



readme

Featuring articles by computer club members

APRIL 2001, Vol 19 - N° 2

WEB SECURITY: LET'S HELP PUT YOU IN CONTROL

By Bob Mitchell

If you haven't already made your computer as secure as you can, and even if you think you have, read on.

There are some nasty, vexatious, mischievous people out there lurking and probing to find computers that are not safe and which can be used for their clandestine purposes. If you think no one would be interested in breaking in to your little old machine, you could be very sorry one day. You might even lose a friend.

You could be the weak link that will inflict a virus or create other havoc on a friend's computer. Look at it this way: You have no firewall. An intruder sends you a virus which is designed to automatically forward itself, without your even knowing, to your friend's computer even though he has a firewall up and running. But, here's the rub: he has configured his firewall to let you, his trusted friend, have access to his machine. This is not what you nor he had in mind.

The internet is not a safe place. In fact, it is like a leaky boat, a sieve, a piece of swiss cheese – unless you take steps to protect yourself and others.

Here are several things that you should do NOW, if you have not already done them.

1. Have a good anti-virus program (AVP) up and running all the time. This is a must if you are connected via cable or DSL, but even if you are using a Dial-Up Modem, you should play it safe. If you want a free personal AVP, get InoculateIT. To download it, log on to <http://antivirus.cai.com>. Whatever you use, update its definition files frequently to ensure protection against the latest viruses. Check with the CWS website <http://cws.internet.com> for the latest update information. It is shown in the top right hand corner of the What's New page for this site. By the way, remember to disable your AVP if you are installing new programs or doing backups to CDR drives. Remember to enable it again as soon as you have finished with this work.
2. Install a Firewall on your computer. If you want a highly recommended free one, install Zone Alarm from www.zonealarm.com. Spend some
3. Test your firewall to ensure it is working. Log on to www.grc.com and run Shields Up. You will see an option to Probe My Ports. Start that. This program will do its best to find a way into your computer. If all is well, you will get a report to the effect that "There is NO EVIDENCE WHATSOEVER that a port (or even any computer) exists at this IP address!". Intruders using port scanners can probe your system for weaknesses and record any such open ports for their future devilish purposes.
4. Obtain and install all available security patches that have been issued for your current browser, your e-mail program and for MS Office (if you use that suite). Set your browser's security options to suit your personal or business needs. One caveat: It is best to wait

a while before installing new versions of your software. If you see reports of security holes, wait until security patches are made available and reports are favourable.

5. Don't send sensitive email to anyone in plain language. Never put anything in a message that you would not write on the back of a postcard. Such information should be encrypted with PGP (Pretty Good Privacy), which can be download for free. It's 7.7MB so be warned: it can be a long download.

Go to www.pcp.org. Select the 6.58 version to download. My copy of Eudora 4.3 was adjusted automatically to handle PGP. If you have a need to encrypt email this is a good route to go.

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www.pcct.org

April General Meeting Tuesday, April 17, 2001

What's New at Sympatico's Internet Portal

We've already had Sympatico speak about their High Speed Edition (aka HSE). In April we are inviting them back to hear about their internet 'portal' presence at the popular URL, www.sympatico.ca. In addition to the usual portal offerings you will hear what's new and exciting at the Sympatico site, even if you're not an HSE subscriber.

The meeting will be taking place at the newly located General Meeting location of the North York Central Library, Auditorium at 7:00 p.m. on April 17th. As an added attraction a limited number of free copies of the Netlife Internet magazine to members in good standing will be distributed at this club event. This is a meeting you'll not want to miss.

See you there!

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Mailing address:

P.O. Box 5429 Station A
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5W 1N6

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Phone & Fax: 416.633.6971
Website:
<http://www.pcct.org>

Board of Directors & Volunteers

Board of Directors

President

Karl Stanley
✉ kstanley@ilap.com
☎ 905/836-5222

Vice President

Doug Colquhoun
✉ Domc@yesic.com
☎ 905/460-0758

Treasurer

Arthur Robertson
✉ arthurr@pcct.org
☎ 416/638-0278 h
☎ 416/665-8428 b

Secretary

Bruce Weppler
✉ Bwepp@ultratech.net
☎ 416/231-5863

Director—Advertising

TBA

Director—Online Services

Walter Petelka
✉ wpetelka@idirect.com
☎ 416/782-4864

Director—Membership

Scott Scobie
✉ caldec@istar.ca
☎ 416/447-5890

Director—SIG Co-ordinator

Mel Marcovitz
✉ mel_mark@pathcom.com
☎ 416/789-4729

Director—

General Meeting Manager

Martin Moss
✉ smarty@3web.net
☎ 416/630-5801

Departments

Refreshments

Tonu Soovere
Murray Dobbs

Database Manager

Scott Scobie

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Murray Dobbs

General Meeting Programs

Dave Hanson
Davidk_hanson@hotmail.com

Visitors Table

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PCCT WEBSITE

<http://www.pcct.org>

PCCT INFOLINE

(416) 633-6971



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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The Personal Computer Club of Toronto is also a member of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups ☆



Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

Basic Windows

Leader: Steve Rakus • src@tht.net

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. 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. You should have learned to use some aspect of Windows by the end of the evening. The BASIC WINDOWS SIG is currently being held at the beginning of the regular WINDOWS SIG.

Daytime SIG

Leader: George Chambers • (416) 751-7559

This group, meeting in the daytime 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.

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.

Internet SIG

Leader: Murray Dobbs • moedobbs@sympatico.ca

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.

Linux SIG

Leader: Brendan Birmingham • bromser@hotmail.com

Linux for Beginners: How to install, configure, use and set up a graphical user interface. It is almost free, robust and reliable. Come on in and have look see.

Office SIG

Leader: Andy Hagan • ad.hagan@sympatico.ca

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

Visual Basic SIG

Leader: TBD

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 SIG

Leader: Steve Rakus • src@tht.net

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

Henry Crane, former president, accepted temporary election to the Board of Directors at the annual General Meeting. Thank you Henry for your continuing support.

Martin Moss, who has previously served on the Board has accepted and been appointed to fill this Board position until the next annual General Meeting.

Clive Apps has tendered his resignation from the B of D. Clive has been elected President of the Toronto Linux Users Group. Thank you for your help Clive over the past year and best wishes to you in the new venture. I am sure that you will maintain an active interest in our Linux SIG Group.

I have taken over the Editorship of the club's newsletter. **Dave Hanson** who has done a great job over the last couple of issues has had to step aside for both business and personal reasons. I hope that I can do as good a job as Dave. Thank you David.

Arthur Robertson, our Treasurer, is chairing an ad hoc committee on the future of the newsletter. Send Arthur an e-mail on your thoughts to: arthurr@pcct.org

Trevor Pedly has resigned as Visual Basic SIG Leader. Volunteers to take over should contact **Mel Marcovitz**. See the Directory on Page Two of the Newsletter.

The Club's notebook computer is going to have its case repaired. The notebook will not be available until the repairs have been carried out.

Meeting Location Changed: By the time this is printed, the Monthly General Meeting will have been moved to the North York Centre's Library – two floors up from the Burgundy Room. This was necessitated by the renovations now under way at the centre.

The cost to the club will be substantially less but the room is smaller and we have lost our equipment storage. Thus all equipment including the soft drinks and coffee urn will need to be brought in for each meeting. Volunteers are needed for this.

You Get What You Pay For...

The choice of ISP's is one with many pitfalls; ask Jim McIntosh. If you like to hear horror stories — give Jim a call. Price is not always the answer. At the suggestion of one of our members, I tried out one of the free services. The service went out of business leaving me a major problem to uninstall their software. At one point I considered formatting my hard drive! Ugh!

— Karl Stanley

How would you like to do the "Write" thing?

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). To add a little pizzaz to your article why not include a screenshot of the product you're writing about.

Send your submissions to email address: kstanley@ilap.com

Thank You Notes: ComputerFest Show Volunteers

The following members volunteered their time and talents for the February 2001 ComputerFest Show. They successfully signed up two new members and four trial memberships. Several prospective members indicated that they would come to the next General Meeting. Thanks for your efforts.

Robin Wright and I set up the booth on Thursday. Robin Wright was present for all three days of the show. He also helped take down the booth and is now storing the it at his home.

On Friday **Mel Marcovitz, John Mahler, Paul and Wendy Wiltshire, Victoria Stawecki, Clive Apps, Bill Sturgess, Walter Petelka** and **Murray Dobbs** were there.

On Saturday **Harry Nellis, Rod Martyn, Scott Scobie, Carl Scobie,** and **Andrew and Martin Moss** carried on.

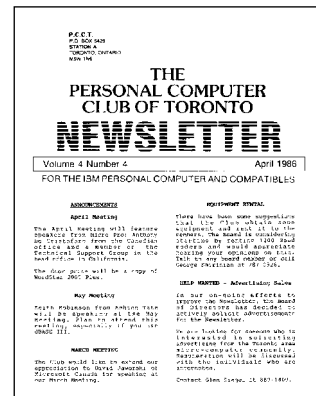
On Sunday **Henry Jackson, AJ Parl, Kal Somogyvary, Solomon Hoasjoe** along with **Doug Colquhoun** and **Werner Schwendt** helped Robin to close out.

