

# Amateur Computer Group of New Jersey NEWS

Volume 25, Number 5

May 2000

## What Is ACGNJ?

by *Walter DeGroot*



Welcome  
to  
Trenton Computer Festival  
Our 25<sup>th</sup> Year



[www.acgnj.org](http://www.acgnj.org)

Founded 1975

You may be reading this while you walk thru the fleamarket, you may be waiting for a seminar to begin, or just taking a break from shopping. Are you wondering — “What is this ACGNJ? Is it a company? Is it like those promoters that put on computer shows and sales? Just what is it?”

ACGNJ is all kinds of people. Not just computer experts, but people of all levels of expertise who are interested in computers. From the office worker using a wordprocessor to the manager of the office network to the housewife balancing her checkbook. We are children, teens, students, and senior citizens. Some of us had to build (not just assemble) our first computer and write the software to operate it.

ACGNJ has over two hundred meetings a year. We have SIGS (special interest groups) for people involved in all kinds of computer activity. Before ACGNJ was founded, over 25 years ago, the only computer people ran the big ones that occupied large rooms and larger air conditioners. Soon a few pioneers built their own computers from scrounged electronic parts. They started ACGNJ so they could help each other solve problems and celebrate together when they found a solution.

Later, when the Commodore, Apple and then IBM PC were available, the rest of us could have computers. We needed answers to our questions, and ACGNJ was there to help. Sub-groups were formed so those who had similar interests could meet and discuss common interests and problems.

By pooling information and sharing solutions, helping and showing others how things could be done, by taking beginners by the hand and leading them toward computer literacy, we all become more knowledgeable.

In addition, we found friends with whom we could share experiences. We could find out what to buy and what not to buy. **And** we could enjoy computers as a hobby if that was what we wanted. ACGNJ is people sharing experience and knowledge. ACGNJ is committed to computer education.

I missed those early years but I have enjoyed talking to those who were there. Computers are less expensive now and they do a lot more.

One thing that has not changed is the need for knowledge and understanding. After you buy a computer, ACGNJ members are here to support you while you are learning, hoping you will help others when you have become “the expert”. We invite you join or visit some of the more than 200 meetings we hold every year. ☐

### In This Issue

Windows 9x Security, <i>Vic Laurie</i> . . . . .	3	Test Your Connection Speed, <i>Sol Libes</i> . . . . .	4
Call, Fax, Pay Bills, Browse — Free, <i>Cass Lewart</i> . . . . .	5	The DealsGuy, <i>Bob Click</i> . . . . .	6
Writing Good Product Reviews, <i>Ken Fermoye</i> . . . . .	8	Cable Modems: A Realistic View, <i>Richard Chernock</i> . . . . .	8
MultiRead Spec for DVD, <i>Ken Fermoye</i> . . . . .	9	Privacy Protection Overdone, <i>John Raff</i> . . . . .	9
Internet Privacy: OptOut?, <i>Steve Gibson</i> . . . . .	11	SIG News . . . . .	16

# For Your Inquiries

<b>Officers</b>			<b>Board of Directors</b>		
President	Frank Warren	(908) 756-1681	Director Emeritus	Sol Libes	(609) 520-9024
Vice President	Jo-Anne Head	(908) 769-7385	Through 2000	Peter Fillingham	(973) 731-9269
Treasurer	John Sheetz	(908) 771-0196		Bob Berto	(732) 247-4321
Recording Secretary	Charlie Huffsmith	(732) 549-1734		Ted Martin	(732) 636-1942
Corresponding Sec'y	Evan Williams	(609) 397-3959		Kevin Shelly	(732) 828-9277
Past President	Bill Farrell	(732) 572-3481		Malthi Masurekar	(732) 560-1534
<b>Special Interest Groups</b>			Through 2001	Sheldon Koepf	(973) 740-2489
APCUG Rep.	Frank Warren	(908) 756-1681		Arnold Milstein	(908) 753-8036
C Languages	Bruce Arnold	(908) 735-7898		John Raff	(973) 533-0664
Concordia	Jerry Entin	(609) 395-8178		Martin Rosenblum	(973) 376-8965
Genealogy	Frank Warren	(908) 756-1681		Scott Vincent	(973) 361-5793
Investing	Sheldon Koepf	(973) 740-2489	<b>Standing Committees</b>		
Internet	Marty Rosenblum	(973) 376-8965	Bulletin Board Sysop	Bob Berto	(732) 247-4321
Layman's Forum	Matthew Skoda	(908) 359-8842	Facilities	Arnold Milstein	(908) 753-8036
Lotus Notes	Mike Barlow	(732) 873-1107	Financial	Jo-Anne Head	(908) 769-7385
LUNICS	Peter Fillingham	(973) 731-9269	Liaison	Bill Farrell	(732) 572-3481
Macintosh	Keith Sproul	(732) 821-4828	Membership	Martin Rosenblum	(973) 376-8965
PC Users	Jo-Anne Head	(908) 769-7385	Newsletter	Milton Astroff	(609) 395-1427
Random Access	Scott Vincent	(973) 361-5793	Special Interest Groups	Kevin Shelly	(732) 828-9277
Symposium	John Raff	(973) 533-0664	Trenton ComputerFest	Scott Vincent	(973) 361-5793
Visual Basic for Apps	James Ditaranto	(201) 986-1104	Webmasters	Jim Wong	
				John Raff	(973) 533-0664

## ACGNJ News

### Editor

Barbara DeGroot  
145 Gun Club Road  
Palmerton PA 18071  
Tel: (610) 377-8632  
Fax: (610) 377-9362  
[bdegroot@ptdprolog.net](mailto:bdegroot@ptdprolog.net)

### Publisher

Milton Astroff  
2C Truro Drive  
Monroe Twp. NJ 08831  
Tel: (609) 395-1427  
Fax: (609) 395-1428  
[waterbury\\_press@compuserve.com](mailto:waterbury_press@compuserve.com)

### E-Mail Addresses

Here are the e-mail addresses of ACGNJ Officers, Directors and SIG Leaders (and the Newsletter Editor). A similar list, including many members not listed here, can be found on the ACGNJ Web Page ([www.acgnj.org](http://www.acgnj.org)).

Bruce Arnold	<a href="mailto:barnold@blast.net">barnold@blast.net</a>
Milton Astroff	<a href="mailto:Waterburypress@compuserve.com">Waterburypress@compuserve.com</a>
Bob Berto	<a href="mailto:bob.berito@acgnj.org">bob.berito@acgnj.org</a>
Barbara DeGroot	<a href="mailto:bdegroot@ptdprolog.net">bdegroot@ptdprolog.net</a>
James Ditaranto	<a href="mailto:fryr92a@prodigy.com">fryr92a@prodigy.com</a>
Jerry Entin	<a href="mailto:jerryentin@worldnet.att.net">jerryentin@worldnet.att.net</a>
Bill Farrell	<a href="mailto:wfarr18124@aol.com">wfarr18124@aol.com</a>
Peter Fillingham	<a href="mailto:pete@panix.com">pete@panix.com</a>
Jo-Anne Head	<a href="mailto:tinarock@aol.com">tinarock@aol.com</a>
Charlie Huffsmith	<a href="mailto:chaz026@aol.com">chaz026@aol.com</a>
Sheldon Koepf	<a href="mailto:sheldonk@intac.com">sheldonk@intac.com</a>
David Lampe	<a href="mailto:david.lampe@entex.com">david.lampe@entex.com</a>
Elaine Lampe	<a href="mailto:Charmer21@Juno.com">Charmer21@Juno.com</a>
Sol Libes	<a href="mailto:sol@libes.com">sol@libes.com</a>
Ted Martin	<a href="mailto:TedJoy564@aol.com">TedJoy564@aol.com</a>
Malthi Masurekar	<a href="mailto:masureka@umdnj.edu">masureka@umdnj.edu</a>
Arnold Milstein	<a href="mailto:arnold_milstein@bigfoot.com">arnold_milstein@bigfoot.com</a>
John Raff	<a href="mailto:jraff@home.com">jraff@home.com</a>
Steven Rodriguez	<a href="mailto:cybertech72@bigfoot.com">cybertech72@bigfoot.com</a>
Marty Rosenblum	<a href="mailto:m.rosenblum@ieec.org">m.rosenblum@ieec.org</a>
John Sheetz	<a href="mailto:jsheetz@home.com">jsheetz@home.com</a>
Kevin Shelly	<a href="mailto:kjshelly@injersey.com">kjshelly@injersey.com</a>
Matt Skoda	<a href="mailto:matthew.skoda@acgnj.org">matthew.skoda@acgnj.org</a>
Keith Sproul	<a href="mailto:ksproul@noc.rutgers.edu">ksproul@noc.rutgers.edu</a>
Scott Vincent	<a href="mailto:svincent@ix.netcom.com">svincent@ix.netcom.com</a>
Frank Warren	<a href="mailto:kb4cyc@webwarren.com">kb4cyc@webwarren.com</a>
Evan Williams	<a href="mailto:nhpressgo@blast.net">nhpressgo@blast.net</a>
Jim Wong	<a href="mailto:jim@interactive.net">jim@interactive.net</a>

### Associate Editors

**Jo-Anne Head**  
(908) 769-7385  
[tinarock@aol.com](mailto:tinarock@aol.com)

**Bill Farrell**  
(732) 572-3481  
[wfarr18124@aol.com](mailto:wfarr18124@aol.com)

**ACGNJ News** is published by the Amateur Computer Group of New Jersey, Incorporated (ACGNJ), PO Box 135, Scotch Plains NJ 07076. ACGNJ, a non-profit educational corporation, is an independent computer user group. Opinions expressed herein are solely those of the individual author or editor. This publication is **Copyright © 2000 by the Amateur Computer Group of New Jersey, Inc., all rights reserved. Permission to reprint with appropriate credit is hereby given to non-profit organizations.**

**Submissions:** Articles, reviews, cartoons, illustrations. Most word processors or ASCII text are acceptable. Fax or mail hard copy and/or disk to Editor; OR e-mail to Editor. **Always confirm by voice.** Date your review and include name of word processor used, your name, address and phone *and* name, address and phone of the product manufacturer, if available.

