The Personal Computer Club of Toronto

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FEATURING ARTICLES BY COMPUTER CLUB MEMBERS "GETTING MORE OUT OF YOUR COMPUTER"

June 1999 Volume 17 Number 6

PCCT

Pffffft! Gone with the wind ...

By Craig Faichney, SIG Co-ordinator

Help! I'm drowning, not waving! The last few months have been a trial, to say the least. So far, we've lost three SIG leaders, have a cancelled SIG and had lots of shuffling of chairs. I need help!

As most of you are aware, Karl Stanley is going to leave as Windows SIG leader. He was very generous in giving a long notice before the fact. Unfortunately, he's not the only one. Jonathan Hines is giving up the MS Office SIG post, and John Mahler has cancelled the Genealogy SIG as of May. Clive Apps has also been presented with an opportunity that might preclude him from doing the Hardware SIG as of September.

Well, nothing like a little drama to keep your days interesting, no? To top it all off, we're going to start a Linux SIG, and Kash wants to run it, giving up the Internet SIG. So what I'd like from you is a little help in the form of feedback and if you'd like to volunteer, so much the better! What I need is a hint of direction is there a need for a Windows SIG? With the Windows Basic SIG being run by Frank Latchford on the first Thursday of the month, having another Windows SIG might be redundant. OTOH, Frank only focuses on the very basics of Windows. There is a whole lot more to an O/S than that. Would an O/S SIG be more appropriate? Linux, Windows, Win 2000, BeOS, even. Shall I say it? Mac OS? Is there interest in such a beast? And who gets to run all that?

MS Office SIG: Do you find this useful? Is it going in a direction that you want it to go? What would you like to see?

Help! I'm drowning, not waving…

Hardware SIG: The same type of questions. Is meeting on a Monday at the church a good thing? Changes?

New SIGs: What interests you? Some software? Hardware? Technique? It might even be a field not normally associated with computers, like a craft SIG. Quilts, needlepoint, cabinet building all need plans and such that a computer is just dandy to use. How about renovations? Or gardening and landscaping? If you think that there is an interest from a few members on any subject, it's a prime candidate for a SIG. And most important, can you lead?

The club is made up of individuals, grouped together by a common interest. Everyone who does something is a volunteer, contributing their time and effort to make the club a good place to be. Nothing happens in a vacuum.

Because of that, having you step forward to help is extremely important. Yes, I too would love it if things just happened because I showed up that night but that isn't the way it works. Ask around. See what you might be interested in. Ask a director what they perceive as a need. Don't be shy.

And most importantly, have fun. if you're not having fun, what is the point of being in the club? ❖

N.B. The Daytime SIG is going on vacation for July and August, at least at the church. The church needs the room for those two months. For a lot of the other SIGs, the holidays are fast approaching as well. August is the traditional off season, and some of July SIGs too. Check the calendar at the back of read.me to confirm dates.

You can get in touch with me at craigf@interlog.com or talk to me or any of the directors at the General Meeting.

Join us at the PCCT on June 15th. See back page for Free Coupon!

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Address Label

JUNE 15TH MEETING

Topic: Canon Inkjet, scanner and multifunction product update

Speaker: Mr. Mathew Waters, Canon Product Marketing

The focus of June's meeting, the final General Meeting of the season '98/99 will be Canon Canada's inkjet, scanner and multifunction (FAX/printer/scanner/copier) products. Mr. Mathew Waters, Product Marketing, from Canon will be the featured guest and speaker.

The Canon BJC-6000 will be shown, a unique inkjet printer featuring high resolution printing along with seperate colour ink cartridge refilling capabilities. Canon will also be showcasing their USB attached scanner and multifunction machine line up. Stay tuned for a possible brand new product update slated to be announced in early June.

Publication Mail Agreement

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General Meeting
Tuesday, June 15th, 1999

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.

The Personal Computer Club of Toronto

PCCT

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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 — *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 — *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 — *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 — *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 — *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 — *Leader: Avnish Kashyap (905) 671-1736*

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 — *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 — *Leader: Jonathan Hines*

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 — *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 — *Leaders: Trevor Pedley & Jim McIntosh*

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

Windows / Win95 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.

Association of Personal Computer User Groups
APCUG

Don't Be Shy...

By Joan Latchford (PCCT)

Most people shy away from writing a hardware/software review for *read.me.*

A frequent excuse is: "I really don't have the time," which can mean "I don't think I write well," or "My English isn't good enough."

If you are committed to a struggle with syntax the review will take longer to write but remember, I am after the information that only you can give me. So why don't you let the editor do the job and massage your text into greater accessibility if necessary. Most people write much better than they give themselves credit for.

That said, here are some things I look for in a review.

Hardware, and operating system requirements.

The company address, Fax, Phone numbers and e-mail address. If you had occasion to contact the company how was their technical support? Does it have an 800 number, Fax back service or 24 hour e-mail response? I recently got an e-mail response from US Robotics within two hours, which resolved an installation problem immediately.

Most of this information should go at the end of your review but it's a good idea to compile it before you start. (I've often had to e-mail an author to send it to me or phone around to get it myself, which can slow down my other function as layout person}.

Installation

Does the hardware/software allow you to choose or change such things as the COM port, drive or directory?

Does it automatically configure your system and does this configuration work to your satisfaction?