I hope each of you received a (Microsoft Supplied) T-Shirt. On behalf of the Club, "THANK YOU"!!!

The shows have for some years been the biggest source of new members. When I joined the club, it was the result of a current member recommendation.

Karl Stanley, CGA
President, Newsletter Editor Pro Tem, Show Manager, and Grand Pubah

Blast from the Past



10 Years ago – 1991

The 1991 issue of the club newsletter was edited by Joan Latchford in the standard magazine format of the day (totaling 16 pages!) The club at that time was headed up by President, Geoffrey Cooper with right-hand man, Luciano Martin as Vice Pres. Geoffrey's 'Random Access' column focussed a lot on 'getting online' and his experiences with same.

Recent meetings included talks by Quarterdeck (remember them?) and Doug Cooper of Intel. The Shareware Library again was a big attraction with about 1,050 different disks available through the club library.

Reviews included Windows programs and utilities by the editor, a very complete article on the different math coprocessor options by Roger Smol-ski, a WordPerfect 5.1 review by Trev Beard and of course an in-depth review of the latest club shareware offerings by club librarian, Bernard Nottage.

Also included was a payroll software review by Don Wilkes and a March meeting report by Jim MacIntosh.



15 Years ago – 1986

Much of the April edition of the 1986 club newsletter was devoted to a listing of the Software Library, numbering upwards of 2000 programs contained on 230 disks. Club president, George Shirinian wrote a mixed review of the GVC Super Modem 1200 and on the same page a short survey polled members on their likes and preferences for an alternate General Meeting location (at that time General Meetings were held at York Mills Collegiate).

Four software reviews of PC shareware was authored by our very own Trev Beard (some things never change, eh?) and a listing of the newsletter exchange was also printed in this issue.

The editor back then was Glen C. Siegel, Vice Pres. was Tony Dixon and Art Robertson wore the two hats as Secretary and Treasurer. ❖

In The Palm Of My Hand

Bob Matheson

We have just returned from our long visit to the other side of the world. The trip to Australia is primarily to visit our son and his Australian wife in Melbourne. We combine it with a longer trip (no point in going that far for only a couple of weeks). With me all the way is my trusty Palm IIIx. Here's what I use it for:

Our Schedule: I make entries for all plane flights, arrival times, pre-booked hotels with phone numbers, addresses, and, if needed, directions to get there. (I use the shareware upgrade *Datebk 3 V. 2.1*)

Addresses: We send a lot of post-cards and although I pre-print address labels before we go I have a back-up list of everyone on the Palm. Also we have found now that access to the internet is ubiquitous so I have email addresses on hand.

Journal: I have always kept a journal when we travel and have boxes full of small notebooks or loose leaf pages, records of the trips we have taken. I found a program called Diary in which I can now record my thoughts. Since my Palm Pilot is in a case attached to my belt it is always available for note taking. (*Diary V. 0.5*) I have become quite adept with the graffiti input system used with the Palm.

Mileage: This trip we rented a car in Western Australia and I used another

shareware program to keep track of the daily mileage. (*Trip 3.1, Handshigh Software*)

Money Conversion: We purchase some money before we go because we watch the exchange rates. I set this program to the rate we paid when the money was purchased and then I can tell instantly what the item we are looking at costs in Canadian dollars. (*Traveler 1.9*)

Spreadsheet: (*Quicksheet 4.1.4, Cutting Edge Software*). This is a great little program that synchronizes with Excel on my PC. I use it for a number of things while traveling. We try to play some golf while we are in Australia (good courses, very cheap) so I register my scores on the Palm with this program. Also I have one boiler plate that I use to convert all the metres on the Aussie courses into yards. (This does not help my score but at least I know how far 125 yards looks.)

Finally, I have a program called *Documents-To-Go* which converts any document in text, Word or WordPerfect so that it can be read on the Palm. I usually load up with a number of articles I have gleaned from the internet so that when I have a few minutes I can read them.

Incidentally, we had a great trip! ❖

Membership Drive – You Can Help!

by Trevelyan Beard

As if our shrinking number isn't enough to worry about, we also have an acute shortage of funds. What to do about it? In a city this size it's inconceivable that a Club as useful and resourceful as the PCCT should stay this low in numbers and be this impoverished.

