

MotherBoard

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This Month At NOPC

***Mr. Greg Meffert,
Chief Technology
Officer for the
City of
New Orleans***

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President's Message

Hello NOPC members...on behalf of the Board Of Directors I would like to wish everyone a safe and Happy New Year. I'm sure many of you either received or purchased new computing hardware or peripherals for family or extended family members, and I'll bet there's a pretty good chance that many of the recipients of such gifts are perhaps a little overwhelmed at many of the functions. As you've probably noticed, we talk quite a bit about computer hardware and peripherals at our meetings and Special Interest Groups! Perhaps with a bit of encouragement, such people might be motivated to join the club and come to some of the SIG meetings, to soak up the knowledge and information that is discussed. One thing that I frequently do is put a link to the club site in the Internet Favorites of someone I'm helping and point out that the club newsletter can be freely accessed.

I would like to remind everyone to get your raffle tickets for the copy of Windows XP Professional that will be given away at the end of this meeting. Also, bring in your used toner and inkjet cartridges for recycling. The plastic mail-in bags for the ink cartridges can be distributed to anyone; so feel free to take whatever amount is necessary to distribute to family, friends, companies and help keep these empties out of the waste stream.

One important piece of business at the January meeting is the latest revision of the Articles of Incorporation will be voting on. Every member who currently receives a hard copy of the newsletter was mailed a copy of this. Both the current version and its proposed replacement are up on the site at <http://www.nopc.org/clubdocuments.htm>.

The last thing I'd like to mention is that the Digital Media and Internet SIGs will be starting back up in January; any member who has an interest in these popular subjects is welcome to attend these two SIGs which meet on the fourth Wednesday and Thursday of each month, respectively. The WebLab SIG, meeting on the 2nd Thursday, will begin again with the basics of developing a Web Site.

Okay, I'm done yapping, see you in the new year.....



TECH NEWS

*By Sue Crane,
Vice President / Editor,*

Big Bear Computer Club, California

Finally, Software with the updates included! Microsoft last month started the process of swapping out all of the boxed copies of Windows XP with the updated version, with a triangle in the upper corner touting SP2 and its security enhancements. Over the next month, Microsoft hopes to swap out the bulk of all boxed copies worldwide. OfficeMax is offering a free 128MB flash drive and anti-spyware to customers buying an XP upgrade.

The Visible Light Communications Consortium, a group of 15 IT manufacturers is proposing using light emitting diodes--which will increasingly become common for ordinary light fixtures and outdoor equipment like traffic lights--to transmit data traffic by up to 10 meters at high speeds. With the technology, a person trapped in a building could hold up a cell phone to a ceiling light, and rescuers would be able to pinpoint his or her exact location. Similarly, cars could exchange information through headlights and taillights, and car computer systems could tell drivers if there were major stalls ahead.

The Federal Communications Commission is beginning a new consumer-education campaign to support the nationwide switch from analog to digital TV. Announcing a new Web site to answer questions about digital TV, The Consumer Electronics Association estimates that about 10% of U.S. households currently have digital sets. For those who don't have cable or satellite TV a converter box will be available to receive and decode digital signals at a cost about \$200 each. <http://www.dtv.gov/>

You probably know that high quality, low cost digital scanning, copying and printing technologies have been used to counterfeit currency, but did you know that the government is fighting back? When you put a document under the glass of your new photocopier or scanner and push the button, it makes a high resolution copy - unless the document is one of the new style twenty or fifty dollar bills. If you do that, you just might see a message pop up informing you that you should visit the Treasury website to become more educated on counterfeit laws

Schools and libraries nationwide have suddenly stopped receiving any new grants from a federal program that is wrestling with new rules on how it spends \$2.25 billion each year to provide high-speed Internet and telephone service. The moratorium at the E-Rate program <http://www.fcc.gov/learnnet/> began two months ago, with no notice, and may last for months, causing significant hardships at schools and libraries.

The FTC is launching an aggressive new strategy to prosecute "spyware" perpetrators, and last week filed a civil lawsuit against former spamming Sanford Wallace and his companies, Seismic Entertainment Productions and SmartBot. Wallace, who was once dubbed "Spamford" for his earlier misdeeds, operates the PassItOn.com Web site, which requires visitors to click through multiple pop-up windows in order to exit.

PC Help Is — Sometimes — Just a Mouseclick Away

*by Gabe Goldberg,
APCUG Advisor, Region 2,
Columnist for AARP's Computer and Technology
Web Site*

Who'd have thought that a Beatles song highlights a great PC resource for solving problems and answering questions? No, it's not "Ask Me Why" or "Do You Want to Know a Secret". It's "Help!".

All Windows versions (Windows 95, 98, ME, XP, etc.) and most applications have built-in Help facilities. Knowing how to fetch Help information leads to happy PC use, saves having to wait for others to answer questions, and can even make you an expert resource for other people!