Does it have an uninstall function or do so cleanly from Control Panel, Add/Remove programs? Can you afford the hard drive space it occupies after you have completed the review?

Remember the reader wants to know what you, a real world user, think about the program. What do you like, dislike about this progam? There is room here for your opinions and even self-identified prejudices. Don't feel that because you have won/received a $600 evaluation product you cannot note glitches or make suggestions for improvements to be included in the next upgrade. Ask yourself "What would I *say* about this if I had forked over the $600 bucks list/street price myself?

Say is the operative word here. Most people feel they have to express themselves more formally when they write than when they speak. Don't. Get it all down the way you talk and only then edit it for lack of clarity. I like to hear your personal voice when I read what you write. Two of a number of club members whose voices imprint their personal of writing style are Craig Faichney and Trev Beard.

Finally, titles. Sometimes you may think of a snappy title first off and it guides the tone of the whole article, including the humour. Other times it will come to you only after you've finished. If it includes a reference, like Mireille's "Using Windows…let me count the ways" it can entice a reader to read what might have been dismissed from the topic as "probably only another 'ho hum' article about Windows."

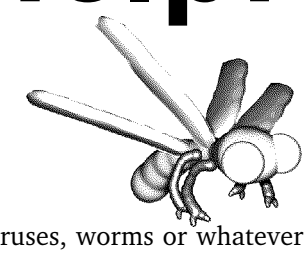
Now, what shall I call this article? ❖

P.S. For those interested in a word count this article is 505 words.

Deadline for *read.me* articles is the General Meeting for articles to appear the *following month. can take copy for proofing by members.*

The Editor.

Viruses, Worms, Help!



By Bob Rife

Durham Personal Computer Users' Club

The notoriety began with Happy99—and the viruses, worms or whatever just keep coming.

W97M.Melissa.A (also known as W97M.Mailissa) now sweeping the Internet (it chugged through industry heavyweights such as Microsoft, Intel and Lucent Technologies the weekend it started) is a typical macro virus, but with an unusual payload.

It spreads when a user opens an infected Word 8 or Word 9 document and executes the macro script. The devious aspect is how it infects. The macro prompts Microsoft's Outlook E-mail program to send a document to the first 50 addresses in a user's address book, under the subject line "Important Message From" and then the user s name. "Here is the document that you asked for," the text inside the message reads. "Don't show anyone else.".

Fortunately it is not a really malicious or destructive virus — just plain annoying and it does take work getting rid of it. The quickest fix, said Indiana University's John Merritt, is common sense. "If your PC asks you if it is alrigbt to run a macro, just say No," he said. "It surprises me that users hit Yes, when they know nothing about the document."

The further good word is that anyone NOT using Microsoft's E-mail or Word programs, escapes scot-free! Seems hackers just love taking potshots at Redmond's Big Bill.

A New Jersey man, David L. Smith, 30, has been arrested by federal and state officials and faces several charges in connection with the creation of the Melissa virus and spreading it across the Internet. He was tracked down by tracing phone calls, police said. The FBI still is investigating whether to file federal charges.

The success of Melissa obviously will inspire more similar viruses — for example, a new one known as X97M.Papa.A has started disrupting things — it's a Microsoft Excel macro worm.

Papa sends itself to the first 60 people in a user's address book. Melissa sends itself to 50. In addition, Papa sends an E-mail EVERY time the virus is activated. Melissa sends a message only the first time it is opened. Melissa's lifespan should end as everyone disinfects—now Papa, well The subject line for E-mail carrying Papa claims the message is from "all.net and Fred Cohen." The body of the E-mail, which contains an attached document titled "path.xls," then instructs the user not to disable the macros, which is how the virus is activated. Sal Viveros, of Network Associates, says the most disruptive aspect of Papa is that it "pings" an external site to make sure there is an available Internet connection. The practice of pinging is not unusual, but Papa pings so many times that it brings a network down.

Add to the new list, a virus called W97M.Ping.A, and some others a little more vicious. Which shows again the importance of an anti-viral program that accepts new definitions and to make sure your protection is up to date! Virus definitions that detect and repair all new viruses and worms and their variants are available, and although some AV sites have been inundated by requests, most Anti Virus companies have added extra servers to handle the unprecedented demand.

If you feel vulnerable, or have been hit, get updated! ❖

COMDEX Canada '99 and NETWORLD + INTEROP featuring Windows World
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Using Windows 98 ... *let me count the ways*

By Mireille Massue (PCCT)

Whether you are one of the 50 million people who still have Windows 3.1, or one of the people who have recently bought a new computer, or one who has bought Windows 98 because, well, just because, then you are all in for an adventure. For the first two groups, you will find Windows 98 has significant features that will work smarter, crash less, (yes there is a god) and allow you to upgrade without having to worry where you downloaded the file. For the last group, it's the fun of having the latest.

Windows 98 is being promoted as the tool to optimize your PC's performance, provide more connectivity to the Internet and have the ability to do more with your PC than you could do in the past. Now, you will be able to add more devices (there's an excuse to go out and buy) have better plug and play, enjoy more games, get amazing graphics, watch TV on your PC and add a second or third monitor to your computer. If you're like me, I just want to use my computer to save time, increase my storage, keep my PC running at peak performance and be able to diagnose and repair problems quickly without tearing my hair out. If your looking at Windows 98, here are some features and benefits that might save you time and money.