We all know that the regular meetings and the SIGs offer to the computer user a whopping bounty of help, interest and opportunity. But who else knows this? We need an aggressive move to publicize the Club and must do this without the help of funds.

This is where our existing membership can really help — in a way no others can. After all, you know the benefits of PCCT membership!

Accompanying this letter are two tools that you can use to help us achieve our goal of 600 members.

1. The **car banner** will be very effective if taped in the back window of your car. Offer the extra copy to a friend to use in the same way.
2. The sheet of **corkboard pin-ups** will also help spread the word effectively. Please cut them out, trim the hanging tails and place them on notice boards in super-markets, libraries and the like.

Help us draw attention to our excellent Web Page. In no time we will have hundreds of new hits that can motivate aspiring members to join us.

The future of the Club is up to all of us. Help us to spread the word. Don't delay. We have a lot to offer every computer user. Let's get our numbers back up to 600 members and our cash account back to several thousand dollars. ❖

A (Mis)Adventure with McAfee Virus Scan

John Mahler
jmahler@globalserve.net

I've been using McAfee anti virus ever since purchasing a computer from Gateway in 1998. I upgraded to Version 4.03 purchased Sept. 18, 1999. I thought it time to upgrade again and purchased what purported to be Version 5.0 on Feb. 12, 2001.

The disc was loaded and the installer found "a previous version" which it asked if I wanted to remove...which I did. The computer locked up.

I restarted the computer with the Version 5 disc which told me on completion of the install that I had Version 4. How could this be as the literature said Version 5?

I used the add/remove program and uninstalled Version 4, then reinstalled and got Version 4 again.

Time was running out as I needed my computer for business. I then asked a computer technician I use to check out my system and install Version 5. He had the same result.

I then phoned (at my additional expense) your California number to get the password and product ID. Your technician Patricia replied promptly by email with the necessary information.

IF it is necessary to contact you to get this information why can't it be done via email to save additional expense! Not a way to please a customer.

We then downloaded the patch to change to Ver 5 that I thought I purchased. The file was 14.1 meg along with the DAT updates.

The patch would NOT load as it's missing DLL files. The download was repeated with the same missing DLL files.

I am now operating with Ver 4 and updated DAT files or in other words back where I was before purchasing "Ver 5", a phone call to California plus charges for a technician to check out my system...only to find it was a McAfee software problem.

I am a member of The Personal Computer Club of Toronto, one of the largest in our area and went to our monthly meeting Feb 20. We have a question and answer session and in talking with other members found I was not alone others had the problem. A member said "Yea, it's a 14.1 meg file, mine had the same problem".

Some members (myself included) felt the upgrade instructions should have clearly indicated Ver 4 was in the box and a LARGE download would be required to give what I thought I had purchased..Ver 5

Our club president Mr. Karl Stanley asked me to detail my adventure and send him a copy.

Would I upgrade to Version 6? I don't think so based on my experience with Ver 5 (which I still don't have). ❖

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- ❖ Business Card Advertising 2 x 3 1/2"
- ❖ Special members price of \$10.00 per issue. No photos, line art only.
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- ❖ Deadline for submission is the General Meeting preceding the next issue.

<i>Accountants</i>	<i>Perkin & Stanley</i>
	593 Holgate Circle Newmarket, Ontario L3X 1V8
	Karl Stanley CGA
Tel: 1-800-365-4193	E-mail: kstanley@ilap.com
Tel: (905) 853-5339	Fax: (905) 836-5421

Unofficially, USB Could Mean 'User's Super Buddy'

by Ken Fermoye

Officially, USB stands for "Universal Serial Bus". Unofficially, I think it could translate to "User's Super Buddy" for PC and Mac users. Anybody who tried to install and configure a peripheral device in the old pre-USB days likely will agree. Back then, the chore was a major one, especially with PCs. It required a ton of computer savvy and no little amount of luck.

First, you had to figure out which port to use from a bunch of confusing possibilities. Then in most cases, you had to pull the cover off your computer (always scary, for either Mac or PC) to install an add-in card. For PCs, this often required setting pesky DIP switches. Next came the job of finding and configuring an available IRQ, not always easy. Basic system components used up some IRQs; serial devices already installed used up still more.

It was a fun job, yes sir! I can recall blowing the better part of a day trying to install a single new peripheral in computers ranging from the venerable XT through a variety of X86 machines, even into WinTel systems of the '90s. (Mac users had it easier but USB has been a boon for them, too.) Windows Plug'n'Play eased the problem, when it worked, but it took USB to solve it completely.