But there's no free lunch; Help can't read your mind and answer questions before you ask them. And to get information you need, you have to look in the right places.

Help info is stored in special files and retrieved

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through Help software. The info and software is similar but not identical throughout Windows versions and applications, so general rules apply. The good news is that it's easy to explore Help information; since it's most useful to read about topics in which you're interested, feel free to replace my examples with your own questions or areas of interest.

Most applications respond to several cues for help: pressing the F1 key, clicking the word Help on the menu bar, and pressing alt-H (hold Alt key and press H key).

Pressing F1 opens the Help system, while pressing the alt-H key or clicking menu bar Help provide a short pulldown of Help options. However you enter Help, you'll see buttons or tabs such as Contents and Search. You may also see buttons such as Getting Started, Basic Features, Errors, and Frequently Asked Questions.

For example, I recently installed the Mozilla browser. Its Help provides four tabs: Contents shows main topics and subtopics, Search explores Help information, Index lists all topics alphabetically, and Glossary provides definitions of terms used. Many applications use Microsoft Help standards tabs: Contents, Index, and Answer Wizard. This wizard replaces searching, allowing entry of questions needing answers.

Clicking Contents reveals a list of topics aimed at getting specific things done. Mozilla's tasks include Browsing the Web, Using Mail, and Bookmarks. Many tasks have a "+" next to them; clicking the + reveals lists of subtasks. Most helpful in learning to use Mozilla Help is Using the Help Window, whose subtasks include Finding the Topic You Want and Search Tips.

When you have a question that isn't task related, consult the Help information index for an alphabetical list of entries. Mozilla Help entries range from Account Settings, Address Books, and Bookmarks, to Toolbar, Uploading Pages, and Working Offline.

When you aren't sure what task or major topic

includes info you need, try searching. Searching Mozilla Help for "bookmarks" found many places the topic is mentioned which are not listed in the index. Unfortunately, computers still only do what we tell them to do, rather than what we mean. So words you search for must match how Help information is labeled. If a search fails, search again for other words that describe the information you're seeking.

You can open Windows Help by clicking Start and then Help or pressing F1 when viewing the desktop; retrieve tips on using Help by entering (in the Index or Search boxes) a term such as "getting help". Similarly, valuable productivity tips are available by searching on "keyboard shortcuts".

As you explore Help and navigate through its information, remember that you're leaving a trail, as you do when you surf the Web. You can always click the Back button to return to a previous display, and click Forward to repeat your path.

Other information nuggets are available.

Many dialogue boxes -- often requiring making baffling choices -- include a Help button. It's easy to miss this valuable button; dialogue box Help buttons have the special advantage of providing "context help" -- that is, taking you directly to info describing the open dialogue box without requiring searching or clicking.

Another tool, even easier to miss, is the "What's this?" symbol on many dialogue boxes, a "?" in the upper right corner. Clicking this turns the mouse cursor into a traveling question mark. Move the ? over a term or menu and click; this will display a brief explanation of the item you clicked. Beware, though: usefulness of this tool varies. It requires developers to spend thought/time/effort supplying suitable information for each box and button. Some do this, others cut corners.

Finally, the most automatic information is displayed when you place the mouse cursor over a toolbar button. Called hints or tooltips, this information usually displays by default. If it doesn't,

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application-specific options can be changed to enable it.

It's easy to forget that Help info is available. A colleague reported that after wondering for quite some time how to add multiple rows to an Excel spreadsheet, he finally consulted Help. He was rewarded by the simple answer: "To insert multiple rows, select rows immediately below where you want the new rows. Select the same number of rows as you want to insert". Lesson learned: Help is your friend.

This article appeared originally on AARP's Computers and Technology Web site, <www.aarp.org/computers>. (c) AARP 2004. Permission is granted for reprinting and distribution by non-profit organizations with text reproduced unchanged and this paragraph included.

The Internet Gets Local

The 'www' in web addresses refers to the World Wide Web, however the hottest market on the Internet today isn't worldwide, it's all about being local. The initial appeal of the Internet was how it enabled anyone with a webserver to establish an instant worldwide presence. Yahoo, Google, Hotmail and a number of other companies took advantage of this, creating worldwide audiences. Now some of the largest Internet companies, and some hot start-ups, are taking a decidedly local focus.

Think Globally, Act Locally

Usually that phrase is applied to environmental issues, yet it also applies to the Internet. If you are looking for information, a worldwide Internet is great. For example, if you need to find the lyrics to that new song that is stuck in your head, a worldwide Internet is great. But if you want to take action, like finding a job, selling your car, finding someone to rideshare with, or even finding that someone special...you want to act locally. In fact, while the vast majority of Internet searches are purely informational, a study by The Kelsey Group and BizRate found that 45% of all *local* searches are performed by people looking to *buy* something.