Installation

As with any upgrade, you need to make sure you have the hardware to support your upgrade. It's amazing how people insist on upgrading their software and yet don't have the hardware to support it. Although Windows is not perfect (no software is) there would be less complaints if people would pay attention to the hardware requirement they need to have to enjoy the product. So here is the absolute minimum (and I mean absolute minimum) you need to use Windows 98—486DX/66 MHz or higher processor (I'ld opt for a higher processor)—minimum of 16 MB of RAM, the more RAM you have the better—hard drive space will differ based on whether you have FAT 16 or FAT 32. If you are installing the full version of Windows 98, you'll get FAT 32 and the hard drive space will be less. Look at a range between 166MB to 255 MB—CD-ROM—there are more items contained on the CD-ROM than on disk—VGA screen or higher-resolution monitor, mouse, sound card, speakers, headphones—Modem—min requirement is 14,400—(look at a higher modem). It's an exercise in frustration if you insist on keeping this minimum requirement. For Web TV and DVD Video, USB peripherals, 3-D graphic's, MMX Technology, AGP (accelerated graphic's port) look to the package for further information.

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SOME OF THE THINGS I LIKE IN WINDOWS 98 Active Desktop: you can place ActiveX controls or Java applets to be used as your desktop background. Download a stock ticker control from the Internet and configure it so you can see what's happening to your stocks. I'm looking for one for news. Although this is a fun thing, it does slow your startup.

Add HTML content to any folder: you can create a web page (including links, images, sounds etc) that can be displayed in your folder

Outlook Express and Address Book:

Outlook express is a scaled down version of Outlook but provides a capable integrated e-mail client and newsgroups reader. The address book saves you having multiple address books for your e-mail, fax and contact management programs. Unless you have a favourite e-mail and contact manager product, think how much money you save if you use what Microsoft has included in Windows 98.

My Documents Folder:

Documents Folder is now on your desktop. Whenever you need a document, you save time by accessing all your documents from your desktop. Something I like a lot.

An Improved Setup Program. I know people who had problems installing Windows 98 and I know people who didn't. Since it was installed on a new hard drive, I didn't experience any problems. Windows 98 new Setup Program is suppose to improve device detection, have better Plug and Play configuration and automatic reboots.

Your Own Help Support:

The Help windows now consists of two panes. One side gives you the list of topics and the other allows you to display a specific topic. There are also several troubleshooting wizards related to issues like installing printers.

Truly Plug and Play:

For those who have USB (universal serial bus) support, Windows 98, allows you to easily add new hardware without the necessary fuss.

Maintenance Wizard and Utilities:

Running Maintenance Wizard will allow you to search your hard drive for unnecessary files that you can delete. For you brave people (that's not me) you will be able to use the Windows 98 Registry Checker. It saves the last five days worth of Registry settings, so you can revert to a previous setting if something goes wrong.

More FAT = More Space:

Although later releases of Windows 95 could accommodate FAT32, the conversion from FAT 16 to FAT 32 became a lot easier with Windows 98. FAT32 speeds Windows startup and loading of applications as well as freeing up hundreds of megabytes of storage space on your hard drive.

Netmeeting

Netmeeting is conferencing software and it is free. Something the web team will be using very shortly. Although it has video and audio capabilities I'm more interested in the whiteboard, file sharing and a text based chat. With this, the web team can meet on the Internet, discuss process and strategy, and feel part of a group. I will be doing a book review on Netmeeting next month, so I'll go into more detail then.

Windows Update

This I love. Microsoft has an update section on its web site. There are the latest software patches and updates for Win98 as well as the latest device drivers for new hardware. One click and I'm up-to-date.

I've counted some of the ways in which I use Windows 98. Let's hear how *you* use Windows 98. E-mail me at mireille@home.com and we'll count the ways in which you use Windows 98 on the PCCT web site.

Want more information, check the PCCT Web site (www.pcct.org) for links to various information pertaining to Windows 98. ❖

Using a macro *to scroll in Word*

By Kash (PCCT List host)

If you're printing all your Word documents rather than reading them on screen, you're wasting paper. But pressing Page Down or clicking the scrollbar repeatedly to review a document is a pain. If you have one of Microsoft's slick Intelli-Mouse devices, you can scroll by moving the thumbwheel. But even if your mouse is only an ordinary one, an undocumented command in Word 97 can automatically scroll a document for you, letting you adjust the speed to suit your needs. Here's how to take advantage of this cool feature:

1. With the document loaded in Word, select Tools, Macro, Macros from the menu.

2. In the Macros dialog box, first select Word Commands from the 'Macros in' list, then choose the AutoScroll option from the 'Macro name' list, and finally click 'Run'.

3. To control scrolling speed and direction, position the hourglass pointer over the vertical scrollbar. Move it to the top half of the scrollbar to scroll up, or to the bottom half to scroll down. The farther the pointer sits above or below the middle of the scrollbar, the faster the scrolling will occur. To stop scrolling temporarily, position the pointer over the middle of the scrollbar. To turn off AutoScroll, you need only click the left mouse button.

If you use this handy feature often, you may want to place the command on a toolbar for convenience. Here's what to do: Select Tools, Customize, click the Commands tab, select All Commands in the left-hand box and AutoScroll in the right-hand box, and then drag and drop the command onto a toolbar.

