

Since the demise of Computronix I do a lot of my bargain hunting at Factory Direct. It's close enough to walk and you never know what you may find there. I always look at the laptops and about a month ago was attracted to an IBM 750 Thinkpad 486 DX 33 with a 343 MB hard drive. This is a mono super VGA unit and the price was right -- \$399. Seeing my hesitation, Riaz (the president) who was looking over my shoulder, said "How would you like to have it with 20 MBs of RAM?" Who could resist?

I brought it home and set about making it mine. The first thing was to vacuum the keyboard -- woops! The digit one key flew off and disappeared into maw of the Electrolux. While painstakingly going through the contents of the emptied bag I found the key cap and something that looked like a little broad stemmed rubber funnel. Not knowing what it was I tossed it back. This was the second error since Frank was in a helpful mood and immediately tidied all down the garbage chute. It was only when I found the replaced key, while functional was no longer tactile, that I realized my mistake. However after a bad weekend I found a parts source and was able to get it replaced at no cost.

Since the 750 does not have a CD-ROM drive, getting Windows 95 onto the computer would have been problematic if we had not had our 135 Syquest removable drive. This peripheral attaches through your parallel port and installs the basic software for it to operate as a "guest." This let me load Windows 95 and a minimal setup of Word 97 before running dangerously low on hard drive space.

Since nature abhors a vacuum and the 750 has a double class II and III PCMCIA slot, I began pricing PCMCIA modems. Lo and behold a weekend visit to Factory Direct proved fruitful once again -- I found a shrink wrapped 56K Bocca Internet "Route 56" PCMCIA Fax modem for \$99. It installed with a satisfying click and was truly plug and play. The only delay in getting online was caused by my typing in a faulty telephone number. Besides being able to read my e-mail with my early morning tea, I am now able to download shareware directly onto the system. Much as I love it Win97 it does not leave room for anything else and I will have to delete it from the laptop,

If you are in the market for a PCMCIA card modem you should give the Bocca Route 56 a look. Factory Direct has more in stock as well as additional IBM Thinkpads. No refunds but used equipment comes with a three month warranty and can be exchanged or returned for a credit within ten days. In my case, I had returned some incompatible RAM I had bought and was able to use it to cover the cost of the modem with a few dollars over.

And yes, I have just written this in bed.

## Are you "Write" for us?

You can write for *read.me*. It's not hard and you don't have to be a professional writer. All you need are some ideas, curiosity and enthusiasm. Tried out a new piece of software lately? A game? Found an interesting site on the web? Read an interesting book? Got a tip? *Then tell us!!*

We have only two demands: keep it down to around 800 words or less, and write your article in plain ASCII text (also called "text only" in some word processors). It would be great if you could include a screenshot of the product you're writing about. Then send it to editor Joan Latchford through e-mail to: [joanie@the-wire.com](mailto:joanie@the-wire.com) and don't forget to include your name.

# PCCT Family Membership Application Form

SEND TO  
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 Annual Family Membership Fees:  
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## FREE ADMISSION . . . the night is on us !!!

**SAVE:** \$5 with this coupon at a PCCT general meeting.  
**WHERE:** North York Memorial Centre,  
 5110 Yonge Street, one floor below  
 the Central Library.  
**TIME:** 7 p.m.  
**WHEN:** Third Tuesday of the month.  
 see the calendar below.

