THE BEST ACCESSORY FOR YOUR PC
COLUMBUS COMPUTER SOCIETY

# the CCS News

http://www.ccscmh.org Since 1986 Vol. 19, Num. 4

## Columbus Computer Society General Meeting

**Online Computer Library Center** (Map to OCLC)
6565 Frantz Road, Dublin
**Wednesday, April 21, 2004, 7:00 P.M.**
See "April General Meeting" on page 2.

**Bring a Friend to a Meeting** **IMPORTANT NEWS FLASH on Pg. 6**

You do not need to be a member to attend any of CCS's meetings! Guests are always welcome. There is a **new/prospective member orientation at 6:30 p.m.** before each General Meeting. Join us and find out what membership in CCS is all about.

**General Meeting & SIG Highlights**

**New Classes**

**Advantages of Becoming a CCS Member**

**Current News!**

**Use the Acrobat Reader**  **button or "Bookmarks" tab to navigate with a more complete list of Contents in the electronic newsletter file.**

### Table of Contents

## Amazing Advancement in Voice Recognition Software

**Jack Strawn, Publications Director**

At the General Meeting last month, Dragon NaturallySpeaking™ was demonstrated by Keith Ennis of Voice Factor. Keith created a new profile from a 5 - 10 minute training session then demonstrated high accuracy and fast performance as he manuvered around the desktop and created text in several programs. We saw him dictate numbers and words, entire sentences, and whole paragraphs at a time into forms and larger documents. He composed in e-mail messages, word processing, spreadsheets, and other programs just by speaking. **Several people purchased the software ($75 off) and a headset ($10 off) at a special user group price offered to those who attended the program.**

I would appreciate hearing from those people who purchased the software as to your personal experiences in training and using version 7 of this software. E-mail me about your findings - both positive and negative. I would like to summarize the results in a future issue of this newsletter. Please send your comments to publications@ccscmh.org Thanks!

## April General Meeting

**Wednesday, April 21, 2004**

The meeting will start at 6:30PM. A representative from the Educational Services Department will conduct a brief guest and **new member orientation** session. After giving meeting announcements, a CCS representative will conduct a short **Q&A (question and answer) session** with the attending members concerning problems they may have with their computer hardware or software. The **main meeting** presentation starts at 7:00PM at OCLC (Online Computer Library Center). See another page in this publication for a General Meeting Location map, picture, and set of driving directions.

Topic: Open Office
Speaker: Craig Wright

Open Office is an Open Source answer to Microsoft's Office product. Users don't have to know the source code to use it. If the user is a programmer, the user is able to access the code because it is "open," or access to it is not blocked. The suite of programs has similar features and can open and work with files created in Microsoft Office programs. The major difference in Open Office is the price - it is free.

## Class: Introduction to MySQL

Begins: Thursday, April 15, 2004, at 7:00 p.m.
Registration Closes: April 8, 2004, at 11:59 p.m.

Location: CCS Resource Center (see Meeting Maps page)
6-week class, Thursdays, 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Instructor: Charles Isaacs E-mail: cri@cri-business-solutions.com
Online Class Registration, or mail paper form on page 29

MySql is a mini database used on an Internet or Intranet server to create dynamic Web pages. Charles Isaacs, Educational Director for CCS and a successful commercial website developer, will teach the class.

The only prerequisite is to have a working knowledge of HTML tags and to have some knowledge of the PHP language. The introduction class will start with the very basics of MySql and PHP development. Then we will progress up to creating the database, tables, text file backup, setting up the MySql Admin file, inserting data into the tables.

Charles will have working examples from the book on his Web Site to assist you in your learning curve. He will also be providing additional materials to hand out during class to help explain MySql and PHP and how it works. He will also have a list of Web Sites that have free PHP - Mysql complete working programs for you to reference and use.

Cost: $179 for non-members; $129 for members ($10 savings if your registion is received before or on registration closing date). Deduct $25 if you already have the book PHP Fast&Easy Web Development from the Introduction to PHP class.

## Class: Introduction to Java

Begins: Thursday, April 15, 2004, at 7:00 p.m.
Registration Closes: April 8, 2004, at 11:59 p.m..

Location: CCS Resource Center (see Meeting Maps page)
10-week class, Thursdays, 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Instructor: Craig Wright E-mail: cjwright@insight.rr.com
Online Class Registration, or mail paper form on page 29

Java is an object oriented programming language that can add interactivity to web pages. Java can also be used to write full scale, stand-alone applications that can run on any computer running a Java Virtual Machine. The write once, run anywhere aspect of Java is what really makes it attractive to developers.