AutoScroll even lets you turn Word 97 into a teleprompter. With a loaded document, select View, Full Screen. Press Alt–T to display the Tools menu; then follow steps 1 and 2 above. The AutoScroll bar will appear to the right of the clean document screen, enabling you to control scrolling as described above.

On Another Topic

One member was downloading a large file and internet connection kept cutting off. She tried it many times but no luck. Suddenly she saw the light and sent an email. The problem was solved in no time.

Another member got a message on the screen that some .DLL file is corrupted, searched his hard drive and CD's but no luck. Suddenly he/she had an inspiration and sent an email. The problem was solved in no time.

Another member wanted to install a new hard drive but wasn't very familiar with the procedure and the setup. Suddenly he saw the light...

Somone else came across some very important Destructive Virus news. He/She got a bright Idea and informed every body with a click of his favourite mouse.

They are all members of the PCCT List.

Let us look at another scenario, you come home after a work, have supper and log on to the Internet and open your e-mail and suddenly you have big smile on your face because you just saw a wonderful Computer tip like the one above and it made your day.

Then you opened another e-mail and laughed out loud and called your spouse, "hey look honey read this, it is ever so funny". He is member of the PcctForum List.

They were all subscribing members to the PCCT List and/or PcctForum List. Well, you can have all this and more by joining the PCCT List for your computer problems and PcctForum List for everything but computers.

It works like this, say you have a problem, a bright idea and or want some opinion or help on any thing other than computers—just send an e-mail to PCCT List or PcctForum List and it will be distributed to all the members. Over a hundred people will read your e-mail and reply to you with suggestions and help you with information. Best of all it is FREE.

To join the Lists just go to the following Links or send your name and e-mail address to kash@canada.com to be added to the lists and you can laugh all the way to your computer. ❖

www.onelist.com/subscribe.cgi/pcct
www.onelist.com/subscribe.cgi/pcctforum

Internet with Linux SIG Meeting

On the 25th Apr. 1999 the presenter was Mr. Paul King from Oakville. Mr. King is B.Sc in BioChemistry (Food Science) and B.Ed. His articles have been published in The Globe & Mail, Toronto Computes and The Computer Paper. He is running a successful consulting business and is experienced in Linux and Windows NT installation.

The Internet with Linux SIG meeting was well attended and judging from the questions it seems to have created fair bit of interest. The computer used for the Demo was a Pentium 100 Mhz with only 16 MB of Ram, which is obviously not enough to run any GUI system or applications (hope to upgrade it to 32 MB RAM when I have some spare funds). Anyway in spite of the drawback, Caldera Open Linux 2.2's KDE GUI interface seems to be very powerful. KDE Desktop looks very much like Hewllet Packard CDE interface. KDE can have 8 or more desktops and any desktop can be activated with a click of the mouse. Although we did manage to log on to the Internet we could not log on to any interesting sites due to lack of RAM and/or phone line noise. Many features of Open Linux system were highlighted and demonstrated. There were many interesting questions from the members, (as a matter of fact we didn't even break for coffee. When I suddenly realized that we didn't have a break it was after 9:00 p.m. and meeting went on to almost 9:30 p.m.

Many of Linux flavours come with lots of application software e.g. Star Office (compatible with M/S Office professional), Word Perfect word processor, NetScape Communicator 4.51, Gimp (Comparable to Adobe Illustrator), text editors and lots and lots of utilities.

If any members are interested in a regular Linux SIG please inform PCCT club officials.

We still have 2 Red Hat 5.2 CD's including Gnome GUI interface, Star Office, WordPerfect and lots of application and utilities available, All proceeds above $10.00 will go to the PCCT Club. I am sure your help will be very much appreciated. ❖

Kash

Getting Paid For Paying Bills

By Jerry Stevens (PCCT)

This article will pay for your PCCT membership.

Paying bills on the Internet is easy, and fast. Once you setup the company name and account number for each company you pay on a regular basis, it is just a matter of choosing the company and entering the amount to pay. The whole process takes seconds, once you are online. No cheques to write, no addressing and stamp for envelopes. If you pay your bills at the bank, there is no time wasted going to the bank and standing in line.

I have found the companies I deal with, have received payment the same or the next day with no chance of having a cheque lost in the mail.

You can check your balance(s) online, make transfers between accounts, see all your transactions, see the current days transactions, set up new bills to pay, set up regular automatic payments and if you have an automatic direct deposit, see when it is credited to your account, etc.

When you open a President's Choice Financial (PCF) account, at a Loblaws store that has a PCF Banking Pavilion, if you transfer your account balance from another bank and if you have your Pension or Payroll cheque automatically direct deposited each month, you receive 40,000 points which equal $40.00 that you can use for groceries at Loblaws, Fortino's, etc. If your spouse does the same that's $80.

Every time you pay a bill on the Internet or by phone you will receive 100 points. At any CIBC ATM you can make deposits or withdrawals, and at a few withdraw U.S. funds. At this time PCF does not have U.S. or business accounts.

There is no charge for this account, personalized cheques, ATM/Interac card and transactions and no minimum balance is required.

Paying with Interac is faster than using a Credit Card, saves carrying large sums of cash or writing cheques.