**Tips for reviewers:** Why does anyone need it? Why did you like it or hate it? Ease (or difficulty) of installation, learning and use. Would you pay for it? If you include graphics, they should be separate files.

**Advertising:** Non-commercial announcements from members are welcome. Commercial ads are 15 cents per word, \$5 minimum. Camera ready display ads: Full page (7 x 10 inches) \$150, two-thirds page (4½ x 10) \$115, half-page \$85, one-third \$57, quarter \$50, eighth \$30. Discount 10% on 3 or more consecutive insertions. Enclose payment.

**Publication Exchange:** Other computer user groups are invited to send a their newsletters to Editor at the ACGNJ address above. We will respond in kind.

**Address Changes** should be directed to Charlie Huffsmith ([chaz026@aol.com](mailto:chaz026@aol.com)) and/or to his attention at the ACGNJ address above.

**Membership,** including subscription: 1 year \$25, 2 years \$40, 3 years \$55. Student or Senior Citizen (over 65): 1 year \$20, 3 years \$45. Family of member, without subscription, \$10 per year. Send name, address and payment to ACGNJ, PO Box 135, Scotch Plains NJ 07076.

**Typographic Note:** The ACGNJ News is produced using Corel Ventura 8. Font families used are Times New Roman (TT) for body text, Ariel (TT) for headlines.

# Windows 9X Security: Barbarians at the Gates

by Vic Laurie, PPCUG

How secure are our computers? In recent months we have been bombarded with warnings about hosts of new viruses, worms, Trojan Horses, and other malevolent software. Anti-virus software now has to be updated every few days. Not only that, but Microsoft has so many patches for various security holes in the operating system that it requires a special effort to even attempt to keep track. (Just take a look at the Windows update site.) To add to our problems, various new ways of invading our privacy are constantly springing up (see Sol Libes' article in the January ACGNJ Newsletter). Advertisers are tracking us in great detail, hackers are breaking into our machines; we seem to be under constant assault.

Short of never going on-line, what can an average PC user do? A full-fledged discussion of security issues is far beyond the scope of our limited space, but in this article are outlines of some of the most important steps to be taken. A few basic precautions will go a long way towards lessening security problems.

## **The Malevolent Zoo**

An essential step is to use a good anti-virus program and keep it updated. Major anti-virus software firms such as Norton and McAfee continually update their database of virus definitions to meet the threat of ever-newer versions of viruses, etc. Updated versions of virus definitions are made available at frequent intervals on the Web sites of the various companies. A listing of a number of these sites can be found at [http://updates.zdnet.com/articles/ax\\_50664.htm](http://updates.zdnet.com/articles/ax_50664.htm). Also, virus news can be found at

<http://www.zdnet.com/zdhelp/stories/main/0,5594,2340483,00.html>.

In today's conditions, checking for updates should be done at least biweekly. Programs such as Norton Anti-Virus contain applets that make updates easy.

Sticklers make distinctions among viruses, worms, and Trojan Horses. For the purists, the term "virus" is limited to self-replicating programs that make use of one of your own files (called the "host") to carry out its actions. Worms are like viruses in that they make copies of themselves but they do not require a "host." Trojan horses do not replicate themselves but carry out destructive actions while masquerading as a benign application. For most of us, these are distinctions without a difference since they are all bad news and they are often lumped together under the single category of "virus." They are all dealt with by the major anti-virus software packages.

## **Mail Bombs**

In recent times, the greatest source of danger to the average user from viruses has become e-mail, in particular for those using Outlook and Outlook Express. Because they are widely used e-mail clients and because of their high degree of integration with other Microsoft components, they have become a major target of hackers. No matter what your e-mail client, however, there are some general rules to follow. Beware of all attachments. Do not assume that e-mail from a friend is to be trusted. The friend may be an unwitting victim of a Trojan

or worm that is using his or her address book to send out malicious mail. Never open an attachment with the extension .exe without doing a virus scan, and even then only when you are sure what the file is. Better, never open any attached file without doing a virus scan. Many file types can contain dangerous code. Microsoft Word files (with .doc extensions) are a favorite these days. In addition, extensions can be faked and executable files may be disguised to seem harmless.

Unfortunately, even the body of a message may contain evil-doing scripts or code if it is in HTML format. Even if you only preview a message, it may cause the scripts or code to be executed. Those using Internet Explorer and Outlook Express should use the precautions that are given in Dave Methvin's articles at

<http://www.winmag.com/fixes/mailsec.htm> and  
<http://www.winmag.com/fixes/ie/restrict.htm>.

In the Internet Explorer menu bar choose Tools | Internet Options (or View | Internet Options for IE4) and click the Security tab. Then select the Restricted Sites icon and select Custom Level. Click the Settings button. Now choose Disable for Java. Disable for Active Scripting, and Disable for Scripting of signed ActiveX controls. Click OK twice to close. Now open Outlook Express. In the menu bar select Tools | Options | Security. In the Security Zones section, click the button for Restricted Sites. Click OK. Now messages in Outlook Express should be unable to carry out any included scripts. If you prefer, you can put the IE Restricted Site settings at Prompt instead of Disable but more vigilance will then be necessary on your part when viewing a message. Incidentally, here is one case where the primitive nature of AOL's mail client and its inability to handle HTML is actually an advantage. Also, Netscape does not execute ActiveX (but may do certain Java operations).

## **Guarding the Gates**

Viruses and their ilk are not the only security problem. The Internet is much more of a two-way channel than many users realize. With the typical Windows setup, perfect strangers can come into a system at will. Did you know that there are 65,535 TCP/IP ports or entryways by which a hacker (or cracker if you prefer) can theoretically gain access to your computer when you are on the Internet? Unfortunately, on most home PC systems there are likely to be a number of these ports wide open to the Internet for anyone to come in. For a list of ports commonly used by Trojans go to <http://www.simovits.com/nyheter9902.html>. For an excellent discussion of this problem and what to do about it, go to Steve Gibson's comprehensive site at <http://grc.com/su-explain.htm>. There you can have some of the common ports on your machine probed to see how vulnerable you are. Those with cable or DSL connections have special problems, due to their having a permanent IP address assigned to their machine. Once a hacker finds the address with scanning software, he can probe the machine for weaknesses at his leisure. Thus, it is advisable for computers with permanent addresses to have firewall software installed.

*continued on page 11*

# Test Your Internet Connection Speed Easily

by Sol Libes

Do you feel that your Internet bandwidth (your connection speed) is not as fast as it should be? That your 56K modem, cable, DSL, or ISDN connection's bandwidth is not performing as you have been promised?

Now there is a very easy and simple way to test the performance of your Internet access. Microsoft has put up a web page to test the speed of your Internet connection. The web page is called the "Bandwidth Speed Test" and is at:

<http://computingcentral.msn.com/topics/bandwidth/speedtest500.asp>

I am fortunate enough to have a cable connection to the Internet via Comcast @Home. I have been using it for about a year now. Comcast promised me that I would achieve a transfer rate of 2Mb/sec.

I frequently transfer large size files. There are times when the transfer takes no time at all. At other times, the transfer rate appears to be slower than a 28.8Kb modem. Hence, I wanted to know how fast by throughput was. To find out I went to the Microsoft web site and ran the test. I ran it ten times (hit the browser refresh key to repeat it) and got the following results:

832.7Kb/sec

412.5Kb/sec

1457.1Kb/sec

1813.3Kb/sec

1651.8Kb/sec

2125.0Kb/sec

1426.6Kb/sec

824.2Kb/sec

1686.1Kb/sec

482.3Kb/sec

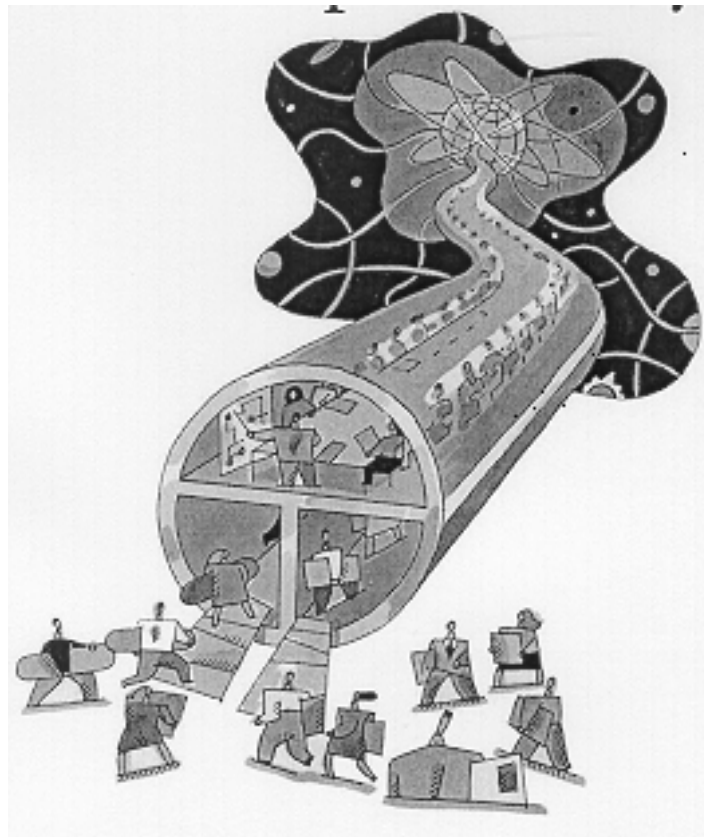
It is necessary to run this test several times since the Internet is a very complex network whose performance is constantly changing due to the changing activity on the Internet and the server used to perform the test.