With USB, a computer automatically recognizes the device connected and installs the appropriate drivers. It enables computer users to "hot-plug" computer peripherals to their PCs. ("Hot-plugging" means you can plug in and unplug peripherals with have to power down and then reboot your computer, no small benefit.)

Not that there weren't difficulties at first. I heard many complaints from people who tried to install USB ports and devices in the early days of the technology. The problems usually arose from trying to use USB in hardware or software systems that weren't ready for it; i.e. older systems that hadn't been built with USB compatibility in mind. I do not recall getting any similar complaints during the past year. Lack of USB devices was a problem at first but now they're everywhere.

USB offers many more benefits than simple installation.

First, USB (Version 1.1) can carry data at up to 12 megabits per second (Mbps), 100 times faster than any serial

port. This broad category includes digital cameras, modems, keyboards, mice, printers, digital joysticks, some CD-ROM drives, tape and floppy drives, digital scanners and specialty printers.

USB's data rate also accommodates a whole new generation of peripherals: MPEG-2 video-base products, data gloves, digitizers and computer-telephony, expected to be a big growth area for PCs and Macs. (In addition, USB provides an interface such business-oriented technologies as Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) and digital PBXs.)

The latest version of USB, Version 2.0, introduced late in 2000, offers even faster communication, with bandwidth up to 400 Mbps. It easily accommodates high-performance peripherals, such as monitors, video conferencing cameras, next-generation printers, and faster storage devices. Happily, USB 2.0 is backward-compatible with Version 1.1

Next, one or two USB ports can support many peripherals. In theory, up to 127 devices can be "daisy chained" from a single port. There are practical limitations, power supplies among them, and most of us will never use anywhere near that number. The ability to plug a USB hub into a USB port and then connect four or more peripherals to it is a real convenience. You can place a hub anywhere on your desktop for easy access; no more crawling under the desk to connect or disconnect a mouse, digital camera or any other USB-compatible device.

Frosting on the cake comes in the form of an impressive hardware package from Belkin: the USB BusStation. This versatile docking station not only serves as a hub that gives you up to seven USB ports. Using optional adapters, it can accommodate many non-USB peripherals. It also offers a laundry list of other features:

- ❖ Innovative modular tower with three slide-out modules that fit into the palm of your hand.
- ❖ Configure your own low-cost universal docking station; choose whatever module combination is right for you, whether you are a PC or Mac user. (Compatible with Windows(r) 95 rev. B, Windows(r) 98, Windows(r) 2000, Mac(r) OS 8.1 or higher)

- ❖ 7-port hub (standard configuration) connects seven devices to a single USB port on your PC.
- ❖ Freedom to Connect keyboards, mice, joysticks, speakers and more to a single USB port on your computer.
- ❖ 4A (Ampere) power supply provides true 500-mA (milliamps) power to each port.
- ❖ Modules available for Ethernet, SCSI devices, serial, parallel, PS/2 and additional USB ports.
- ❖ Illuminated green LEDs for easy access to port status.
- ❖ Supports all high-speed and low-speed USB devices.
- ❖ Includes a Belkin Pro Series 3 ft. USB Device cable for a quality connection, lifetime Belkin warranty and USB Wizard to make configuration even easier.

I've been using a BusStation for many months now and find it invaluable. (Faithful readers know I don't report on a service or product until it has proved itself over a reasonable length of time and I have become thoroughly familiar with it.) Even before installing it in my main computer, I vowed never to buy another non-USB peripheral again.

With BusStation, I've found it easy to connect some of my older devices, including one of my several scanners and a digital camera with only a serial interface. This rates as an especially valuable feature for those of us who

can't afford to replace all of our currently owned peripherals with new USB products.

One caution: The BusStation User Manual clearly states that the 4A power supply is more than enough to supply adequate power to all ports in normal configuration. At 500mA per port, the power draw would be 3.5A. (Low-power devices such as mice and keyboards draw only about 100mA

However, adding a 4-port hub as one of the modules would overtax the BusStation. In such case, the 4-port hub must have its own 2.1A power supply, supplied with optional 4-port hub modules.

I like the fact that the BusStation includes built-in "Over current Protection," which shuts off a port if it draws too much current, protecting both the connected device and BusStation from damage.

At the usual price of \$79.99, I consider this Belkin product a good value. The cost is higher than two standard 4-port USB hubs, but you get more versatility. The price is competitive with multifunction hubs, even when you add in the cost of an adapter module or two (adapters range from about \$50 an up.) and, again you have greater choice in integrating USB into your system. ❖

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Mr. Fermoye has written some 2,500 articles for publications ranging from Playboy and Popular Science to MacWeek and PC World. Ken's Korner, a syndicated monthly column, is available free to User Groups and other non-profit or educational organizations.