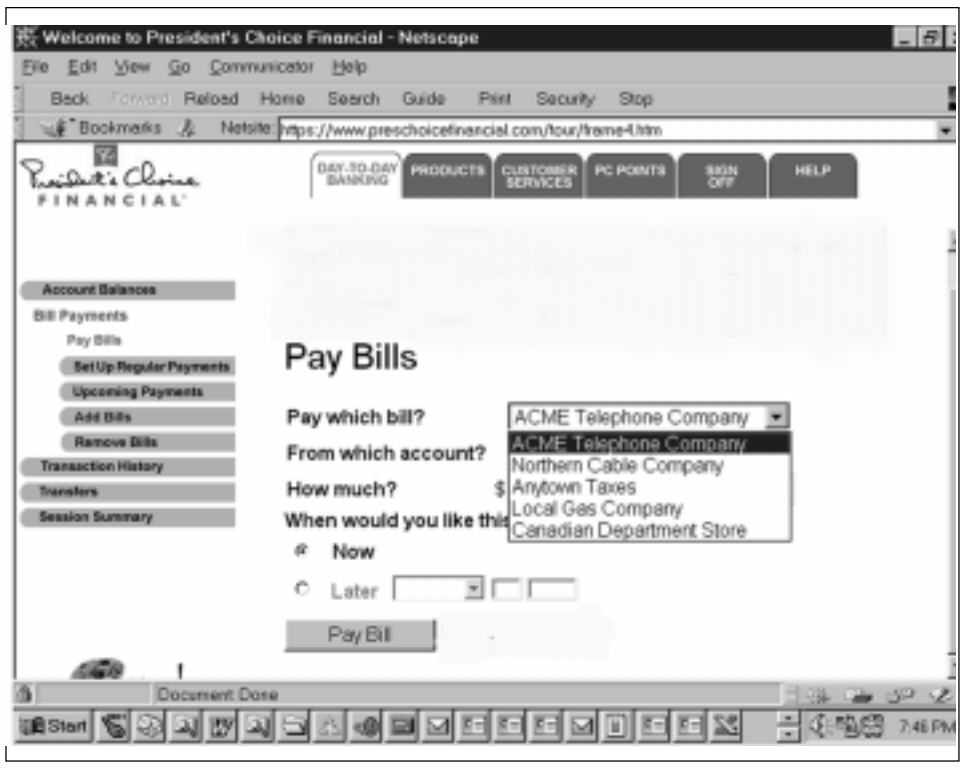
Interest is paid at higher rates, on the Daily balance no matter how small it is and interest charged on loans and mortgages is lower, than it is at Banks or Trust Companies.

Points are issued for loan and mortgage balances. If you have a PCF mortgage for $100,000 you will receive $250 at inception and then $2 for every $1,000 outstanding at the end of 12 months for Free groceries.

If you are receiving "Free" transactions from your current bank and have to maintain a minimum balance, usually you will do much better with a GIC or Money Market Fund, or the rates paid by PCF.

If you are paying a monthly service fee to do your banking, you can reduce that amount to zero and receive Free groceries.

When you open your account they might give you a daily limit to withdraw after making a deposit. Make sure you understand if there is going to be a hold on some of your funds. If there is a limit they will increase it after a few months. They put no hold on any Automatic Direct Deposits from your employer or pension. I have been using PCF since July 1998 and am very pleased and highly recommend them. ❖



For complete information check ***http://www.preschoicefinancial.com*** *or phone 1-(888) 872-4724 (toll free call), where you will find very friendly, helpful people.*

Installing Linux

By Charles Howe, Tampa PC Users Group

Objective: Install Linux "on my own." I had sort of installed Linux on a plausible machine (plausible from the standpoint of CPU speed, amount of memory, disk space) at a meeting of the Suncoast Linux User Group [charming acronym: SLUG]. A couple of helpful people guided me through it, but the process didn't allow me to mull over each step and let me fix what happened in my brain.

Rather than wipe it out, I decided to try putting it on a machine with a 40 MHz 386 motherboard. I brought memory on that machine up to 16 Mb and hard disk space to 540 Mb. The video card had 1 Mb of video RAM, and there was a CD ROM drive and an AHA1520 SCSI card to handle it. I had Red Hat Linux, version 5.1. A mantra of Linux types is that it will install on hardware like this. Ought to work. Did work. Did it go to completion first time? Of course not.

There was stuff to figure out beforehand. I had tried installing with a 170 MB hard disk, but it ran out of space. That was when I bought a used Connor 540 MB hard disk. I also put in a 120 MB Maxtor hard disk to be used for the Linux Swap partition, but it didn't get recognized when partitioning took place, even though it was recognized by the BIOS at boot-up. That has been the only disappointment so far.