Some experience with programming languages, particularly object oriented programming, is desirable in order for you to fully appreciate this course.

Cost: $219 for non-members; $169 for members (includes book).

## Special Interest Group News

Snippets of just a little of what is going on in the 19 SIG meetings each month.

Thanks to the 19 SIG Leaders plus Assistant Leaders many of our members enjoy small group lessons and Q&A (Question and Answer) sessions that provide the valuable knowledge that makes membership in the Columbus Computer Society special! Check out the list of SIGS, their meeting times, and locations on another page in this document. Part of each meeting is set aside to answer the specific questions you have and to allow you to hear about the concerns of others and solutions to those concerns. You may not have the same concern as someone else now, but you may have some of the same needs at a later time. Come see ideas and trouble shooting on a large projection screen.

Just **some of what has and is going** on in some of the SIGs is as follows:

**COCUG -** has discussed digital cameras and the steps to making a PC.

**Computer Networking SIG** will be looking at some of the proteciton features of Mozilla.

**Genealogy SIG** will be learning about new options on a genealogy web site, (familysearch.org - **deleted specific site in final version**) and John Cramer will share ideas he learned at a Dayton conference.

**Linux SIG** will be doing "Open Source Databases - MS Access re-placements".

**MS Office SIG** had a lively discussion about archiving messages in Outlook and Outlook Express archiving messages ; also there has been instruction on managing fonts.

**WordPerfect SIG** was trouble shooting tables and an installation problem last month.

I will try to contact some of the SIG leaders each month to let you know one or two of the many topics each group covers. SIG leaders and group members can always submit one or two ideas covered or to be covered to publications@ccscmh.org Remind the other members and visitors that your group is “alive” and open to others for a visit.

If you decide to join the Columbus Computer Society, you dues will help support the CCS Resource Center where we can meet in comfort and with the equipment that helps to make our meetings successful. Our large membership helps make it possible to pay about $1,000 per month in rent and utilities to keep our center open. If our groups are of value to you, help us keep it open - become a member! ($49 per year divided by 12 months = $4.08; your share of the $1,000 per month)

## Assistant SIG Leaders Needed

We have people who know a little, want to learn more, get guidance and materials from experts, and facilitate leading a SIG. Also, we have SIG leaders that are already experts. Sometimes there are assistant leaders in a SIG. These leaders also learn from the other SIG members as the group discusses issues, tests, and works through to solutions. Sometimes the leaders use some time before the next meeting to find answers for the SIG members. See our list of SIG and assistant SIG leaders at http://www.ccscmh.org, and ask the people listed about what they do and how you can be trained in or assist in these activities.

## Other Kinds of Assistance Needed

We function smoothly when there are people who spend a small amount of time monitoring the counting of ballots and other people spend a larger amount of time as an officer. Please let one of the nominating committee members, who are listed below, know of someone you think would serve on the CCS Election Committee or as a director or an officer - President, Vice President, Secretary, or Treasure. We will contact those people to explain the duties, responsibilities, and amount of time required for the position and to find out if they are interested in serving in that capacity. The people presently serving as SIG leaders, directors, and officers are listed on our web site at http://www.ccscmh.org.

The present nominating committee members are:
Jim Bartos jbartos@columbus.rr.com
Judy Bell judybell@copper.net
John Cramer jcramer_ccs@hotmail.com
Cindy Cramer jcramer_ccs@hotmail.com
Craig Wright cjwright@insight.rr.com

# Under the weather?

Sometimes our leaders or their family members get sick or are affected in other ways by the weather.

Be “on top” of our attempts to keep you informed. Be sure to check our Web site for changes in location of a meeting and cancellation or rescheduling of special interest groups (SIGs) and classes. Read the calendar page and click on the SIG or class for information. Use the SIG or class leader’s telephone or e-mail address to check the status of the meeting the day before or the day of a meeting if you still have questions. We try to maintain regular meeting locations and times, but there are situations that make it necessary for us to make changes.

http://www.ccscmh.org

## News Flash!

### Thinking About Disposing of Old Computer Equipment?

There is a way that you can be sure your old computer doesn’t contaminate the soil and ground water of our earth with lead, cadmium, mercury, chromium, and trace amounts of gold, selenium, rhodium, arsenic, gallium, and barium. The Solid Waiste Authority of Central Ohio is providing the public with two dropoff locations on **Saturday, April 24, 2004, 9am – 4 pm** for equipment you wish to dispose. These sites will accept CPUs, printers, faxes , software, and monitors. Please “scrub” your harddrive before dropping off your computer. More information about “scrubbing” can be found at www.swaco.org and at http://www.accessdata.com/wipedrive_secureclean_intro.htm .