From these results I was able to determine that my average bandwidth is 1271.2Kb/sec or typically a little under 1.3Mbps. As you can see, I actually achieved the promised 2Mb/sec rate once. Twice the test showed that I achieved less than a quarter of the promised speed.. Of course and average of 1.3Mbps is very good when you consider that a T1 connection is typically 1.5Mb/sec. And this is much better than my old 56Kbps modem, which was typically about 40Kbps.

I wondered how reliable was this test. For example, would there be a difference between a test run by the Microsoft server versus a test using a program on my computer and another web server.

To compare the different test methods I downloaded a free MS Windows utility, called "NetMonitor", from the Kissco website <http://www.kissco.com/>. This placed a program on my computer that allowed me to download a file from their web server have my computer determine the transfer speed. I

ran the test ten times and determined that my average bandwidth was 1247.4Kb/s. In other words the Microsoft test, which did not require installing any software on my computer, was very close to the NetMonitor program.



Well, now I knew that my ISP service was operating at a fairly decent speed — over 60% of what Comcast promised. There is still nothing that I can do about the poor throughput I get when downloading a file from a server that is very slow and busy servicing many other users.

Incidentally, the Kissco NetMonitor program does have some nice features. It provided me with a little screen showing both the send and receive activity. Thus, I could see if the web server was very busy, pausing between packets or had stopped sending packets. It also showed me the transfer rate of each packet received, and the IP addresses of my system, my ISP, and the URL I was connected to. Kissco also has a free utility called RAM optimizer that they claim speeds up your transfer speed by freeing up RAM. I think that this program should prove worthwhile if you do not have much RAM in your system. They also sell a program that promises improved Internet performance by optimizing all the system factors which influence bandwidth. ☺

# Call, Fax, Pay Bills and Browse — All for Free!

by Cass Lewart (rlewart@monmouth.com)

What is the most powerful word in any marketer's vocabulary to attract immediate attention? No, it is not "SEX", it is "FREE". By now many Internet start-ups realize that giving things away in the hope of hooking future customers, as well as establishing brand recognition, is worth literally billions of dollars in stock market appreciation. The investor does not seem to care about the immediate losses as long as there is a glimmer of hope for future gains. In the meantime Internet users get, in many respects, a free ride. Although there are literally hundreds of free Internet services today I will discuss only those I have personally tried out. Their quality and usefulness varies but they are definitely free.

## **Free Phone Calls Over the Internet**

When you register with [www.dialpad.com](http://www.dialpad.com) and download their Java applet, you will be able to dial any number in the U.S. by just clicking your mouse on the dial pad. Assuming you have a working sound system with a set of speakers and a microphone, you will be able to conduct free unlimited telephone conversations over the Internet with your computer at one end and a phone at the other end. The sound quality is quite good, though there is some echo. It is somewhat better than Alexander Graham Bell's original phone call.

## **Free Phone Calls Over the Telephone Network**

When you register with [www.mytalk.com](http://www.mytalk.com) you will get a toll-free number assigned to you with an extension, as well as an e-mail address ([userid@mytalk.com](mailto:userid@mytalk.com)). When your friends call this number and extension, they can leave voice messages for you. When you call the same toll-free number and give your password you can retrieve those messages. You can also retrieve e-mail messages sent to [mytalk.com](http://mytalk.com), which are read to you over the phone by a text-to-speech converter. After dialing the same toll-free number you can also place free 2 minute calls to any phone in the U.S. After 2 minutes you will be disconnected. However, before you get connected you have to listen to a 2 minute commercial. Quality is excellent and you can place calls from any phone including phone booths.

## **Free Fax Service (Receiving)**

When you register with [www.efax.com](http://www.efax.com) you are assigned a regular phone number somewhere in Illinois. This is your private fax number, but it is not toll free. When somebody sends a fax to that number, a minute later, a file containing the fax is e-mailed to your regular e-mail account (about 50 kbyte per page). You can see the fax on the screen with a special viewer which you download free from eFax. You can then print, rotate or save the fax in different formats. Before you can read your fax you are exposed to about 15 seconds of advertising. I consider this service extremely valuable. My phone no longer rings in the middle of the night and my fax is never out of paper.

## **Free Fax Service (Sending)**

Similarly when you register with [www.free2fax.com](http://www.free2fax.com) you will be able to send a fax to any U.S. or Canadian phone number. Unfortunately the faxes accepted are text only and have to be composed on-line. I guess if your recipient has no e-mail, but

has a fax machine this service would be okay. Otherwise I find this service of only limited use.

## **Free Bill Payment Service**

When you register with [www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com) and provide them with your Visa or Mastercard number you can immediately start paying bills, which will be then charged to your credit card. The recipient has to have an e-mail address. When you send ("beam" in PayPal parlance) \$2.50 to your friend Joe, Joe will find in his e-mail a message coming from you, announcing that \$2.50 has been credited to him. He can either keep this amount with PayPal by opening an account with them, he can have this amount credited to his bank account or he can request that a check be mailed to him. When you open an account with PayPal you get a \$10 credit and for each person you recommend you get another \$10. If you open an account with PayPal, don't forget to give my e-mail as reference! Overall it is a great and unique service. (Ed. note: Since the recent merger of PayPal with X.com, an online branch of a genuine bank, policy on referrals has changed and the bonus amount has been reduced to \$5. According to their press releases, PayPal funds will eventually be available at ATM terminals as well as the ways listed.)

## **Free Internet Access with E-Mail**

There are many choices for free ISPs. There is Freei, Bluelight (from KMart), Juno and others. I tried NetZero at [www.netzero.com](http://www.netzero.com) and was quite happy with it. You download the software, about 5 MByte, then request a User Name and password. If the User Name is available you fill out a long questionnaire covering your habits (I stressed my love of shopping) and your station in life. NetZero then gives you a free account with hundreds of local POPs all over the country. The sign-up software has a few bugs, so you may have to fill out the questionnaire more than once before your application is accepted. NetZero is quite unobtrusive in that it will run with your regular browser and e-mail programs. Most of the time it will put an advertising banner on the top or bottom of your screen. Occasionally the banner will disappear. NetZero is not associated with a news server. I consider the main disadvantage of NetZero and similar services to be that you get branded as a cheapskate. If you can stand the occasional scorn of your friends, lack of news groups and want to save \$20 per month, then this service is for you. ☺

## **Classified**

**FREE TO MEMBERS.** Use our classified section to sell off your surplus computer stuff. Send copy to Classified, ACGNJ NEWS, P.O. Box 135, Scotch Plains NJ 07076 or via e-mail to the editor, [bdegroot@ptdprolog.net](mailto:bdegroot@ptdprolog.net). Classified ads are free to members, one per issue. Non-members pay \$10. Send check payable to ACGNJ Inc. with your copy. Reasonable

# From The Dealsguy

Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer User Group

The comments about my disgusting experience with Best Buy brought a tremendous response. I was deluged with people's experiences, almost all bad. I have an attorney, but no response yet from Best Buy. More next month.

## ***A caveat on buying rebated products from catalogs***

I learned that Net Objects had a \$200 rebate on their "Fusion 4.0" Web site software (too late to include it in the column). To order on their Web site was \$299 before the rebate. Then I received a new catalog from PC Mall offering it for \$269 (\$69 after rebate), \$30 cheaper. I seldom order rebated items, but relented and ordered it from PC Mall for that kind of rebate since I'm told Net Objects is a reliable company.

In the package from PC Mall, I found the product, no receipt, and just a very plain shipping slip. I called PC Mall and was faxed a receipt, but it also was plain with no logo on it. A phone call revealed that was not acceptable to Net Objects for the rebate, so I called PC Mall asking for a software receipt with their logo to be mailed. After a week and no receipt, I called again and was promised the proper receipt by mail a second time. After the third call and no response from PC Mall, I did the best I could to send for my rebate (before its deadline) with what materials I had to qualify, including a copy of the catalog pages offering the product.

Had it not been for the good graces of Net Objects customer service, I would have been out the \$200 rebate (pleading on my knees may have helped). When I asked Net Objects about their upcoming version 5.0 upgrade, seems I had bought it too early for a free one, but they'd send it anyway because it was close. What a nice staff to work with at Net Objects. I came out okay, but no thanks to PC Mall. Interesting that version 4.0 had no free tech support, but version 5.0 does. Imagine my relief when I received that \$200 rebate check.

## ***Susceptible to prying eyes?***

Regarding people with cable or DSL being susceptible to prying eyes, Paul Witheridge from the Sarnia, Ontario group suggests that just because you are using ordinary dial-up access to the Internet doesn't mean you are not susceptible to prying hackers.

He stresses that everyone has the same problem without a firewall, but the increase in vulnerability for 24/7 connections (cable and DSL connections on full time) is owed to the fact that they normally keep the same IP address. The dial-up modem has a different address whenever you sign on and you are normally not on long enough to catch anybody's attention, or at least to be of use as a remotely controlled hacking site. I'm sure you will read articles about this according to what I see in various newsletters.

According to the Steve Gibson site, Zone Alarm (<http://www.zonelabs.com/downloads/zonalm20.exe>) is the better firewall. Paul Witheridge states that some people can pass Steve's tests with flying colors, even though they may have taken no special precautions, so they have no problem.

Take the test at <http://grc.com> and be your own judge. He explains further, but I have limited space.