The installation process: You have to experience it for yourself, of course. I put the boot diskette in A: and the CD in the CD-ROM drive and turned the power on. The first screen shows up! A morale booster. Then screen after screen. What you do for several screens is obvious and simple minded. Then comes the one entitled "Disk Setup," the choices being Disk Druid and FDISK. A legend tells you that Disk Druid does partitioning and setting up mount points and is usually easier to use than FDISK so I chose it. The next screen to show up, entitled "Current Disk Partitions," and its derivatives are all important. In the middle of the screen is the legend "Disk Summaries." If you have just one hard disk, just below the first header it reads "hda." (If you have two, the second line would read "hdb"; a single SCSI drive would read hdsa, etc.) The second header is "Geom [C/H/S]." The entry is something like "[866/15/26]," meaning 866 cylinders, 15 heads and 26 sectors. Note that the drive geometry was autodetected! These numbers pertained to the 170 MB hard disk that was abandoned in favor of a 540 MB drive. The third column header is "Total." Below it is 164 M. The fourth column is "Used." At one point it was 162 M. Then came the column "Free," below which was 2 M. The last column is untitled. Below it was [########], roughly indicating percentage occupied. The top of the screen has a line of column headers reading "Mount Point," "Device," "Requested," "Actual" and "Type". There are as many lines as there are partitions. Initially the "Mount Point" column is blank. The "Device" column might contain entries like "hda1," "hda5," "hda6," etc. In other words, there may be skips. The "Requested" and "Actual" columns are filled with partition sizes. It isn't clear to me what would have to happen for the two columns not to be identical. The last column must show at least one "Linux native," and there has to be one "Linux swap." Along the bottom is a line of five push buttons. What they are used for is obvious. Initially the first partition is highlighted, selected and active and the first disk drive is highlighted and selected.

I'm not going to try to describe every keystroke you can take, many of which will lead you to a dead end. Do enter and key in the mount point. I do not yet comprehend what would be a good partitioning scheme, but I took the easy way out and designated one mount point only, the root — "/". The installation takes care of everything, but if anything goes wrong, everything goes wrong disk-wise. I also made a 32 MB swap partition. I would have used the entire second drive had installation recognized it. A bit of arcana: the largest allowable swap partition is 127 MB, one MB less than 128. (Don't ask.) I didn't install a modem, a GUI and TCP/IP. Later. I did install X Windows, in which programs can be run from the command prompt. In that manner multitasking can proceed. There are two GUIs, KDE and GNOME. Red Hat didn't include either in version 5.1 and also didn't in version 5.2, which is now out. However, GNOME is almost certain to be included in version 6.0, which is expected to be out by midsummer. ❖

Electronic Serial Numbers for Chips:

Security Help or Privacy Intrusion?

By: J.D. Abolins

In late January, the Intel Corporation announced a controversial new feature for the Pentium III chips: a unique serial number electronically embedded in every chip. The company calls the feature "Processor Serial Number" (PSN). The ID would be a 64-bit number created by fusing wires on the chip together during its manufacturing. This number would be used along with the current 32-bit CPUid to create a unique 96-bit number that can be read by software. Intel offered software that would allow the user to turn off the PSN. The chip can identify each machine and, by extension, may identify the user or general owner of each machine. The chip also would contain a random number generator to aid cryptography. Recent television ads for the Pentium III depict a door which cannot be broken down by "the Big Bad Wolf" huffing and puffing, by a band of Vikings with a battering ram, and by robot with a laser. The door opens when a little girl rings a doorbell. The ads hint at the way Intel hopes the PSN and the random number generator will help online transactions but Intel has avoided overt discussions of these features in the TV ads. Intel claims that the electronic identifier and the random number generator will provide these benefits to help electronic commerce and enhance some aspects of security by:

♦ making it easier for merchants to verify customers' identity by adding the PSN to things such as Ids, passwords, and credit card numbers.

♦ making it possible to detect stolen PCs on the Internet, thus, helping to reduce the market for stolen PCs. (But later Intel said it would not track the PSNs and customers.)

♦ helping detect "overclocking" of PCs (vendors setting the system to run faster than the processor was intended to run and selling the PC at a higher price) by allowing buyers to check their system against Intel's listings of speeds for processors by matching the PSNs.

♦ aiding cryptography for electronic commerce by the random number generator.

In the workplace, the serialization might be useful for remote management of PCs and help desk record keeping. Hypothetically, the serial number could used to mark email to tie Internet email more closely to a particular PC and, thus, to a contact person. Some might see this as a help to fight forged email and spam.

Privacy Concerns Raised

"The application is a double-edged sword. On the one hand it offers more security—for e-commerce and information security,"—*Barry Steinhardt, associate director and privacy expert at the American Civil Liberties Union (http://www.aclu.org)* The prospect of the PSN becoming a commonly required "ID" for any computer activities caught the attention of many people and groups. Some deemed the PSN having the potential for becoming "the Social Security Number of the online world". Other people noticed weaknesses in the security claims for the PSN. The privacy and security concerns include:

♦ Easier tracking of people's computer activities, especially online. Although initially the machine's identity might not be matched with a specific person, eventually, a pattern of transactions can give enough data to track people. There is some concern that databases could be set up to match people to the machines.

♦ Encouraging vendors and others to require the electronic serial numbers in order to get service. If people choose to "opt out" with the patch offered by Intel, they might find it difficult to do many things on the Internet. The existence of many other chips and systems helps to moderate such a trend. If all the major PCs go to electronic serial numbers, watch out!

♦ If the serial number is hacked or forged, identity theft could be done. Even simpler is processor chip swapping where a person swaps processor chips. This could even be done by computer support or repair people. The same techniques, however, could provide some identity tracking scrambling to help privacy if it is done among consenting parties.

♦ The PSN identifies the computer but not the person using it. If a computer is sold or used by many people, a "tainted" reputation may be transferred to the other users.