1. Grove City, Broadway Shopping Center, Broadway & SW Blvd
2. Dublin, Ashland Chemical, 5200 Blazer Prkwy

## Member Classified - Wanted!

Dell barebones (Pentium or AMD) CPU system.

Case, power supply, CPU, Dell motherboard, Dell bios, (Dell sticker/numbers on case), other items are optional.
Would like the Bios to be between 1999 and 2004.
Contact Cindy or John W. Cramer
(614)279-8271

## Advantages to Becoming a CCS Memeber

1. The greatest value comes from bringing people together at SIG (Special Interest Group) and General Meeting Q&A (question & answer) sessions. Time is given for people to share/hear about others with the same/similar problem and possible solutions. The Columbus Computer Society (CCS) frequently provides enormous amounts of useful information in Q&A sessions with no specific general topic.

2. The second greatest value comes from CCS providing new product information.

3. A third value is the reduced price members pay for CCS-sponsored classes. See the details below.

Please note that if you join CCS for $49 (includes your whole family) for the whole year – that amounts to $4.08 per month to . . .

- attend special interest groups which meet monthly,
- attend monthly General Meetings (to learn about new products and get your specific questions answered),
- receive a monthly newsletter,
- **and receive member prices on classes during the whole year.**

If you decide to join the Columbus Computer Society, you dues will help support the CCS Resource Center where we can meet in comfort and with the equipment that helps to make our meetings successful. Our large membership helps make it possible to pay about $1,000 per month in rent and utilities to keep our center open. If our groups are of value to you, help us keep the Resource Center open - become a member! ($49 per year divided by 12 months = $4.08; your share of the $1,000 per month)

Columbus Computer Society (**CCS**) is a member of the national group –
The Association of Personal Computer User Groups

## Class Registration advantages to becoming a member

Members receive a $50 discount on all class registrations. That is a quick way for the membership fee to pay for itself. If the class fee is $179 for a non-member, your member price will be $129. If the class fee is $219, your member price will be $169. After taking two classes, your savings could add up to $100 in one year.

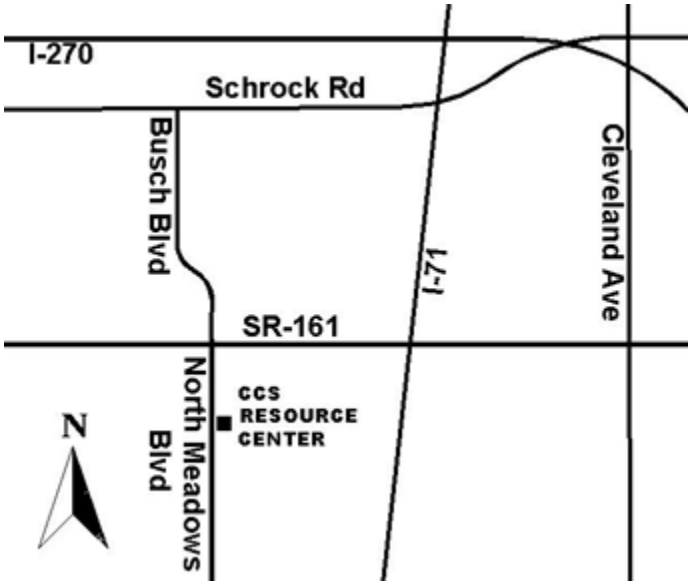
## General Meetings

**are located at Online Computer Library Center (OCLC)**
**6565 Frantz Road, Dublin, OH 43017**


From the intersection of SR 161 and Frantz Road, turn North onto Post/Frantz Road, after traveling about 150 feet, take a slight right turn in front of MAG Used Cars, after traveling another 200 feet you will see a sign for OCLC, continue until you see a stop sign. Turn left and follow that road as it curves to the right and toward the parking area. Use one of the first two parking lots and enter the building using the left side door as you face the building from the parking lot and as shown in the picture below.

## Most SIG Meetings & Classes

**are located at the CCS Resource Center,**
**5880 North Meadows Blvd., Suite C, Columbus, OH 43229**




From I-71, travel west on E. Dublin Granville Rd. (SR 161) for one-half mile to a traffic light. At the traffic light, toward the north is Busch Blvd. and toward the south is North Meadows Blvd. Turn onto North Meadows Blvd., travel one-quarter mile then turn left (east) into the parking lot of the small shopping plaza pictured below. The entrance to our facility is the first door along the left (north) side of the plaza. There is a Columbus Computer Society sign in the window above the door.