## ***Pram battery software***

Sorry I didn't do my homework for the Pram battery software. I've had e-mails saying it's for Macs only. I didn't check, or I would have mentioned that. However, check your favorite shareware Web site to find similar software for a PC. Your CMOS battery condition is important.

## ***BlueLight Internet***

AOL disks have become so commonplace that most people have enough to tile their bathroom walls. Next time you stop at a Kmart store, notice their free BlueLight.com disks hanging on a post at the checkout counter. I've heard few complaints about their BlueLight.com free Internet service. They are certainly making it easy to try. They have telephone tech support also. Perhaps one bathroom wall could be tiled with Kmart disks.

## ***Caere, World Skyline, Adobe deals***

As far as I know, the deals from Caere are still good. Visit <http://www.caere.com/survey/usergroups.asp> to have the order forms mailed to you. The special offer from World Skyline should also be good yet. The Adobe photo site is good indefinitely. Go to: <http://www.activeshare.com>, the corrected URL.

## ***A Reminder From Adobe***

I printed this one before, but at the FACUG conference in Kissimmee, FL, Louise Miller from Adobe asked me to make sure you knew about this discount. Adobe is, without a doubt, one of the user group's best supporters. Peachpit Press/Adobe Press offers up to 40% off the list prices. Order 1 to 10 books and receives a 20% discount. Eleven or more books get a whopping 40% discount, so ordering in bulk pays off. Have your group's special offers coordinator contact Louise Miller or Rye Livingston for the form.

## ***From Our Friends at JASC Software***

"Belated Happy New Year from your friends at JASC Software! As you may have heard, we recently created a free digital imaging community called StudioAvenue.com(tm) for all Paint Shop Pro users. When you join StudioAvenue.com, you'll be able to:

- Securely store and share your photos over the Web with friends and family,
- Create unique photo-personalized greeting cards and gifts,
- Order high-quality reprints of your favorite photos,
- Search and browse through hundreds of photo communities,
- Use advanced viewing technology to easily zoom, pan, and explore your photos,
- Get 50 MB of free photo storage
- Enter fun contests — and win cool stuff!"

*continued on page 14*

# Honesty, Accuracy: Keys to Good Product Reviews

by Ken Fermoye

After meeting notices and other club news, product reviews make up a major share of the content in most user group publications. Therefore, it's important — even critical — that they be done properly. Unfortunately, this isn't always the case.

In the 2½ years since I started my Ken's Korner column I've read at least 2,000 newsletters, sent to me by groups that use the articles. I don't pretend to read every single one cover to cover, but I do scan them all and I do read most of the interesting material, including reviews. Most are okay, some are very good, and some are terrible! The majority of them would be improved if reviewers followed a few simple rules.

**Honesty is the only policy** — Yes, you want to keep vendors happy so they will continue to support your group and the UG community as a whole, but your first obligation is to your fellow members. This means telling it like it is. If you find a flaw in the product, tell your readers about it.

**Be fair to readers & product** — Don't blame the product for your shortcomings or those of your computer, however. If a software program runs slower than you'd like, maybe it's because your machine doesn't have enough RAM. Or perhaps you haven't configured things properly. You need to put things into context so readers can judge whether a flaw you report is inherent in the product or may be pilot error.

**Accuracy is vital** — I've read many reviews in which the reviewers criticized a product with which I was familiar. It was obvious to me that the reviewer didn't understand it, had not read the manual or help page carefully, and had not sought help from a more experienced fellow member or the product's Tech Support before writing the review.

**Explain user benefits** — Up front, preferably in the first paragraph, tell readers what the product is designed to do for them and how it can make their computing life easier. Be specific enough so they can determine whether or not the product would be useful for the type of computing they do most often.

**Specify system requirements** — We all know that requirements listed on a box aren't usually realistic. Sure, a graphics program may run with just 32MB of RAM, but it will make a snail's pace look speedy. Spell out exactly how your system is configured so readers can compare it to their own setups. This is part of being fair, Item 2 above.

**Balance subjectivity, objectivity** — You're allowed to editorialize, but make it clear when you're giving a subjective opinion. ("This program was somewhat difficult for me to use because the interface is different from the XYZ software that I normally use" is a clearly-labeled subjective statement.) "It took exactly 5.4 seconds to save to save a 5.6MB file to this disk" is clearly objective.)

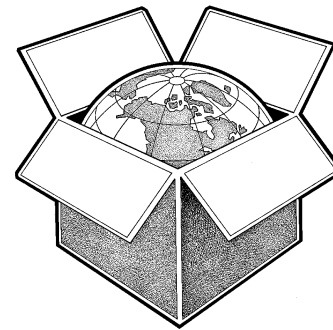
**Check out tech support** — Is there an 800 number? How long were you on hold before a real live techie was available? Is a manual furnished in the package? Is the manual helpful? (Hint: Lots of illustrations, including screen shots, and a very complete Index, with abundant cross-indexing are characteristics of a really good manual.) Remember the fairness factor, however, and check to see what experiences others have had with this vendor's tech support.

**Include relevant details** — Give readers the suggested price, and user group discount, if one is offered. Add complete vendor contact information: address, phone & fax numbers (both sales & tech support), website URL, e-mail address.

**In addition** — Your group may have its own set of product review guidelines. If not, it would be a good project for an editorial committee to undertake. Such guidelines should spell out minimum and maximum lengths, how a review should be delivered to the editor (usually on diskette or via e-mail), what file format should be used (plain ASCII text, Word, Rich Text Format, etc.) and other requirements.

Correct grammar and spelling are certainly important, but don't let lack of writing experience stop you from doing reviews. Honesty, accuracy and fairness are more important than an occasional split infinitive or misspelling. Do a spell check, and you might want to have a third party check your opus for obvious goofs (An ex- or current English teacher would be great).

Those are the basics. Follow them and you will be a real asset to your group when it comes to doing product reviews that are effective, readable and useful for readers. ☐



*Open up a whole new world — join a user group.*

## Phil Katz Dead

Philip W. Katz, the creator of one of the world's most popular utility programs, PKZip, was found dead in his motel room in Milwaukee on April 14. He was 37.

PKZip, a file compression program, is used by millions, and is the standard for compression. Anyone who has downloaded or shared a file with the extension .zip has benefited from the contribution of Phil Katz to the computer industry.

PKWare, founded by Katz in 1989 to publish his PKARC program competing with SEA's ARC, can be found in the Shareware Hall of Fame. After some legal wrangling with SEA, Phil wrote PKPAK and finally PKZIP which immediately became the industry standard for compressed file libraries. The PKZIP standard was made public and PKWare even published APIs.

The cause of death was reportedly complications from chronic alcoholism. ☐

# Cable Modems: A Realistic View

*Richard Chernock, Danbury Area Computer Society*

We've all heard the come-ons: "Blazing speed!" "Connect 100 times faster than over the phone!" Unfortunately, two very important phrases are left out: "sometimes" and "up-to." Most of the hype that we hear about high-speed, broadband access is driven by the marketers rather than by the techies. But for the reasons mentioned below, that hype is rarely delivered. Lest this sound too negative, I'm pleased to note that the cable modem provider in the Newtown, Conn, area has taken a much more realistic approach to its marketing and is promising what it can deliver.

## **The Reality**

After switching to cable modem access, many people discover that they rarely achieve the kinds of speeds that they are promised in the marketing hype. Typically their access speed is significantly improved over their old POTS connection (Plain Old Telephone Service), although in some cases when things get very bad this may not be true. The basic problem with achieving high speeds is that the cable modem connection is shared, and the speed that is achieved is determined by how many other users are competing for the pipe. In addition, one important consideration that is often overlooked is the end-end view of a connection on the Internet. The cable modem represents only the "last mile" between the home and the cable head-end (essentially, the ISP). From that point to the server providing the content, the packets flow over the ISP connection to the Internet, the Internet backbone, and whatever connection the server is using. In many cases, one of these is the rate-limiting link: No matter how fast the last mile is, data will not flow any quicker. In addition, users quickly discover that bandwidth is only a part of the equation. As outlined below, other factors (especially the "always-on" characteristic of cable modem connections) become more important.

## **Feature attractions**

Besides bandwidth, cable modems do offer many attractive features. One of the first things that new subscribers notice is that they regain a telephone connection. When using POTS modems for the Internet, the phone line is tied up.

Probably of more importance is the "always-on" nature of the Internet connection. Whenever the computer is on, it is connected to the Internet. Initially for those coming from a connection-oriented service, this may not seem like much of an advantage. But once habits are unlearned, this characteristic becomes quite important, as illustrated by the following two examples:

With an always-on connection, e-mail becomes less of a batch process and more like checking a telephone answering machine. I've begun leaving my mail client running whenever my PC is, automatically checking the server for new e-mail every 10 minutes. Whenever I walk by the computer, I check for a new-mail indication (similar to looking for the blinking light on an answering machine) - or listen for the "mails-in" sound (similar to the phone ringing)

CD player: A feature that many people aren't aware of for many CD-audio players under Windows is the capability of

looking up a CD in a database located somewhere on the Internet. I was quite amazed the first time I played a CD after installing my cable modem: shortly after closing the CD drive tray, I was presented with not only the name of the CD I'd inserted, but also a list of all the songs on the disk.

Even when their service is oversubscribed, resulting in slow speeds, numerous studies have shown that few people are willing to give up their cable modem and go back to their old access.