Bruce Schneier, a cryptographer expert, pointed out that the PSN's one real security advantage is in the detection of stolen processors. But the tracking of the PSNs and customers is one thing that Intel said it would not do. Schneier summed up the security and privacy problems by saying, "Those who are engaged in illicit activities will subvert the system, while those who don't know any better will find their privacy violated."

Intel tried to head off the privacy concerns by offering a utility program to turn the PSN on and off, requiring a reboot before taking effect. Intel also offered a program to "permanently" turn off the PSN and the company said that the processor would be shipped with the PSN set as "off" instead of "on". Reports from some privacy groups indicate that this might not be the case. The computer companies installing the Pentium III would be responsible for turning the PSN off before shipping. So the buyer should check the system rather than assume the PSN is off. In late February, a German computer magazine, Computer Technology, (or c't), claimed that contrary to Intel's claims, the Pentium III PSN can be secretly turned on and off without the user's knowledge by a small software program. There have been some controversial allegations that the PSN was a concession to agencies such as the National Security Agency in order to smooth the way for the inclusion of the random number generator cryptography aid. It is claimed that the PSN was seen as a way eventually to make electronic communications more traceable. Several cyberspace privacy groups called for a boycott of Intel products until the company drops the PSN. They formed a "Big Brother Inside" Web site, parodying the Intel "Intel Inside" slogan. Recently, several groups have asked the US Federal Trade Commission to prevent Intel from going forward with the PSN scheme. The FTC says that this is outside of its jurisdiction.

Emerging Issues Beyond the PSN

While much attention is given to the Pentium III and the PSN's impact upon privacy, there are larger issues in the background. Among these issues are "identification and authentication" (I&A). This pair is an important information security concept of being able to identify a user or a machine and to be able to verify that identity. In many transactions, I&A is important, so important that some people believe that all transactions should have absolute I&A. After all, it can be argued that I&A helps security by encouraging accountability for actions. Conversely, the lack of I&A can be seen as an opportunity for anarchy and crime. But pervasive monitoring and cataloging of people's every transaction can lead to many other abuses. At one extreme, it can be used to manipulate people and to stifle dissent. At milder extents, it can be stressful as people wonder what new uses are made of the data. I&A is overkill for many transactions. It may be understandable for a mortgage application but does buying a newspaper or mere browsing of an open Web site really require I&A? The PSN issues raise some I&A questions of its own. Is identifying the PC really a good way of securing transactions among people? What happens when the PC's processor is sold, transferred, or stolen? The questions of the PSN being on or off and whether or not it can be secretly turned on reflect a growing sense of uncertainty about what personal computers are doing in the background. As the functions of computers have increased in the past decade and become capable of running more things in the background, the prospect of covert problematic activities becomes more significant. The vulnerability to hyped-up claims also increases. (Witness the extent of e-mails passing along virus hoaxes.)

Closing

The controversy over the PSN and similar schemes is going to continue for a while. It will be interesting to see if the controversy will affect the sales of the Pentium III chip. There may also be a number of adaptations, such as special third-party utilities or hardware, to hide or alter the electronic serial number, leading to an eventual equilibrium in the privacy-security tension. It is far too early to take this Intel announcement as the "end of privacy". Meanwhile, people can vote via their purchase choices and find ways to control features such as the PSN. ❖

For Further Reading

Intel's PSN and PSN utility information http://www.intel.com/pentiumiii/utility.htm Speech by Intel representative about Intel's security plans http://www.intel.com/pressroom/archive/speeches/pg012099.htm The Big Brother Inside site http://www.privacy.org/bigbrotherinside/ Bruce Schneier's comments on ZD Net http://www.zdnet.com/zdnn/stories/comment/0,5859,2194863,00.html Bill Machrone's claim that the PSN benefits outweigh the risks http://www.zdnet.com/pcweek/stories/columns/0,4351,388214,00.html German Computer Technology article about the hack http://www.heise.de/ct/english/99/05/news1/ J.D. Abolins Meyda Online - Privacy /Intel PSN News (for updates to this article) http://pluto.njcc.com/~jda-ir/privacy/news/intel_psn.html

Princeton PC Users Group - Feature Nov 98Feature

PCCT Family Membership Application Form

SEND TO

The Personal Computer Club of Toronto
Membership Director
P.O. Box 5429, Station A,
Toronto, Ontario,
Canada M5W 1N6

Annual Family Membership Fees:
$65 / year *(per household)*
BBS: (416) 636-6394

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First Name: _____ Last Name: _____
Street: _____ Apt/Suite: _____
City: _____ Prov./State: _____
Country: _____ Postal/Zip Code: _____
Res. Ph: ( ) _____ - _____ Bus. Ph: ( ) _____ - _____
Fax: (____) _____ - _____ e-mail: _____
Profession: _____ Company: _____
Signature: _____ Date: _____
Cheque enclosed: ❑ Amount: $ _____ ***I WANT MORE INFO:*** ❑
VISA ❑ VISA Number: _____ Expiry Date: _____
*Where did you pick up this copy of read.me?*_____

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.