## Instructors Needed!

The Columbus Computer Society is always looking for new classes to present that are of interest to members and the general public. We are looking for people with knowledge in all areas of computer programming, applications, and systems. These people must have good knowledge of the program they would like to teach and enjoy sharing their knowledge with others.

If you would like more information on how to become a CCS instructor, please contact Charles Isaacs by e-mail at education@ccscmh.org

## CCS CALENDAR - April 2004

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5<br>*6:30 pm WordPerfect SIG<br>*7 pm Novice SIG | 6<br>*7 pm Computer Networking SIG<br>*7:30 pm Investment SIG | 7<br>*6:30-8 pm WOSU Radio | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12<br>*7 pm Super Highway SIG | 13<br>*6:30 pm Windows SIG<br>*7 pm AutoCAD/ AutoLISP SIG | 14<br>*6:30-8 pm WOSU Radio<br>*7pm Delphi & Consulting SIGs | 15<br>*7 pm Java & Open Source SIG<br>*7pm Intro MySQL Class | 16 | 17<br>*9:30 am COCUG SIG |
| 18 | 19<br>*7 pm Access/VB SIG<br>*7 pm Genealogy SIG | 20<br>*7 pm Linux SIG | 21<br>*6:30 pm General Mtg. (OCLC)<br>*6:30-8 pm WOSU Radio | 22<br>*7 pm Intro Java Class<br>*7pm Intro MySQL Class | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26<br>*6:30 pm Board Meeting<br>*6:30 pm FoxPro Programming SIG | 27<br>*7:00 pm Web Development<br>*7 pm MS Office SIG | 28<br>*6:30-8 pm WOSU Radio | 29<br>*7 pm Intro Java Class<br>*7pm Intro MySQL Class | 30 | |

## CCS SIG and GENERAL MEETING DETAILS

| SIG/MEETING | LOCATION | TIME/DAY | CONTACT | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Access/Visual Basic | CCS Resource Center | 7:00 PM - 3rd Mon. | Dave Kochs | dave@heydave.com |
| AutoCAD/AutoLISP SIG | CCS Resource Center | 7:00 PM - 2nd Tues. | Randall Wilcox | 736-2620 |
| Board Meeting | CCS Resource Center | 6:30 PM - last Mon. | Greg Woeste | president@ccscmh.org |
| COCUG | CCS Resource Center | 9:30 AM - 3rd Sat. | Ralph Buckley | cocugleader@ccscmh.org |
| Computer Networking | CCS Resource Center | 7:00 PM - 1st Tues. | John Cramer | jcramer_ss@hotmail.com |
| Consulting | Gateway Store 6674 Sawmill Rd. | 7:00 PM - 2nd Wed | David Williams | consulting@dcwconsulting.com |
| Delphi | Worthington OH Library 820 High St | 7:00 PM - 2nd Wed | Rick Ross | rickross@delphi1.com |
| Fox Programming | CCS Resource Center | 6:30 PM - 4th Mon. | Jerry Gibson | jegibson@on-ramp.net; 488-4186 |
| Genealogy | CCS Resource Center | 7:00 PM - 3rd Mon. | John Cramer | jcramer_ss@hotmail.com |
| General Meeting | Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) | 7:00 PM - 3rd Wed. | Ron Vagnier | rvagnier@columbus.rr.com |
| Investment | CCS Resource Center | 7:30 PM - 1st Tues. | Garth Trappe | gtrappe@columbus.rr.com |
| Java & Open Source | Ohio Super Computer Cntr 1224 Kinnear Rd | 7:00 PM - 3rd Thurs. | James Bartos | 457-3752 jbartos@columbus.rr.com |
| Linux | CCS Resource Center | 7:00 PM - 3rd Tues. | Scott Sharkey | ssharkey@lanshark.com |
| MS Office | CCS Resource Center | 7:00 PM - 4th Tues. | Steven Rollison | srolliso@columbus.rr.com steve@Safety-Education.com |
| Novice | CCS Resource Center | 7:00 PM - 1st Mon. | Wright & Isaacs | 885-9419 581-3468 |
| Super Highway | CCS Resource Center | 7:00 PM - 2nd Mon. | Wright & Isaacs | 885-9419 581-3468 |
| Web Development | CCS Resource Center | 7:00 PM - last Tues. | Charles Isaacs | 581-3468 |
| Windows | CCS Resource Center | 6:30 PM - 2nd Tues. | Ron Vagnier | rvagnier@columbus.rr.com |
| WordPerfect | CCS Resource Center | 6:30 PM - 1st Mon. | Bill Young | 267-8452 |

**Online Computer Library Center (OCLC)**
**6565 Frantz Road**
**Dublin, Ohio 43017**

**CCS Resource Center**
**5880 North Meadows Boulevard**
**Suite C**
**Columbus, Ohio 43229**

**Check web site Calendar & SIG page for cancelations due to weather and holiday travel.**

**Online Computer Library Center:** located in the northwestern part of metropolitan Columbus (Dublin) near the East exit off I-270 for SR 161(Dublin-Grandville Road).