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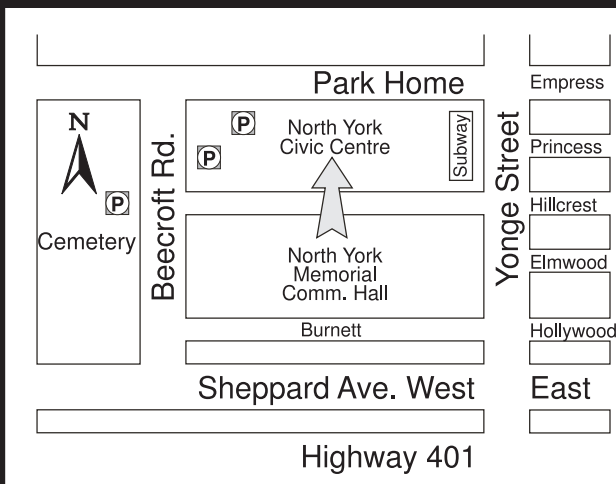
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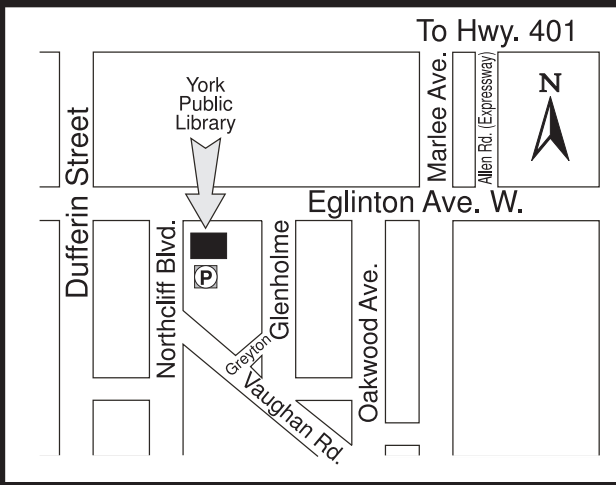
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- Access to a software library with the best of shareware and freeware programs;
- A copy of Delrina's WinComm Lite communications software;
- Access to the club BBS (for a one-time set up fee of \$20);
- Monthly issues of the club newsletter you're holding right now!

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	CALENDAR NOTES
SEPTEMBER		<b>1 Windows SIG</b> YPL at 7:30pm	<b>2 Investment SIG</b> YPL at 7:00pm	<b>3 The Basics SIG</b> YPL at 7:00pm	We have 2 new SIGs which have replaced the DTP SIG and the Multimedia SIG.  Daytime SIG now meets at St.A twice a month.  On the last Tuesday of the month there is a special SIG. Keep an open ear for more details.
	<b>7 Hardware SIG</b> St. A at 7:00pm	<b>8 Daytime SIG</b> St. A at 1:00pm	<b>9 Digital Imaging SIG</b> YPL at 7:30pm	<b>10 Visual Basic SIG</b> YPL at 7:00pm	
	<div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> <b>Call (416) 633-6971 to confirm PCCT SIG Events</b> </div>	<b>15 General Meeting</b> NYC at 7:00pm	<b>16 New User SIG</b> YPL at 7:30pm	<b>17 MS Office SIG</b> YPL at 7:00pm	
		<b>22 Daytime SIG</b> St. A at 1:00pm	<b>23</b>	<b>24 Genealogy SIG</b> YPL at 7:30pm	
		<b>29 Special SIG</b> YPL at 7:30pm			

## NYC North York Memorial Comm. Hall, 5110 Yonge St.



## YPL York Public Library 1745 Eglinton Ave., West



	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	
OCTOBER	<b>5</b>	<b>6 Windows SIG</b> YPL at 7:30pm	<b>7 Investment SIG</b> YPL at 7:00pm	<b>8 The Basics SIG</b> YPL at 7:00pm	
	<b>12 Hardware SIG</b> St. A at 7:00pm	<b>13 Daytime SIG</b> St. A at 1:00pm	<b>14 Digital Imaging SIG</b> YPL at 7:30pm	<b>15 Visual Basic SIG</b> YPL at 7:00pm	
	<b>19</b>	<b>20 General Meeting</b> NYC at 7:00pm	<b>21 New User SIG</b> YPL at 7:30pm	<b>22 MS Office SIG</b> YPL at 7:00pm	
	<b>26</b>	<b>27 Daytime SIG</b> St. A at 1:00pm	<b>28</b>	<b>29 Genealogy SIG</b> YPL at 7:30pm	

## St.A Church of St. Andrew 2333 Victoria Park Ave.