## **The Alternatives**

Today, there are essentially two alternatives to cable modem technology for high-speed Internet access — T1 and ADSL access. Both of these are phone technologies using twisted-pair copper connections to the telco's central office. Some may remember ISDN, which although quite successful in Europe, has come and gone in the U.S. without much impact. T1 technology has been in existence for a long time and provides approximately 1.5 mbps dedicated bi-directional connections. Unfortunately, it is also extremely expensive and requires a high-quality line between the subscriber and the central office. These two factors take T1 connections out of the realm of possibility for most home users.

ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line) is a lower-bandwidth technology that is considerably cheaper and more forgiving of line conditions. ADSL connections co-exist with your telephone connection without tying up the line (you can talk and compute at the same time). Typically, ADSL subscriptions are sold as multiples of 256 Kbps, with prices comparable to cable modem access. Unlike cable modems though, ADSL connections are not shared, so network loading will not affect your speed. Outside of the high-tech areas of the country, it is rare to have a choice between ADSL and cable modem connections. This makes the decision quite easy: You subscribe to what is available. In this area of Connecticut, cable modem seems to be the choice

## **The Technology**

Cable Modem signals travel on the same coax that delivers cable television service. In order to understand some of the limitations of cable modem service, it is necessary to understand something about the topology of the cable network. Today's systems use an infrastructure called hybrid fiber-coax, which essentially means that all signals from the cable head-end travel along fiber optic connections to a network node. At the node, the signal is converted to RF, which travels through coaxial cable running along the telephone poles to the home. While each node may be fed different information, all of the signals from the node to the homes are the same (two different houses on the same coax line will see exactly the same information).

There are typically two different paths with quite different characteristics for the data delivered to you (the "downlink") and the data you send (the "uplink"). The downlink channel is provided by modulating digital information on one of the 6 Mhz television channels within the spectrum provided by the cable system. As mentioned above, this channel is shared

*continued on page 10*

# MultiRead Spec for DVD

by Ken Fermoye

Recent action by the Optical Storage Technology Association (OSTA) to extend capabilities of its "MultiRead" optical drive specification will make rewriteable DVD drives more practical. Lack of compatibility between drives from different makers has hampered growth of the technology to date.

All CD- and DVD drives that conform to the new MultiRead2 specification will read 2.6GB DVD-RAM ReWriteable media. Panasonic, a pioneer in DVD-RAM, projects that industry-wide DVD-RAM drive sales will reach 1.5 million units by the end of 2000.

"To protect consumers from compatibility issues and eliminate confusion, OSTA has developed a single standard that ensures media interchangeability of recorded media," explained Dr. Paul Liao, chief technology officer of Matsushita Electric Corporation of America (Panasonic is MECA's principal brand.) "After completing all necessary testing, OSTA issued MultiRead 2, which validates DVD-RAM. This specification paves the way for DVD-RAM to reach the tremendous potential the DVD Forum envisioned for it."

That means lower prices, and not just for rewriteable DVD drives. CD-RW drives probably will drop, too.

I wouldn't be surprised to see CD-RW drives going for about \$150 in time for Christmas, if Panasonic's projections prove to be accurate.

DVD-RAM is the industry's first ReWriteable DVD format, and it provides a number of significant advantages over other removable, ReWriteable storage options. These include:

A DVD-RAM disc provides a read/write capacity of 5.2GB (about 8 times that of CD-R/RW) on two sides (2.6GB single-side media).

DVD-RAM media offers extremely inexpensive storage—less than \$.01 per MB.


Rapid data transfer—1.385MB/second for DVD-RAM, 2.77 MB/second for DVD-ROM and 20X CD-ROM read speed

High-speed access—120ms or better for DVD-RAM; 85ms or better for DVD-ROM and CD-ROM

Unprecedented media interchangeability—DVD-RAM drives can read discs currently accepted by CD-ROM, CD Audio, CD-R, CD-RW and video CD drives, as well as DVD-ROM, DVD videos and DVD-R drives

More than 100,000 write/overwrite cycles

A technically-proven growth path—next-generation media will provide a single-side capacity of 4.7GB; ultimately, higher capacities will be available

Panasonic began shipping its DVD-RAM drive in April 1998, and was the first company to deliver a DVD-RAM drive fully compliant with the DVD Forum specification. In January, Panasonic announced plans to market its first DVD-RAM-based video recorder, which will offer consumers "exceptional picture quality, multi-disc playback, digital recording and random access when connected to home theater components" the company claims. — *A TidByte from Ken's Korner* 

# On the Soap Box — Again Privacy Overdone?

by John Raff

On April 20th the FTC made it illegal to collect and/or disseminate information from an underage (13yr) child without following appropriate privacy and dissemination laws. This, on the face of it, sounds like a good thing, but consider the consequences and extensions. Laws that have been abused by the courts; the pot smoking mothers up on charges of being a dope dealer, simple businessmen charged as drug dealers because their products or service use large amounts of cash. I'm certain you have heard of other such ridiculous "crimes".

Anyway the "Children's Online Privacy Protection Act" (COPPA) went into effect April 20th or thereabouts. The "law" requires any web site collecting information of or about children to provide the "parents" of such children access and control over what data was collected and how that data will be used and or disseminated.

Sounds fine until you consider the other side; a web site not intended for children has a form on said site and collects information from the surfer for later use. With this new COPPA law this site owner/operator may be brought up on charges of illegally collecting and disseminating information if just one child enters information. This law was intended to protect children, and I agree they should be protected, but the law mandates ridiculous rules, like having to check with all surfers entering data as to their age and parental permission prior to saving or using the data, and requiring all dissemination of data to go through a rigorous "sex" search to prevent rapist and pedophiles from obtaining the data. Consider a web site intended for heavy machine parts that has a web form on it collecting information from surfers interested in the latest Big, Heavy, Fast, grinding widget. Now such site must conform to COPPA to protect itself from "under age" surfers who might enter data and submit the form. It would seem that all forms will have to have a "proof of age" similar to the "adult" sites just to collect data from the surfers.

When our legislative bodies come up with and pass into law such ridiculous regulations the senators and congressmen should be summarily drawn and quartered. The law is very clear and requires **every** internet site that collects information to follow the COPPA rules. How does a web site protect itself against such ridiculous laws? It can't!

I believe the appropriate Congressional bills are S.2326 and H.R.4667, one may search for them here:  
<http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/d105query.html>,  
<http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/d105query.htmlA>.

These bills were buried in The Omnibus Appropriations Bill for FY1999.

Relevant links:

<http://epic.org/privacy/kids/>

<http://epic.org/privacy/kids/>

<http://www.ftc.gov/os/1999/9904/index.htm#20>

continued on page 11

# Tech Tips from ZDNet

**PROBLEM:** You need to reformat your hard drive, then reinstall a bunch of programs, including Netscape Communicator. What steps should you take to make sure all your bookmarks and mail files survive the experience?

**SOLUTION:** In a nutshell, you have to save the c:\Program Files\Netscape\User(s) folder, reformat the hard drive, then restore the \User folder by copying it into the \Netscape folder before running Navigator. Netscape has detailed instructions at <http://cgi.zdnet.com/slink?11960:2139974>.

**PROBLEM:** You have a CD-ROM that somehow ended up loose in a desk drawer where it became scratched and covered with gummy little bits. Now you need to use it again.

**SOLUTION:** Clean off the gummy stuff with De-Solv-It or a similar general-purpose solvent. For the scratches, try the Wipe Out CD Repair Kit — find out more at <http://cgi.zdnet.com/slink?11963:2139974>. It contains a fluid that, when used according to the instructions, keeps scratches from confusing your CD-ROM player's laser. The

manufacturer says it works for audio CDs, too, and offers a money-back guarantee if it fails to do so.

**PROBLEM:** You want to identify all the files on your PC that contain the word “invoice” in their name (for example, invoice22.doc, myinvoice.xls, geninvoices.exe, or even a folder called Overdue Invoices). What's the fastest way to do that?

**SOLUTION:** If you type something into File Find (Start, Find, Files or Folders) and there are no wildcards (? Or \* characters) and no period, Windows looks for any file or folder name that contains the text you've typed. In this case, typing “invoice” in the Find box will tell Windows to look for all of the file and folder names that you mentioned.

*Copyright (c) 1999 by ZD Inc. All Rights Reserved. PC Computing is a trademark of ZD Inc. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Reprinted by ACGNJ News with permission.*

## Cable Modems, *continued*

among all of the users. Depending on the technology used, a single 6Mhz analog channel can carry up to about 27 mbps of digital data (typically much less — often 10 mbps). Only the information for a given user is presented at the interface from the cable modem to the ethernet card in the computer. As you can readily see, the bandwidth available to an individual user is a function of how many others are trying to get information at the same time. If there are 100 others vying for the same pipe, then each user will get 100 Kbps, far from the total capacity of the pipe. Matters aren't quite as grim as they seem though, since most Internet connections are connection oriented: A brief flurry of data is sucked down, followed by a quiescent period while the information is digested (for example, reading a Web page). In addition, some of the providers are being careful about how they provision their networks, essentially guaranteeing a high level of service.

The uplink channel is a bit more problematic, since it is typically carried in the “low-split” region (the frequency band below the television signals). The main reason for using this band is historical: This was the only way to sneak a return path by the amplifiers on what was originally a one-way distribution system.

The low-split region has much less data-carrying capability and is much more susceptible to noise (before today's technology matured, there were numerous stories about how turning on a vacuum cleaner knocked out cable modem service for an entire neighborhood). The lack of bandwidth for the return path is usually not a problem, since the most common use of Internet connections is for Web browsing, which has very asymmetric characteristics—a short request brings a flood of data.

Running a web server behind a cable modem connection is a different story—very little data on the downlink and a large amount of data on the uplink, which often swamps the return connection and destroys performance for other users. This is

the reason most cable modem contracts prohibit running servers.