**See map, directions, and building picture on another page.**

**CCS Resource Center:** located in northern Columbus about a 1/4 mile East of Worthington and West of I-71 on SR 161 (Dublin-Grandville Road).

**See map, directions, and building picture on another page.**

**Other Class Locations:** Ask the listed "Contact" person.

## Keep Up On What's Happening In CCS!

**Website**

http://www.ccscmh.org/

**Help List**

http://www.ccscmh.org/members/help_list.php

**CCS Information Line**
(614) 888-0227

The CCS Resource Center is opened by a volunteer on Monday afternoons except holidays. You can call before coming to confirm someone is there.

**CCS Board Minutes and Treasurer's Report**

http://www.ccscmh.org/members/profit_loss_index.php

**Download the Newsletter**

To get past and present issues delivered right to your computer, connect your computer to the Internet and use the following URL address:

http://www.ccscmh.org/news/index.php

**"Computers In Your Life," hosted by Tom Wiebell**
**Radio Program Wednesdays- 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.**
http://www.wosu.org or WOSU Radio 820AM

The primary emphasis of the show is to have listeners telephone or e-mail their questions. A panel of guests from the Columbus Computer Society and other area computer user groups respond and resolve these issues. Those of you who are too shy to speak on the radio may submit your questions by e-mail during the program. The show is in its twelfth year with Tom Wiebell as host. The radio show is on 820 of the AM dial every Wednesday - 6:30p.m. to 8:00p.m. Call (614) 292-8513 to ask a question during the show.

Also, the show can be heard over the Internet at http://www.wosu.org, by downloading the Microsoft Media Player (free software) from http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/download/default.asp. During the show, the e-mail address for submitting your question will be announced. Join us Wednesday evenings!

## Advertise In CCS News!

Promote your business or service to the CCS membership in this publication. You will find that the *The CCS News* has a targeted audience of people interested in and knowledgeable about computers. The following monthly rates will place your ad in *The CCS News*:

| | |
|---|---|
| Full-page | $150.00 |
| Three-quarter page | $125.00 |
| Half-page | $100.00 |
| Third-page | $75.00 |
| Quarter-page | $50.00 |
| Business card | $20.00 |
| Business card (member) | $10.00 |
| Help wanted "classified" style or up to a quarter-page | Free |
| Help wanted third-page up to full page | $25.00 |
| Items for sale "classified" style | Free |

Purchasing a One Year ad entitles you to a 10% discount.

## DEADLINES FOR *The CCS News*

Please submit advertising for placement in The CCS News by the **second Friday** of the month.

Please submit articles or news items for placement in The CCS News by the **third Friday** of the month. Articles can be submitted as text files, Microsoft Word documents or Corel WordPerfect files.

Articles should be submitted by email attachment to publications@ccscmh.org

We Will Make Room for Help Wanted

apcug Member of The Association of Personal Computer User Groups

CCS News (ISSN 1041-0538) is published monthly by the Columbus Computer Society, PO Box 163336, Columbus, OH 43216-3336, as a service to its members.  Articles may be e-mailed to the Publications Director at publications@ccscmh.org

Change of address should be directed to CCS Membership Director, PO Box 163336, Columbus, OH 43216-3336 or by e-mail to membership@ccscmh.org

## OFFICERS

**President**
Greg Woeste greg-wst@ccscmh.org

**Vice President**
OPEN

**Secretary**
Ruth L. Albert rlalbert@copper.net
Assistant OPEN

**Treasurer**
Helen Isaacs hli@cri-business-solutions.com
Assistant OPEN

**Immediate Past President**
Jim Bartos jbartos@columbus.rr.com

### DEPARTMENTS, DIRECTORS AND STAFF

**Advertising**
Director OPEN
Assistant OPEN

**Educational Services**
Director Charles Isaacs cri@cri-business-solutions.com
Assistant Open

**Electronic Communications**
Director Craig Wright cjwright@insight.rr.com
Webmaster Greg Woeste greg-wst@ccscmh.org
Web Applications Programmer
Charles Isaacs cri@cri-business-solutions.com