66/9

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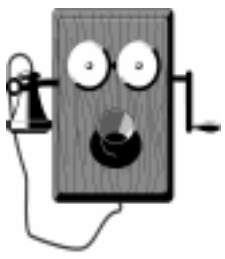
ADMIT ONE

Calendar of Events

JUNE 99	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
		1 **Windows SIG** MSL 7:30 pm	*2* **Investment SIG** MSL 7:00 pm	*3* **Win Basics SIG** MSL 7:00 pm
	7	*8* **Daytime SIG** St. A 1:00 pm	*9* **Digital Imaging SIG** MSL 7:30 pm	*10* **Visual Basic SIG** MSL 7:00 pm
	14 **Hardware SIG St. A at** 7:00 pm	*15* **General Meeting** NYC 7:00 pm	*16* **New User Group** MSL 7:30 pm	*17* **MS Office SiG** MSL 7:00 pm
	21	*22* **Daytime SIG** St. A 1:00 pm **Internet SIG** MSL 7:30 pm	*23*	*24*
	28	*29*	*30*	

JULY 99	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
				1 **Win Basics SIG** MSL 7:00 pm
	4	*5* **Windows SIG** MSL 7:30 pm	*6* **Investment SIG** MSL 7:00 pm	*7* **Visual Basic SIG** MSL 7:00 pm
	11 **Hardware SIG St. A at** 7:00 pm	*12*	*13* **Digital Imaging SIG** MSL 7:30 pm	*14* **MS Office SiG** MSL 7:00 pm
	19	*20* **General Meeting** NYC 7:00 pm	*21* **New User Group** MSL 7:30 pm	*22*
	26	*27*	*28*	*29*

INFO LINE!



Find out what is going on at the PCCT each week by calling the club hotline at: **(416) 633-6971** for the latest news on meetings.

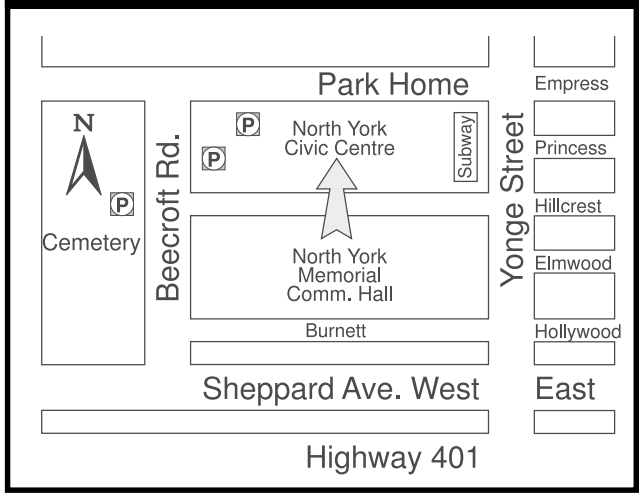
The new message is changed on Sunday for the following week. Check for last minute changes. If there is a cancellation of a SIG meeting, the message should be on our phone line or BBS.

PCCT Family Membership Benefits

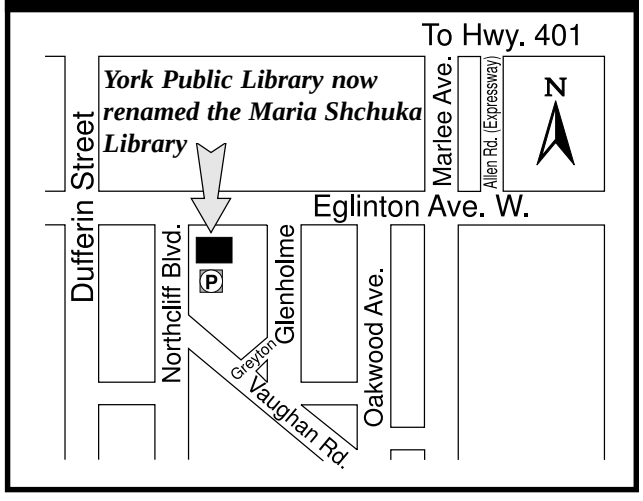
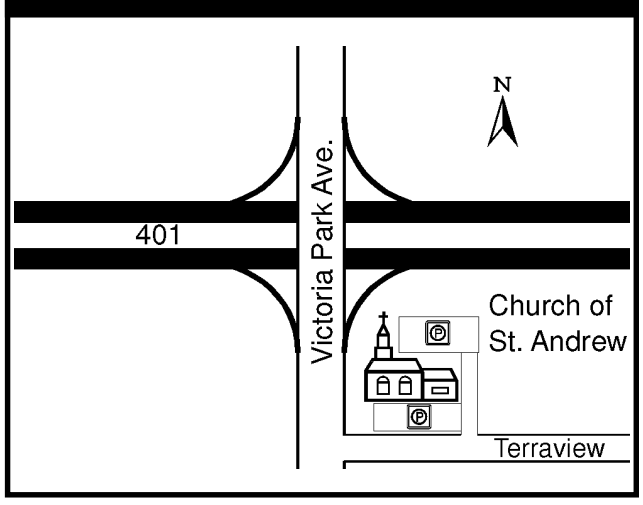
With your family membership you get:

- Expert help from knowledgeable computer users;
- Special deals on Internet service, software and hardware;
- A monthly draw and an auction for great products;
- Demonstrations by leading software and hardware companies;
- 11 monthly Special Interest Groups *(SIG)* meetings;
- Access to a software library with the best of shareware and freeware programs; 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!

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



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



St. A — Church of St. Andrew, 2333 Victoria Park Ave