### *Security*

As usual, there's a dark side to the always-on characteristic of cable modems — the issue of security. Unfortunately, there are people lurking on the Internet who are looking for openings they can exploit. A common practice among hackers is to run port probes on machines in a network, looking for openings. A cable-modem connection has no additional security exposures over any other form of Internet connection, except that the connection lasts longer. The pervasive connection makes it more likely that a poorly protected machine can be found by someone running port probes, and once a hole is found, it is more likely that the machine will be available for mischief later. How to deal with the security issue is the subject of another article. But for now, here are the major points to remember:

- Don't run any unnecessary daemons (for example telnet or ftp).
- Don't enable any unnecessary protocols over the cable modem connection (TCP/IP should be all that is necessary)
- If you use file/printer sharing, change the workgroup name from the default and don't enable the protocol for the cable modem.
- Consider running a firewall to protect the connection.

*Richard Chernock is at IBM Research, working on ways to bring data and interactivity to your television set. You can reach Rich at [mpeg2@earthlink.net](mailto:mpeg2@earthlink.net)*

# Internet Privacy: OptOut?

Steve Gibson

Several weeks ago a scare swept through the Internet community regarding alleged Internet “spying” being done by a very popular advertising system known as “Aureate” (now renamed to “Radiate”). Since the Aureate system is “carried” into the user’s PC by more than 400 popular freeware programs (like Go!Zilla, GetRight, CuteFTP, and others), and is currently installed and running in over twenty-two million PCs, the threat that this software was “spying” on its users was of great and immediate concern.

My initial analysis of the Aureate system revealed that much of what had been claimed was completely unfounded. However, that analysis did raise enough concern and questions that I decided to look further. What I discovered was that this system was secretly running as a “parasite” on the Netscape or Microsoft web browser, using the browser’s Internet connection to communicate with Aureate servers in the background without the user’s knowledge or explicit permission! This meant that the Aureate software was running and communicating over the Internet even when the hosting “carrier” freeware, which brought it into the system, was not running!

This browser “parasite” had also been implicated in frequent crashes of those browsers. And even after the “freeware” which brought this parasitic software into the user’s machine had been completely removed, the aureate system remained installed and operating secretly! This was not okay.

A reading of Aureate’s developer web site shows that the freeware authors are receiving payment from the advertisers in direct proportion to the number of advertisements actually viewed and the length of time they are shown. In order to do this, the actual use of the various programs must be monitored and reported back to Aureate. This bothered me too. So, since I already knew of other similar-sounding problems with “Adbots” being secretly installed in user’s machines (The ZoneAlarm firewall discovered a different one running in my own machine!), I decided to create an easy-to-use tool to check for the presence of known “baddies” and — optionally — remove them from the computer for the user.

The program is called “OptOut” because it allows users to “opt out” of the use of unwanted advertising software on their machines. I wrote it in 100% assembly language over the past two weeks, it’s a nifty little 32K bytes in size, and the “Preview Release” is ready for you to use right now! Please see the new “OptOut” page on the grc.com web site for more information and news about Aureate and OptOut. You can download it from there too: <http://grc.com/optout.htm>

ZoneAlarm Update: The free ZoneAlarm firewall is evolving nicely and I expect to soon be able to recommend it without reservation. Version 2.1 is currently in beta testing, and is really working very well. It adds the significant new feature of “event logging” so that a record of blocked Internet traffic is preserved. ZoneLabs has given me permission to point you to their version 2.1 beta page, where you can download and experiment with this very nicely developing free personal firewall: [http://www.zonelabs.com/beta\\_download.htm](http://www.zonelabs.com/beta_download.htm)

*continued at right*

## Security, *continued from page 3*

There is freeware called Zone Alarm that many recommend. See <http://www.zonelabs.com/>. Gibson has a discussion of firewalls, complete with his recommendations, at <http://grc.com/su-firewalls.htm>. Although dial-up connections typically have dynamic assignment of IP addresses (they change every time you sign on), they still are subject to attack and Gibson gives step by step procedures for making your connection more secure. The features on Gibson’s site make it a must visit for anyone who surfs the Internet.

Another valuable discussion of Internet security measures is given by Fred Langa in a four-part series, “Secure Your PC Online”:

<http://www.winmag.com/columns/explorer/2000/04.htm>

<http://www.winmag.com/columns/explorer/2000/05.htm>

<http://www.winmag.com/columns/explorer/2000/06.htm>

<http://www.winmag.com/columns/explorer/2000/07.htm>

At minimum, there are two steps all users should take. Make sure you have file and print sharing either disabled or properly password protected. Go to Control Panel-Network, click File and Print Sharing, and either uncheck both boxes or set up proper passwords. As mentioned above, the default setup for Windows contains several glaring gaps in system security. One of the most notorious is the NetBIOS (port 139) problem and everyone should take steps that will plug this open port. The procedure is somewhat complex and will not be described here, but both Gibson at

<http://grc.com/su-bondage.htm> and Langa at

<http://www.winmag.com/columns/explorer/2000/04.htm>

give details of methods to be used. They differ somewhat in their approach and I prefer the longer but more thorough method of Gibson. Another, very simple method recommended by others (I have not tested it— you’re on your own) is to go to C:\Windows\System, find the file named vnbt.386, rename it to vnbt386.closed, and reboot. If you ever need to use NetBIOS, put the file name back to the original. ☐

## Privacy Overdone?, *continued from page 9*

<http://www.ftc.gov/os/1999/9904/index.htm#20>

You, yes, **you** need to contact your representatives and require them to think of all the consequences of such laws, not just pacify the current squeaky wheel with some quick fix law. I’m not saying the children don’t need protection, but I am saying that the law is way too broad when it requires **all** web sites to have age discrimination filters. Soon we could be required to have “mentally handicapped” and “geriatric” filters as well. ☐

## OptOut, *continued*

My Current Internet Security/Privacy Project: As you might have guessed, my work on the new OptOut freeware has diverted my attention away from work on the hyper-speed port scanner. I will be working on the new OptOut web site for a while, and enhancing the OptOut program to detect and remove several other known “spyware” systems. Once OptOut is firmly in place, I plan to return to work on the hyper-speed port scanner. ☐

# SIG News

## PC Users Group

Jo-Anne Head ([tinrock@aol.com](mailto:tinrock@aol.com))

<http://www.intac.com/~tinrock/pcug.html>

**May 19:** J.D. Abolins is speaking on Computer Security and Privacy. With all the security holes in popular software, this is a very timely topic. See J.D. Abolins' bio or check out his website for more information on security and privacy. ☞

## Random Access

Scott Vincent ([svincent@ix.netcom.com](mailto:svincent@ix.netcom.com))

Those of us who have been involved in computer user groups for a long time remember when the Random Access Session was the only source of information about your particular computer. Even though PCs and the software that runs on them are pretty much standardized now, users occasionally have problems or want more information.

Random Access is for *everyone*. There is no such thing as a dumb question. Everyone usually benefits from the discussed topics regardless of their level of expertise. Many of the regulars can help solve your problem or at least get you started in the right direction.

This is an official "Newbies too" group. ☞

## Layman's Forum

Matt Skoda

([matthew.skoda@acgnj.org](mailto:matthew.skoda@acgnj.org))

We discuss issues of interest to novice users or persons who are just interested in getting started. Watch the ACGNJ Web page for updates. ☞

## Main Meeting

Frank Warren ([kb4cyc@webwarren.com](mailto:kb4cyc@webwarren.com))

**May:** No meeting due to preparations for TCF

**June:** Computers & Cardiology, host Malthi Masurekar. ☞

## MCP

(Preparing for Microsoft Certification Exams)

Scott Vincent ([svincent@ix.netcom.com](mailto:svincent@ix.netcom.com))

Wednesdays from 7:00PM to 10:00PM except for the 4th Wed of each month. We review typical exam questions. Those who attend are encouraged to bring a PC properly configured with: NT, 10BaseT network card, and NetMeeting 2.1. Most of us have the 4-volume set of Exam Cram books. We do not teach NT but help prepare for the exam. Meetings are hands on and everyone is expected to participate.

For more information, including reading assignments and course schedule, visit us at the Web site:

<http://www.scottsville.net/mcp.htm> ☞

## C/C++ Users Group

Bruce Arnold ([barnold@blast.net](mailto:barnold@blast.net))

<http://www.blast.net/barnold>

The C/C++ User's Group was founded several years ago with the following goals: to be a forum for discussion about programming in general; to discuss beginning and intermediate level C, C++, and C-Win programming; to demonstrate real programming in a non-intimidating way; to discuss hardware, software, code, algorithms, operating systems; and to present the complete code for working programs in 3-5 sheets of paper. Each meeting is divided into three sections: random access question, answers, and discussion; standard library functions, Windows API functions and other topics of a narrow and simple scope; and a main presentation which is normally a small program, 300-1000 lines, which actually performs some useful function. The program is discussed and demonstrated in terms of its philosophy, algorithm, flow, code, challenges, options, improvements, etc. This case study also provides a forum for additional questions and audience participation. Source code for the program is handed out and is also available on the ACGNJ FTP Server: <ftp://ftp.acgnj.lrg/pub/acgnj/cug/>. ☞

## Internet

Martin Rosenblum ([m.rosenblum@ieee.org](mailto:m.rosenblum@ieee.org))

**April 6:** I received an interesting note from Bob Barns about a "virus" called Aureate Spy. Turns out that it's not a virus, but a naughty marketing ploy. Some free soft/shareware, most notably CuteFTP, contains this program as an unannounced parasite which adds .dlls to your machine that transmit marketing info about your browsing to Aureate, now called "radiate.com". Spent most of the meeting on random access and Aureate spy. I'll tell you more about this in the next Internet Corner. We didn't get around to Alex's FBI meeting news.