**Membership Services**
Director Gary Smith ccsmembership@columbus.rr.com
Assistant Eagan Foster elfoster@ccscmh.org
Corporate OPEN

**Programs & Events**
Director Ron Vagnier rvagnier@columbus.rr.com
Assistant SethYoung syoung@columbus.rr.com
Assistant OPEN

**Public Relations**
Director Gretchen Heinke publicrelations@ccscmh.com
Assistant OPEN

**Publications** publications@ccscmh.org
Director Jack Strawn
Proof Readers
Eagan Foster
Gary Smith

**Resource Center**
Director Butch Clodfelter badger@netwalk.com
Assistant OPEN

### Key CCS Personnel

This page includes the names and e-mail addresses for the elected officers, department directors and the key volunteer staff in the Columbus Computer Society.

The CCS Board of Trustees is composed of the four elected officers, the immediate past President, and the directors of the various departments listed above.

**Online New Member Registration**
**Online Membership Renewal**

## US MAIL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

_____
NAME FIRST MI LAST

_____
MAILING ADDRESS

_____
CITY STATE ZIP

(_____)_____(_____)_____
HOME PHONE WORK PHONE

_____
OCCUPATION

_____
EMPLOYER

_____
EMAIL ADDRESS

_____
SPONSOR

*CCS NEWS* PREFERENCE—Please select from the following:

- ☐ I prefer to receive *CCS News* as an attachment to an e-mail message in pdf format
- ☐ I prefer to receive a notice that the newsletter is available for download from the web site
- ☐ I do not have e-mail or access to the web

THIS APPLICATION IS:

- ☐ New
- ☐ Renewal - Member # _____
- ☐ Address Change
- ☐ Gift - From _____
- ☐ Request for replacement card (see $5.00 fee below)

Name on card(s) if different from above:

1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

Annual Dues 1 x $49.00 = $ 49.00
Additional Family Cards ____ x $2.50* = _____
(At time of Membership or Renewal)
Replacement Cards ____ x $5.00 = _____
Add Family Cards ____ x $5.00 = _____
My Enclosed Tax-Deductible Contribution = _____
Enclosed Check # _____ Total = _____

Return to: Columbus Computer Society
Attn.: Membership Dept.
P.O. Box 163336
Columbus, OH 43216-3336

## About “Current News”

**Read If You Are New To This Section**

One of the strengths of the Internet is providing vast amounts of knowledge with a mouse click. We are always looking for ways to better use our strengths and resources. CCS publication members spend their time looking for information of interest as expressed by the members. We can accomplish more in quantity and quality by providing links rather than whole articles. Members can download the CCS Newsletter and while reading it and still connected to the Internet, click links to articles, then download those articles of interest to read offline at another time.

**If you do not presently have Internet access**, you are encouraged to attend one of our meetings and ask about free, as well as fee based, Internet Service Providers (ISPs). We hope you, too, can explore the rich source of information from the given links.

## Current News - April Articles

We have a variety of articles in this issue that include information about the following topics: security updates for Windows 98 - XP, sending photos by e-mail, managing and sharing online information, comparing search engines, new hardware, free online filing with the IRS, Web accessibility for everyone, under attack by Cyber Worms, and US government attempts to help computer users. Even more information might be gleaned through the links you might explore. The following articles contain information and items not endorsed by the Columbus Computer Society, but are included for your personal consideration and evaluation. Some of the articles chosen for this month are printed completely due to the way they were received and other articles are located through links to other Web sites. Prior to clicking on a link, make sure you already have an open connection to the Internet. After a period of time, an article is removed from its primary location and often stored in another location. If you do not locate the article with the given link, try typing the title or subject of the title in the online magazine's search box, when available, then pressing the Enter key to find the archived location.

**If you have areas of interest not covered by the following links**, or you would like to recommend addresses to pages, please send the topics and/or addresses, along with your name and membership number (which will not be published) to publications@ccscmh.org

## CDs available with Microsoft Security Updates

A big help to users with dialup modems

It is our thought that this offer is so valuable to our members that it will appear in several issues of this document.

http://www.pcworld.com/news/article/0,aid,114849,tk,dn021904X,00.asp

## Wal-Mart Joins The Online Music Market

**88 cents per song; for Windows only.**

http://musicdownloads.walmart.com/catalog/servlet/MainServlet

## SendPhotos - Easily!

**This program re-sizes photos so you don't have to do it, thus small, fast e-mail file size.**

This software is complete with colorful stationery backgrounds. Use NO attachments; embed the photos into your message. Make your own stationery designs by adding your company logo or any graphic on your hard drive. Use SendPhotos with any email program, including Outlook and Outlook Express, AOL, Yahoo, Hotmail, Eudora and Netscape. SendPhotos Gold supports a huge array of photo formats including JPG, TIFF, GIF, BMP, Kodak PCD, Kodak FPX, PNG, Photoshop PSD and RAW.