For information or permission to reprint, contact: kfermoyle@earthlink.net.



Murray Dobbs thanks Frank Link for a great presentation at the February Internet SIG

Keeping In Touch Via Email

by Bob Mitchell

If you are going on a trip in the near future and would like to keep in touch with friends and family, it is best to set up a routine before you leave.

I hadn't done that before I left for New Zealand last spring but when I found a guest computer in the lobby of my hotel in Christchurch I sort of wished I had. However, it was fairly easy to set up an account with Hotmail right from that machine. From that time on, I planned to use Hotmail for all my out of town trips.

The next step was to have my ISP forward all my mail to Hotmail while I was away. This worked very well and I was happy until I changed ISPs. Now I found that my new ISP could not (or would not) do any forwarding. They did have, however, a better route.

All I had to do when out of town, was to get on any computer with browser access and enter my ISP's web site. Lo! I could easily get my email, send new messages, do all the things I did at home. Moreover, I could get onto any web site in the world and take a look at the news, weather, just about anything I could do at home.

Sometimes there was a charge for this as in Seville, Spain where it cost me less than a dollar for about 20 minutes of browsing and mail handling. One problem there was that the browser was set up in Spanish and the keyboard was more complex than at home; it had keys for the accented letters and a special key to access the "@" sign. But a bit of help from the proprietor, who spoke a little English set me on the right track.

By the way, my ISP is *Yesic.Com* here in Toronto and it might be unique in providing this world wide access to the net.

POSTSCRIPT: The world-wide web mail service is off-line at my ISP and they have suggested that I use an alternative, www.mollymail.com. I tried it; it works like Web Mail and is easy to set up on one or more mail-servers, e.g. your ISP and Hotmail.

If you would like to try it, set it up now by logging on to Mollymail and opening an account. You should then be able to receive and reply to your mail from wherever you have access to a browser. ❖

My New HP932c Printer — A True Delight.

By Bob Mitchell

Three months ago, I decided to replace my aging Canon BC210 with a new printer. After much research and a little help from my friends and my daughter, I chose the Hewlett-Packard 932c. It was selling just about everywhere for about \$300 plus taxes. It came with two half-full (half-empty?) cartridges, one black and the other colour, which are still working — but about to go dry anytime soon.

There is a rather neat built-in software routine that allows the user to check how much ink is still left in each cartridge. Mine now shows both to be very low; every few days I get a reminder that ink is low and that I should have replacement cartridges at the ready.

I am still running Windows 98SE and I read that about the only improvement in the ME edition that would benefit me is a new Print Preview option much like the one that appears with Office 2000. My new HP932C already has this option build into its software. That saved me the agony of switching to Windows ME, which is fraught with a myriad of pitfalls (so I am told).



The performance of this new printer is truly delighting me. It is significantly faster than my old printer and does a wonderful job of printing in colours that come startlingly close to matching what I see on my screen. Printouts will contain whatever colours appear in the original file; there is an option to print in gray scale (but I learned from HP support that this does not save the colour cartridge as it is used to deal with the gray scale printing).

Cartridges are available in half full or full versions. This is little comfort since both black and colour cartridges do not come cheap. A full colour one will run you about \$100.00, so be prepared.

Three months later, the selling price is still the same \$300, meaning this version is still selling well and is not likely to be superseded soon. ❖

SIG-nificant Photos...

Images from the March SIG Events



Steve Rakus, leader of the Windows SIG offers a few pointers.



Ken Morgan, leader of the Investment SIG welcomes guest speaker Derrick Sweet, Investment Advisor for Nesbitt Burns BMO — March 2001



Windows SIG meeting — March 2001



Derrick Sweet of Nesbitt Burns BMO presenting to the Investment SIG — March 2001

Dream Machine 2001

by Paul Leduc, PCCT

Every few years I get caught up in the upgrade cycle, and it's that time again. It seems my once powerful 400 MHz Pentium II can no longer keep up with the newer and larger software applications. When Dave asked me for an article for ReadMe, I thought I would share my experiences with you.

Let me qualify what I mean by 'upgrade': I have never upgraded an existing system; with the advances in technology, I find that an upgrade usually involves changing everything except the case. For example, there is no big advantage in changing the CPU chip, without a newer motherboard; conversely, there is no point in keeping an old slow hard drive, with a new mother board that supports a higher data transfer. So, instead, my 'upgrade' involves a complete system replacement.