The market for local Internet advertising is currently valued at \$1 Billion and it is expected to grow to \$5 Billion by 2008. At the same time, newspapers earned \$15.8 Billion last year selling local classified ads; and yellow pages vendors earned \$14.9 Billion selling local directory ads. Yet classified ads and directories are far more efficient online. This has combined to create a new Internet gold rush to address the burgeoning local markets.

Search Engines Look for Local Gold

Search engine companies such as Google, Yahoo and AskJeeves have begun building geographical awareness into local versions of their search engines. If you're looking for a local business like a bicycle shop in Davis, CA, these local search engines can help. But if you're looking to sell a used bike, or you want to find someone to bicycle with in Davis, you're out of luck.

The search engine companies have taken an outside-in approach. They reside outside of the local communities looking inward to find local information. The search engines hope to sell ads to local vendors that are displayed alongside the search results, just as they have done on a national basis—a process known as search engine marketing.

In their quest to extend their Internet dominance locally, search engine companies face two very significant challenges. First, the small to medium sized businesses that comprise the bulk of these local companies generally have no online presence. Since search engine marketing is built upon redirecting Internet users to the advertiser's website, it simply doesn't work without a web presence; there's no website for the user to click to.

Secondly, these small to medium sized businesses typically don't have the in-house expertise necessary to master the technical and marketing issues behind search engine marketing. As a result, the search engine companies need to establish local representation to sell the concept of paid search and then to help the companies implement these solutions.

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Local Communities Complement Search Engine Marketing

While the search engines take an outside-in approach of finding local information, local community websites, like Craigslist, complement this with an inside-out model. These web communities provide local residents with the tools to interact with one another. In the process, these residents create a tremendous amount of valuable information. This is the type of information that the users of localized search engines want. Search engines and local community websites are very complimentary, like peanut butter and chocolate, in addressing local markets.

Craigslist, a popular early implementation of the local community, is now straining under the weight of its popularity. While the largest Internet companies were busy establishing their global dominance, Craigslist evolved into a quirky local free classified ad website in the San Francisco area. It has since grown into a collection of free classified ad websites covering 58 U.S. cities. This local Internet solution, which began as a hobby, has now become a big business. If you need proof of this, consider that eBay recently bought 25% of Craigslist.

Craigslist relies upon a simple posting model. You select a category and post your free classified ad. While this is very simple, it doesn't provide the context necessary to search effectively. For example, searching the cars & trucks section of Craigslist for "1988 Acura Integra" yielded results that included a Mercedes Benz, some used Honda parts and all kinds of things that didn't fit my search criteria.

Without an efficient search mechanism, users are forced to read all of the newest ads to find what they want. This can be very time-consuming. It is also problematic from the advertiser's perspective. There are so many new ads posted each day, that in order to keep your ad fresh and keep it in front of readers, you need to post the same ad every day or two until you sell the item. Craigslist is a simple local community website, but it can be very time-consuming to use.

A new company called ZiXXo has recently

launched a similar service in over 100 U.S. cities. The New Orleans site is <http://neworleans.zixxo.com/>. ZiXXo provides free classified ads that use best-of-breed forms for most of its categories. These forms guide the user in creating their ad, ensuring that it includes all of the relevant information. The buyer can then search by field. To search for a 1988 Acura Integra, simply open the search form for used cars and enter "1988" in the year field, "Acura" in the make field and "Integra" in the model field. This search finds only exact matches.

Unlike other supposedly free classified ad sites, ZiXXo doesn't charge users to make their headlines bold, to ad pictures, or anything like that. There are simply no charges at all. In fact, the company raffles off digital cameras or Apple iPods every week to users of the site. ZiXXo makes money by selling printable coupons to local vendors. Users of the site can find, print and redeem these coupons locally. ZiXXo relies upon local individuals to sell these coupons, paying them a commission for each sale.

The Local Internet Market is Still Young

While the Internet upstarts attempt to redefine local advertising, the demise of the current leaders in local advertising—newspapers and publishers of yellow pages—has been greatly exaggerated. With about \$33 Billion in revenue between them, they are developing, buying and partnering to defend their local turf as it moves online. For example, newspapers are offering online classified ads to complement their print editions. Some are also offering local auctions to fend off eBay's encroachment. The yellow pages are also active moving their directories online, so that they too can offer businesses a package that includes both online and offline advertising. In fact, BellSouth, owner of yellow pages publisher RealPages, partnered with Google to combine search engine marketing with online and offline yellow pages advertising.

It will be very interesting to see how the local Internet evolves over the coming years. It's hard to tell now which companies will come out as the big winners, but if the analysts projections hold true and local Internet advertising grows from \$1

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Billion this year to \$5 billion in 2008, there will no doubt be some big winners.