**May 4:** Alex will run this meeting. Ever click on a file to use it and get the message that Windows doesn't know what program to use to open it, and you don't know either? The origins of this message and what to do about it is the topic of the May Internet SIG meeting. Alex Goldfinger will be the speaker. For the cognoscenti, the subject is "file associations". If there's time, Alex may say something about the FBI presentation at the Scotch Plains Library meeting.

**June 1:** If you wonder what goes on behind the scenes at an ISP, Phil King from INTAC will be giving the June talk and will tell us about their big move from their own plant to a larger facility with a NYSE-listed company. More details next issue. ☞

*continued on page 14*

## Lunics (Linux/Unix)

Peter Fillingham ([pete@panix.com](mailto:pete@panix.com))

<http://www.acgnj.org/groups/lunics.htm>

This is a group for those who share an interest in the Linux operating system and its relatives (UN\*X, BSD, Coherent, AIX, etc.). Currently there is a strong interest in Linux as an alternative to other operating systems, especially since there is no charge for the system. It and its source code are freely distributable. Meetings the first Monday of the month. ☐

## Symposium

John Raff ([jraff@home.com](mailto:jraff@home.com))

**May:** To be announced.

Keep an eye on <http://www.acgnj.org/groups/symposiu.html> for updates. ☐

## Genealogy

Frank Warren ([kb4cyc@webwarren.com](mailto:kb4cyc@webwarren.com))

<http://www.webwarren.com/kb4cyc/gensig.html>

The Genealogy SIG is a group for genealogists who have an interest in computers and for computer users who have an interest in genealogy. We provide a forum to assist members in furtherance of both computing and genealogical endeavors. Meetings generally focus on genealogy more than on computers. We meet at 8:00 PM on the fourth Thursday of each month at the Scotch Plains Rescue Squad

In addition to our Web page the SIG also has an electronic mailing list. Messages to be sent to the list should be addressed to [gensig@webwarren.com](mailto:gensig@webwarren.com). Subscription requests should be addressed to [gensig@webwarren.com](mailto:gensig@webwarren.com) and include the line "subscribe gensig" in the body of the message. ☐

## Macintosh Users Group

Keith Sproul ([ksproul@noc.rutgers.edu](mailto:ksproul@noc.rutgers.edu))

The Macintosh group generally meets on the fourth Friday of the month in Hill Center, Room 114, Busch Campus, Rutgers University, Piscataway, NJ. In June, November, and December, the meeting is usually pushed to the third Friday. The meeting starts at 7 pm. We meet in the Busch Campus Student Center Food Court for supper around 5 PM for those people that come to the meeting straight from work. ☐

## Lotus Notes

Mike Barlow ([mwb@injersey.com](mailto:mwb@injersey.com)), <http://www.njlnug.org>

I will again be speaking at TCF this year. My talk will be on (coincidentally enough) Lotus Domino and how it can be used as a premier Int(ra/er)net platform. My talk will be on Sunday and if you want to see the abstract of my talk go to <http://www.tcf-nj.org/tcf2ktalks.html#su2a>, and while you are there, check out the rest of the info on TCF at (<http://www.tcf-nj.org>).

Attendees of the April ACGNJ Lotus Notes User Group Meeting got to hear my TCF 2000 presentation early, due to cancellation by the planned presenter.

All meetings are held at the offices of Bright Ideas Software in Edison. You'll find directions on our Web page. ☐

## Multimedia & Mobile

Steven Rodriguez

([cybertech72@bigfoot.com](mailto:cybertech72@bigfoot.com))

The MultiMedia and Mobile Computing Activity meets at 7 P.M. the same night as PC Users Group, and often introduces the topic being discussed at PCUG.

**May 19:** Multimedia and Mobile Computing: Steve will show us ulead, which makes graphics programs. He might also demo some phone link software. ☐

## VBA

Jim Ditaranto ([fryr92a@prodigy.com](mailto:fryr92a@prodigy.com))

VBA = Visual Basic for Applications

VBA is currently implemented in Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Project and Microsoft Access. In the future, Microsoft will implement VBA in Microsoft Word and in Microsoft PowerPoint. Anyone interested in using any one of the Microsoft Office products and VBA is urged to attend.

Meetings start at 7 P.M. on the fourth Monday of the month. ☐

## Investing

Sheldon Koepf ([sheldonk@intac.com](mailto:sheldonk@intac.com))

<http://www.intac.com/~sheldonk/invsig>

**April 13:** We discussed the strongest portions of the current bear market. All attendees were asked what type of stock they would buy at the present time. In spite of the current weak technology sector, many would make their investments there. Your chairman showed how one of the strongest sectors is the pharmaceuticals.

Our potlatch was a great success. Besides the 65 or so books donated by our co-chairman, Dick Boyd, a member of our group, Jack Smith brought about 30 books. Each member took home about 4 books.

We will be holding a special meeting of the SIG at TCF on Sunday, May 7. Hope to see you there. ☐

“If you’ve already joined us at *StudioAvenue.com*, thank you. If you haven’t, then please take a moment and read about all the great benefits StudioAvenue.com has to offer.”

**Latest From Our Friends At Power Quest**

As you would expect, Gene and Linda Barlow were at the FACUG conference and Linda gave me this form with the latest specials. Boy do they take good care of us user group people. Look at these great specials, and get 'em while they're hot:

- Partition Magic V5 — List \$69.95 — UG special \$30
- Drive Image V2 — List \$69.95 — UG special \$30
- DataKeeper V3 — List \$49.95 — UG special \$25
- SecondChance V2 — List \$69.95 — UG special \$30
- Lost \$ Found — List \$69.95 — UG special \$30
- OpenLinux V2.3 — List \$49.95 — UG special \$25

Submit three for \$75, four for \$95, five for \$115, or six for just \$135.

OpenLinux eServer – List \$199.95 – UG special \$120

\$5.00 S&H for mail and Web orders only. Use the order form, which should have been mailed to all user groups, or use their secure Web site to order at [www.ugr.com/order/](http://www.ugr.com/order/). Have the code UGMAR00 when ordering. What a friend we have in Power Quest and the Barlows. They are two of the hardest working people I know and it is always great to see them.

**A Scanner In Your Pocket — What Have You Been Smoking???**

That’s right! At the FACUG conference, a company called Wizcom was showing the neatest little scanner that looked somewhat like a large pen you could put in your shirt pocket. It is battery operated and will scan full lines of printed text (regular, bold and italic, 6-22 point size). It stores up 1000

pages of data, which can be edited and retained in separate files.

It will transfer data to your PC, laptop, Palm Pilot or text-enabled cellular phone. It transfers data directly into Microsoft Windows applications as well as other standard applications. Uses a friendly icon-based graphical interface that makes the “QuickLink Pen” fun and intuitive. An “Opticard” is included to read larger text from billboards or headlines or to input text manually.

The weight is three ounces (I’m tellin’ ya, it’s small) and it takes two AAA batteries (included). Communications are Infrared (IrDA) and a serial cable is included. Contains 2MB ROM memory, 2MB integrated flash memory and 4MB flash memory (optional upgrades). Desktop applications included are: address book, table and charts, Internet links, notes and data, with the same familiar icons as the QuickLink Pen so users can store, edit, transfer text for easy data management.

To order this little jewel of a scanner for just \$125 (UG price), call sales at 1-888-777-0552 or 1-978-635-5357. E-mail them at [sales@wizcomtech.com](mailto:sales@wizcomtech.com) or visit their Web site at <http://www.wizcomtech.com>. Tell them you read it in this column, and what user group you are with. S&H is \$10.

I gave them my green business card to scan and it didn’t do well. I wasn’t surprised, but it worked well otherwise because another guy gave them a card with a white background and it did very well. I don’t know how long this special is good.

Looks like I’m out of space. This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click ([dealsguy@mindspring.com](mailto:dealsguy@mindspring.com)). Visit my Web site at <http://www.dealsguy.com> for past columns. ☞

**ACGNJ MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

	US/CANADA	FAMILY OF MEMBER (No Newsletter)	Dues	FOREIGN	STUDENT	SENIOR CITIZEN (Over 65)
1 Year	\$25	\$10		\$55	\$20	\$20
2 Years	\$40					
3 Years	\$55					\$45

Mail this application and your check to:  
 AMATEUR COMPUTER GROUP OF NEW JERSEY, INC., P.O. BOX 135, SCOTCH PLAINS, NJ 07076

Date \_\_\_\_\_  New Member  Address Change  Renewal of (Membership #) \_\_\_\_\_