First off, let me say I do not buy off the shelf, so to speak; that is, I do not buy a ready built unit from one of the big computer companies. My strategy is to research the components and order a system built to my specification. Yes, I could probably build it myself, and there is a great deal of satisfaction in that.. but, on the other hand, there could also be a lot of aggravation if something goes wrong. Besides, having it built by a system builder, usually ensures it will work and usually comes with a 2 to 3 year warranty in the event something does go wrong. The prices quoted in this article are from the web site of Greytech, a system builder dealer in Markham, taken from their web site in February 2001.

While I have always bought Intel, this is the first time I chose AMD. I opted for the AMD Athlon Thunderbird 1 Ghz processor this time. In my research, I found the newer Pentiums hardly had any improvement over the older ones, and the AMD out performed them in many cases. The newer Pentiums are designed to deliver performance with the addition of an added instruction mix.. however, most software today is not written to take advantage of this yet, a possible reason for the so-called poorer performance figures compared to the Athlon. I suppose it is much like when Intel released the MMX CPUs, and there was no software optimized for it either then. While there are currently faster Athlons available, at \$319, the Athlon 1 Ghz seemed to me like a better value for the buck.

To compliment this CPU, I chose the ASUS A7V motherboard. I have always used ASUS motherboards in all my systems, and never had a problem with them. They are reliable, have good support, and the BIOS can be flash upgraded easily. The A7V sup-

ports the Athlon CPU, and has a front side bus speed of 200 MHz - another reason for the choice. This board supports the new PCI v2.2 and USB v1.1 standards, the new ATA100 standard for hard disk support, and has 3 DIMM memory slots for up to 1.5 Gig of 133 MHz RAM. The board is \$229.

I decided to start with 256 MB PC133 SDRAM (as the name suggests, it runs at 133 MHz speed). While DDR RAM seems to be the next great thing in memory, I found that the cost was about 4 times SDRAM at this time.. not really worth the expense right now. The 256 SDRAM modules are \$189. If I find the system is paging too much when running, I can easily pick up another module and install it myself. While doing my research, I can across an excellent source of information on memory. On the Kingston memory web site, there is a 110 page PDF document called the Ultimate Memory Guide. It is an excellent document, written in plain easy to understand every day English, containing everything you ever wanted to know about memory, including the meanings of all those obscure abbreviations. It is also well illustrated. You can get at copy at: <http://www.kingston.com/tools/umg/default.asp>

The video card was a bit of work - there are a lot of good cards out there, and deciding which to use required a bit more research. It all depends on what you want to do with your system - some cards are optimized for business and others for games. Since I play very few games, I finally chose the ATI Radeon DDR 32 MB card; this card did very well in business benchmarks, while it's bigger brother the 64 MB card, had excellent scores on the gaming benchmarks. I have had ATI cards before and was happy with their performance and support; at \$239, I felt the Radeon DDR 32 would be perfect for my needs.

The hard drive chosen was IBM's ATA100 Deskstar 45.0 GB. Although I have always chosen either Quantum or Fujitsu drives in the past, I elected to go with the IBM drive this time. I have heard very good reports on it, and it's high data transfer rating (100 MB), 2 MB internal cache, and low cost (\$279) made the choice easy for me. Given its size, I plan to partition it to permit dual booting.. more on that later. As these larger hard drives tend to run a bit hotter, I also decided to get a hard disk cooling fan; this

is a small specialized unit that fits directly under the drive to provide cooling; it costs about \$25.

In the CDROM drive area, I chose two drives: a DVD and a CD Writer. I had a writer (sometimes called burner) in my previous system, and found it a very good backup device; I use the NovaDisk backup software, and with compression, I can backup my entire system (including apps) onto about 7 or 8 disks. These are R/W disks, so they can be rewritten. A cheap backup system! Also, I find that with a digital camera, a burner is an essential tool to save the hundreds of megabytes of images I take. I opted for the Yamaha

2100E internal EIDE drive. I had a Yamaha burner before (the 4416) and never had a problem - hence, my reason for loyalty.

The 2100E can write at 16x speed, rewrite at 10x speed, and read at 40x speed, and supports the newer 700 MB disks. It was \$369.

The DVD drive was a 'nice to have' option. I don't plan on watching DVD movies on my computer system, but I got one for several reasons. First, it was cheap: a Pioneer 16x DVD drive cost \$149. Although it reads DVDs at 16x, it can also read standard CDs at 40x speed, so it can double as a standard CDROM drive. It will come in handy if I am copying CD's. Also, I suspect that with the size of software these days, it probably won't be long until some applications and games are shipped on a single DVD disk.