Craigslist: www.craigslist.org

ZiXXo: www.zixxo.com

Yahoo Local: <http://local.yahoo.com/>

Google Local Beta: <http://local.google.com/>

AskJeeves Local Search: <http://local.ask.com/local>

Submitted by Mike Hogan
www.ZiXXo.com

Raffle for Microsoft Windows XP Professional

The New Orleans Personal Computer Club will be starting a new raffle for a new copy of Windows XP Professional to be given away at the end of the January 2005 general membership meeting. This program is the full, sealed, stand-alone copy (not the upgrade version) and retails for around \$300 from most retailers.

The price for the raffle tickets remains the same as in previous raffles: \$1 per ticket, or \$5 for six tickets. As in previous raffles, this is open to club members only. Please purchase as many tickets as possible and help support the club. Profits from fundraisers like this go straight into the club treasury and are used to help defray operating costs.

HELPFUL HINT

I would like to submit a hint I read in USAA Magazine, 2004 Number 3, Page 7. It came from a reader in Letters to the Editor.

"I recommend that those who have computer password numbers should file them with a will,

estate attorney, or in a safe-deposit box. In some cases this may expedite the handling of an estate. David Byrne, Lake Kiowa, Texas"

I thought this was particularly timely since many take this time of the year to review their affairs.

Submitted by Mary Prinz
Director at Large,

New Orleans Personal Computer Club

January Meeting –Speaker Profile

The NOPCC is looking forward to our January 5th meeting. Our speaker will be Mr. Greg Meffert, Chief Technology Officer for the City of New Orleans. Mr. Meffert will speak about his experiences working within the City and his years in the software industry. Prior to serving as CTO for the City, Mr. Meffert founded and served for 10 years as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of ITS Inc. NetEx, Inc. and Chief Technology Officer for Illumin, Inc. These software and service companies developed products to securely transmit and manage digital content (such as mail, text/video publishing, and wireless transactions) via the Internet.

He has filed for and been awarded multiple patents in the area of Internet services and security technology. He has been cited and profiled in various books, periodicals and industry magazines. Mr. Meffert currently is an advisor on various public and private boards, including university, governmental and private Internet companies.

The monthly meeting of the NOPC club will be at 6:30pm on Wednesday, January 5, 2005. Location of the meeting is the J.D. Meisler school cafeteria at 3700 Cleary Ave. Metairie. Use the entrance through the breezeway on Pharr Street.

THE SECRET GUIDE TO COMPUTERS

The Secret Guide is available at every New Orleans Personal Computer Club General Meeting.

The latest printing is available for only \$15.00.

Sherrie K. Henne

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Web Lab	Edward Jahncke	editor@nopc.org	897-1205

Other Important Numbers / Addresses

Club Hotline	Recorded messages. Meeting Information. Open 24 Hours	887-5746
NOPCC BBS	Bulletin Board System for members. The original way to PC communicate.	486-7249
NOPCC Web Site	On the World Wide Web. Our own home page and club information.	www.nopcc.org

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January 2005

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1 Living with Home Electronics WTIx 890AM 10-11am
2 Computer Solutions WSMB 1350AM	3 GNONUG	4	5 NOPC Gen Mtg J.D. Meisler School 6:30p-8:30p	6	7	8 Living with Home Electronics WTIx 890AM 10-11am
9 Computer Solutions WSMB 1350AM	10 GNONUG	11	12 NOPC BOD @ McCann's 6:30p-8:30p	13 WebLab SIG @McCann's 6:30p-8:30p	14	15 Living with Home Electronics WTIx 890AM 10-11a
16 Computer Solutions WSMB 1350AM	17 GNONUG	18 Genealogy SIG @ McCann's 6:30p-830p	19	20 New Users SIG @McCann's 6:30p-8:30p	21	22 Living with Home Electronics WTIx 890AM 10-11a
23 Computer Solutions WSMB 1350AM	24 GNONUG	25	26 Digital MediaSIG @McCann's 7:00p-9:00p	27 Internet SIG @McCann's 7:00p-9:00p	28	29 Living with Home Electronics WTIx 890AM 10-11a
30 Computer Solutions WSMB 1350AM	31 GNONUG					

The New Orleans Personal Computer Club (NOPCC) is a private non-profit organization chartered under the State of Louisiana. Its purpose is to provide an open forum for discussion and education of the membership in the use and application of PCs, peripheral equipment and software. The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the author (s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the NOPCC, its members or its officers. The club does not verify for accuracy the articles in this newsletter and leaves verification of accuracy to its readers. Articles in this newsletter may be duplicated as long as credit is given to the author (s) and the NOPCC. Annual Dues Schedule: Regular Member, \$40/yr.; Family Membership, \$60/yr.;

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