Free trial available for download; careful - 16MB to download; use the CCS Resource Center!

Software $19.95 (not $39.95 as I have seen advertised elsewhere)

http://www.novatix.com/Products/SendPhotos

## ONFOLIO Organizes Your Web Searches

**Helps you manage and share online information.**

http://www.pcworld.com/news/article/0,aid,115295,tk,dn032204X,00.asp

## Feature Comparison of Search Engines

**Google can't do the same as specialty engines.**

http://www.pcworld.com/news/article/0,aid,114725,pg,11,00.asp

## What is 3 1/2” wide & Holds 400GB?

**Answer:** Hitachi’s Deskstar 7K400 highest-capacity 3.5 inch ATA drive ever, the company claims. The five-platter drive, which spins at 7200 rpm, is designed for audio-visual use, for example, in digital video recorders. See their web site for more information and when/how to purchase it. http://www.hitachi.com

## New Chipset; New, Faster Memory!

A new chipset, reported to be due in May, supports PCI Express plus DDR2, DDR400.

http://www.pcworld.com/news/article/0,aid,115309,tk,dn032304X,00.asp

## PCI Express: Say Goodbye to AGP & PCI Slots

**Faster than a . . .**

**Will this prompt a different PC case?**

By Timothy Everingham, TUGNET
teveringham@acm.org

Those of you who have been around personal computers for a while might remember plug in cards slots referred to as ISA, EISA, Microchannel, and VESA Local Bus. ISA, EISA, and Microchannel were replaced by PCI. VESA Local bus was primarily for video cards, which was replaced by PCI, then AGP slots. It was a fun time during these card slot transitions because many times you could not use the plug in cards from your old machine in your new computer or motherboard or if you did it could slow down the entire system. Well guess what, its time to do it all over again. Intel has come up with a new slot standard PCI Express, which will start to show up in computers/motherboards this spring.

PCI came out in 1992. Today these slots and its data bus technology are used for things not envisioned when it was under development over 12 years ago. PCI has its limitations and the PCI pro slots never became popular. The limitations are coming to the forefront in delivering multimedia content and Gigabit Ethernet. Of course getting higher frame rates at higher resolution and quality for video games also is an issue. PCI has been evolving over time increasing its speed to five times the original, but it has reached its limits of development. Many say that stretching out the AGP to 8x speed might be pushing at its limit too.

First let us look at the current PCI architecture you will find on most motherboards. The CPU/Microprocessor communicates with the first of two data bridges, normally referred to as the Memory Bridge or Northbridge. The Northbridge not only communicates with the CPU; but also communicates to the AGP port, which is where your main graphics card is (usually the only graphics card). It also communicates with your RAM. The fourth thing it communicates with is the second data bridge, known as the Input/Output (I/O) Bridge or Southbridge. The Southbridge also communicates to your plug in slots/cards, drive controllers, and USB, Fireware/1394, parallel. serial, game, keyboard and mouse ports. The theoretical speed limit of the Southbridge communication to I/O including the PCI slots is 133 MB/second. All of the communications in the system are parallel with none of the data having any priority over any other. Blocks of data have to be sent one at a time and cannot be done concurrently. Therefore the data is transferred from one section of the motherboard to the next section based on the order received, not the importance or whether a piece of data arriving by a certain time to its destination is critical.

PCI Express, instead of using a parallel bus architecture, uses serial networking typology with only two wires for each direction. At higher speeds, it allows concurrent transfer of data while having a similar look and the same type of Northbridge/Southbridge architecture as currently in desktops and laptops.

However, in servers the Southbridge is eliminated producing greater data throughput. The PCI slots initially have a 250 MB/second throughput, but the scalable width technology (increasing the number of wire pairs) enables slots and cards to communicate at 32 times that speed in later implementations using longer slots. But the typology can also use network switching type technology, giving data priority and quality of service functions. Hot plug/swap of components is a native part of the architecture.