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ URL \_\_\_\_\_

**Do not** list me in the Membership Directory. (Street addresses are not listed in the directory.)

What topics would you like to see covered at club meetings? \_\_\_\_\_

## Other Local Computer Groups

<b>Princeton Macintosh User Group:</b> 7:15 pm 2nd Tuesday, Jadwin Hall, Princeton U. (609) 252-1163	<b>NY/NJ/CT Relational Database User Group:</b> Corporate and independent users. (212) 839-0125	<b>New York Personal Computer Club:</b> For information call hotline, (212) 533-NYPC
<b>Computer Education Society of Philadelphia:</b> 7:30 pm, 2nd Wednesday, St. Asaph's Episcopal Church. Lee Le'mon, (717)786-2260	<b>Brookdale Computer Users Group:</b> 7 pm,3rd Friday, Forums 103 at Brookdale Community College, Lincroft NJ. Andrea Tarr (732) 229-2959.	<b>Macintosh User Group:</b> Third Tuesday, Mallory Hall, Montclair State University, Montclair NJ. (201) 893-5274 or (201) 659-1017.
<b>WordPerfect SIG of PCUG of So. Jersey:</b> 2nd Tue., Queen of Heaven School, Cherry Hill; 4th Wed., Cherry Hill Library. (609) 354-1159.	<b>Hunterdon Computer Club:</b> 8:30 am to noon 3rd Saturday, Hunterdon Medical Center, Rt 31, Flemington. (908) 995-4042	<b>PC Club of South Jersey:</b> 7 pm, 2nd Tuesday, Holy Cross HS, Route 130, Delran NJ. Pat Murphy, (609) 428-8759
<b>Philadelphia Area Computer Society:</b> 3rd Sat., 9 am Main Meeting, groups follow. Drexel U., Philadelphia. Pat Murphy, (609) 428-8759	<b>Central Jersey Computer Club:</b> 8 pm, 4th Friday, Rm 74, Armstrong Hall, Trenton St. College. Rich Williams, (609) 466-0909.	<b>NJ PC Users Group:</b> Bergen County Community College, Paramus NJ. Maureen Shannon, (201) 853-7432
<b>Morris Micro Computer Club:</b> Bill Traywick, (973) 635-5393.	<b>Fairlawn Computer Club:</b> Last Monday, Fairlawn Senior Citizen Center. Joe Mathias ( <a href="mailto:fair.lawn.computer.club@juno.com">fair.lawn.computer.club@juno.com</a> )	<b>Princeton PC Users Group:</b> 2nd Monday, Lawrence Library, Rt 1 & Darrah Ln, Lawrenceville, Paul Kurivchack (908) 281-3107, <a href="http://www.ppcug-nj.org">http://www.ppcug-nj.org</a>
<b>Workshop, Hands-On:</b> 2 P.M. to Midnight on last Saturday of the month. First United Methodist Church, Church and Atlantic Streets (one mile from GSP exit 117A), Aberdeen NJ. Bring your project, computer and extension cord. For information call Burke Mawby, (908) 566-7445.		

### Radio and TV Programs

**Computer Radio Show**, WBAI 99.5 FM, New York, Wednesday 8-9 p.m.

**Software Review TLC** Sat.10 p.m.

**On Computers**, WCTC 1450 AM, New Brunswick, Sunday 1-4 p.m. To ask questions call (800) 227-7770.

**Computer Talk**, WPHT 1210 AM, Saturdays 11 a.m-1 p.m.

#### Free Help Line

**Dell Computer:** Sundays 1-4 P.M. (800) 677-0874. Call with your questions.

#### KGP Computer Shows

(More at <http://www.pcshow.com>)

**May 6 & 7:** Trenton Computer Festival, 25th year, NJ Convention Center, Edison NJ

**Sat. May 20:** South Jersey Expo Center, Pennsauken NJ

**June 10 & 11:** NJ Convention Center, Edison NJ

### ACGNJ Hotline

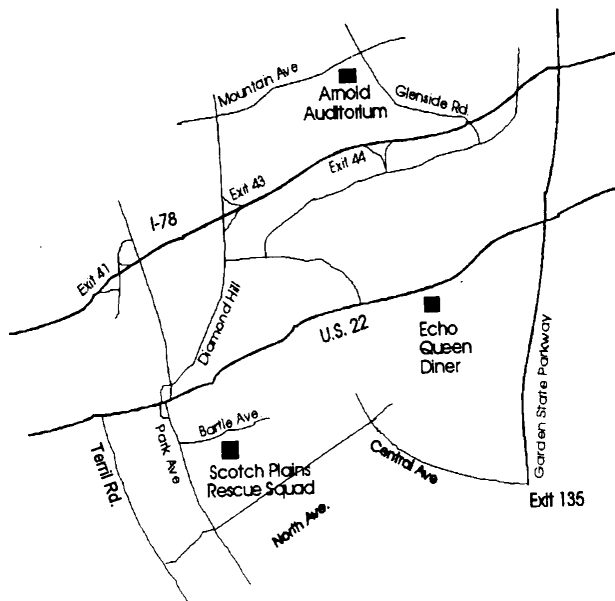
(908) 322-4654

### ACGNJ Bulletin Boards

The ACGNJ Bulletin boards were shut down in April due to lack of interest. Of the all the other bulletin boards previously listed in this spot, only one is still in operation.

**(732) 739-3693 Dave Wrobel**

For a comprehensive listing of NJ bulletin boards, look for and download GSBBS???.ZIP (Garden State BBS List).



## Directions to Meetings at Scotch Plains Rescue Squad, 1916 Bartle Ave., Scotch Plains, NJ

### From New York City or Northern New Jersey

Take either Route 1&9 or the Garden State Parkway to US 22 Westbound.

### From Southern New Jersey

Take Parkway north to Exit 135 (Clark). Stay on left of ramp and follow circle under Parkway. Bear right onto Central Avenue; follow to Westfield and under RR overpass. Left at light onto North Avenue; follow to light in Fanwood. Right onto Martine (which turns into Park Ave.). Right onto Bartle Avenue in middle of shopping district. The Scotch Plains Rescue Squad is located on the right. It is a two-story brick building. Please do not park in the row next to the building.

### From I-78 (either direction)

Take exit for Scotch Plains (Exit 41) and follow signs to US 22. Turn right at light at bottom of hill and use overpass to cross over low US 22 Westbound directions.

### From US 22 Westbound

Exit at Park Avenue, Scotch Plains. The exit is after a McDonalds Restaurant on the right, diagonally opposite the Scotchwood Diner on the left, and immediately before the overpass. After exiting, turn left at the light and use the overpass to cross US 22. Bear right at bottom of ramp to continue south on Park Avenue. Turn left at the second light (a staggered intersection). The Scotch Plains Rescue Squad is located on the right. It is a two-story brick building. Please do not park in the row next to the building. We normally meet upstairs, entering by the door at the right front of the building.

### From Western New Jersey

Take US 22 Eastbound to the Park Avenue exit. The exit is about a mile past Terrill Road and immediately past the overpass. Exit onto Park Avenue South and follow the directions above to the Rescue Squad building.

## ACGNJ NEWS

AMATEUR COMPUTER GROUP OF NEW JERSEY, INC.  
P.O. BOX 135  
SCOTCH PLAINS, NJ 07076

FIRST CLASS MAIL  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT NO. 89  
NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ 08901

## FIRST CLASS MAIL

DATED MATERIAL

DO NOT DELAY

TEMP-RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

# ACGNJ MEETINGS

For the very latest news on ACGNJ meetings visit the ACGNJ Web Page (<http://www.acgnj.org>)

### Monday, May 1

8 P.M. - Lunics, Peter Fillingham, 973-731-9269

### Tuesday, May 2

8 P.M. - ACGNJ Board Meeting.

### Wednesday, May 3

7 P.M. - MCP Study Group, Scott Vincent, 973-361-5793

### Thursday, May 4

8 P.M. - Internet. Marty Rosenblum, 973-376-8965.

### Friday, May 5

8 P.M. - Main Meeting. Cancelled. Frank Warren, 908-756-1681

### Saturday, May 6 and Sunday, May 7

Trenton Computer Festival, NJ Convention Center, Edison NJ

### Monday, May 8

8 P.M. - Layman's Forum, Matt Skoda, (908) 359-8842.

### Wednesday, May 10

7 P.M. - MCP Study Group, Scott Vincent, 973-361-5793

### Thursday, May 11

8 P.M. - Computerized Investing. Sheldon Koepf, 973-740-2489.

### Friday, May 12

8 P.M. - PC Symposium. John Raff, 973-533-0664

### Wednesday, May 17

7 P.M. - MCP Study Group, Scott Vincent, 973-361-5793

### Friday, May 19

7 P.M. - Multimedia & Mobile Computing. Steve Rodriguez.

8 P.M. - PC Users (<http://www.intac.com/~tinarock/pcug.html>).  
Jo-Anne Head, 908-769-7385.

### Monday, May 22

7 P.M. - VBA (Visual Basic, Excel). James Ditaranto,  
973-772-7171.

### Tuesday, May 23

7:30 P.M. - C/C++ Users, Bruce Arnold, 908-735-7898.

8 P.M. - Lotus Notes, Mike Barlow. Meeting at offices of Bright Ideas Software, Edison NJ. Info Line: (732) 417-5778 ext 5.

### Thursday, May 25

8 P.M. - Genealogy. Frank Warren, 908-756-1681.

### Friday, May 26

7 P.M. - Macintosh Users Group, meeting at Rutgers University, Piscataway. Keith Sproul (ksproul@noc.rutgers.edu),  
732-821-4828.

8 P.M. - Random Access, Computer Q&A, Scott Vincent,  
973-361-5793

### Tuesday, May 30

8 P.M. - ACGNJ Board Meeting.

### Wednesday, May 31

7 P.M. - MCP Study Group, Scott Vincent, 973-361-5793

### Thursday, June 1

8 P.M. - Internet. Marty Rosenblum, 973-376-8965.

### Friday, June 2

8 P.M. - Main Meeting. Frank Warren, 908-756-1681.

### Monday, June 5

8 P.M. - Lunics, Peter Fillingham, 973-731-9269

### Wednesday, June 7

7 P.M. - MCP Study Group, Scott Vincent, 973-361-5793

### Thursday, June 8

8 P.M. - Computerized Investing. Sheldon Koepf, 973-740-2489.

### Friday, June 9

8 P.M. - PC Symposium. John Raff, 973-533-0664

### Monday, June 12

8 P.M. - Layman's Forum, Matt Skoda, (908) 359-8842.

### Wednesday, June 14

7 P.M. - MCP Study Group, Scott Vincent, 973-361-5793

All club meetings, unless otherwise noted, are at Scotch Plains Rescue Squad, 1916 Bartle Ave., Scotch Plains, N.J.  
Directions and map inside back cover.