For those times I need to connect to the net via phone (I have cable Internet now), I also threw in a cheap AOPEN 56K internal modem for \$49. At my age, my hearing is not the best, so I did not go crazy on a sound card either.. just a basic Sound Blaster 128 for \$59.

To package all this, I chose an Enlight midsize tower with a 350 watt power supply. This case has four 5.25 inch bays, and three 3.5 inch bays, 2 cooling fans, and is easy to work with should I need to add components at a later date. The case and power supply are \$129. I also threw in a Panasonic 1.44 MB floppy drive for \$19.

I did not buy a new keyboard, mouse, speakers, ether net card, or monitor; I will just move my existing ones over to the new system. Also, I saved some money by not having the dealer install an operating system - I have my own copy of Windows 2000

and also an older copy of Windows 98. Having your own copy of the OS is also useful in the event you need support. If you have an OEM version (ie, preloaded by the dealer), Microsoft will not support you. They direct you back to the dealer where you purchased your system, and in my experience, dealers are generally not too helpful in solving software problems. I mentioned earlier my intention to partition the 45 GB hard drive: Windows 2000 is primarily a business system and a number of games cannot run on it, hence my reason for creating a separate bootable partition with Windows 98.

So, the bottom line is that my new muscle system for 2001 will cost around \$2000 plus taxes. I know it is almost obsolete and I don't even have it yet, however, I suspect it will keep me happy for the next few years. As you can see, it is really not that difficult to design a system to your own specs. With the Internet, it is very easy to find product information, comparisons, and reviews. If you have the time, I think you will find it is well worth it! ❖

Tip Sheet:

When you are using a file over several days; create a shortcut on your desktop for quick access.

Get a copy of *Tweak UI* for all kinds of little things. You can rid you desktop icons of those noxious arrows for example.

Good housekeepers we aint! Dust and fingerprints degrade monitor sharpness. Use a good anti-static screen cleaner — often!

If you want lots of tips - get a copy of Windows SIG Leader Steve Rakus's book *Dr. Tips*; now available on CD.

Can you Market?

We are looking for help with marketing and promoting the club. Things like:

- ✓ help with radio service announcements
- ✓ help with corporate sponsorship
- ✓ newsletter distribution
- ✓ television, print and web coverage

If you have marketing or promotion experience and knowledge, an interest in helping out and a little bit of time, please contact your Board of Directors.

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:
\$ 65.00 (per household)
FAX/Voice (416) 633 - 6971

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PCCT Family Membership Benefits

With your family membership you get :

- ☆ Free entrance to club meetings including the General Meeting and the ten (10) Special Interest Groups that meet throughout the month.
- ☆ Entrance to the monthly General Meeting doorprize draws
- ☆ Demonstrations and presentations by leading software, hardware and computer columnists at the general meetings.
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FREE ADMISSION... The night is on us !

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Where: The North York Central Library
5110 Yonge Street,
Second floor of the Central Library
When: 3rd Tuesday of the month
(see calendar below)

**FREE
Guest
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One person, one month

PCCT EVENT CALENDAR

TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
3 APR 7 p.m. - BTS: Windows & WinBasic SIGs	4 APR 7 p.m. - BTS: Investment SIG	5 APR	6 APR
10 APR 1 p.m. - StA: Daytime SIG	11 APR 7 p.m. - BTS: Digital Imaging SIG	12 APR	13 APR
17 APR 7 p.m. - NYCL: GENERAL MEETING	18 APR 7 p.m. - BTS: Linux SIG	19 APR 7 p.m. - BTS: MS Office SIG	20 APR
24 APR 13:00 - StA: Daytime SIG	25 APR	26 APR 7 p.m. - BTS: Internet SIG	27 APR
1 MAY 7 p.m. - BTS: Windows & WinBasic SIGs	2 MAY 7 p.m. - BTS: Investment SIG	3 MAY	4 MAY
8 MAY 1 p.m. - StA: Daytime SIG	9 MAY 7 p.m. - BTS: Digital Imaging SIG	10 MAY	11 MAY
15 MAY 7 p.m. - NYCL: GENERAL MEETING	16 MAY 7 p.m. - BTS: Linux SIG	17 MAY 7 p.m. - BTS: MS Office SIG	18 MAY
22 MAY 1 p.m. - StA: Daytime SIG	23 MAY	24 MAY 7 p.m. - BTS: Internet SIG	25 MAY
29 MAY	30 MAY	31 MAY	1 JUN