The PCI Express Graphics Port, replacing the AGP Port, will have a 4GB/second transfer rate in its initial configuration, double that of the current 8x AGP ports. For laptops units there will be a new plug-in card to replace PCMCIA called ExpressCard. It will come in two forms, one that more looks like a PCMCIA card refereed to at the 34 module form factor (34 x 75 x 5 mm) and a more oversized L looking card called the 54 module form factor (54 x 75 x 5 mm). This new architecture is compatible with existing operating systems. Also the new PCI Express slot is capable of being placed alongside current type PCI slots so a choice can be made which type of card can be used in a motherboard just like was done with ISA slots and current PCI slots. The standard PCI Express slots being put in motherboards this spring (1x) will be a lot shorter than the standard PCI slots.

All of this will mean that a lot of issues having to do with multimedia on desktop and laptop computers will have been solved. It also opens wider use of Gigabit Ethernet on local area networks. It also enables the prospects of new motherboard form factors and computer case designs. As the transition from ISA to PCI was an interesting transition with computer buyers having to do more research and planning on their purchases, the move from PCI to PCI Express will do the same. However, as was with the previous transition, the performance and capability increases of computers will be profound. Further information on PCI Express can be found at www.express-lane.org.

Timothy Everingham is CEO of Timothy Everingham Consulting in Azusa, California. He is also Vice Chair of the Los Angeles Chapter of ACM SIGGRAPHand is also on the Management Information Systems Program Advisory Board of California State University, Fullerton. In addition he is the Vice President of the Windows Media Users' Group of Los Angeles. He is also part-time press in the areas of high technology, computers, video, audio, and entertainment/media and has had articles published throughout the United States and Canada plus Australia, England, & Japan. Further information can be found at http://home.earthlink.net/~teveringham



## Computer Memory

Historical development of and how much should you have?

by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D.
Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida

Occasionally the question arises as to how much memory can be put in a computer. The answer is "it depends". It depends on just what you mean by memory (RAM or hard disk), what operating system you are using and the capabilities of your computer's motherboard and its chipset. When I talk about memory I am not referring to the permanent storage of programs and data on the hard disk. Rather, I refer to the random-access memory or RAM. This is the memory provided by memory chips seated in slots on the motherboard of today's computers. Anything stored in RAM disappears when the power is turned off, so it is referred to as volatile, or temporary memory.

If you want to upgrade the memory in your computer you have to be able to determine the memory type as well as the size, pins and speed, the number of slots available on your motherboard and the maximum amount of memory that your system can address. In general, this varies with the age of your computer. So let's look at these components in a little more detail. (Please note that although my remarks refer to Intel's Pentium series central processors, they also generally apply to the equivalent AMD processors.)

Early Pentium based computers had a CPU bus speed of 66 MHz (megahertz) and a PCI I/O bus speed of 33 MHz. These values relate to the speed of data movement within the central processor and transmission to and from peripherals such as the memory bank. In some cases transfer to and from memory was at 50 MHz. Pentium computers generally had four slots which were arranged as two banks. This meant that memory had to be installed in units of two. The memory chips were 72 pin DRAM (dynamic RAM) or SIMM (single in-line memory modules) modules. Many of these computers could support four DRAM modules of 32 MB (megabytes) for a maximum of 128 MB of RAM. There were some motherboards built for

Pentium 5 systems that had 2 or 3-168 bit DIMM slots in addition to the 72 pin slots. However, you could not use both the 72 pin and 168 pin slots, only one or the other. These systems would support either 128 or 256 MB of memory. However, at the time, many Pentium/Pentium II computers were sold with only 16 MB of RAM and Windows 95. Later, with Windows 98 the basic memory was 32 MB. In both cases, this is a less than optimum amount of memory for these operating systems. The first Pentium computers had a 32 bit address space which was theoretically capable of addressing 4 GB (gigabytes) of memory. However, none of the motherboards manufactured for these computers carried any such memory capacity.

The next generation of computers carried faster CPUs and chipsets along with faster bus speeds. For example the Intel 440 series chipsets were capable of working with CPUs with speed of 233 - 333 MHz at a bus speed of 66 MHz or with 350-450 MHz processors at a bus speed of 100 MHz. These motherboards generally had 3- 168 pin slots and would support a maximum of 384 MB of RAM. As the address space of the CPU was increased to 36 bit, the maximum addressable memory was 64 GB. However, in practice some computers running Win98 would not recognize more than 256 or 384 MB of RAM. This problem has been ascribed to the chipset design and problem with the L-2 cache. So some caution is recommended if you intend to upgrade the memory in a Pentium II or older system With some of the Pentium III class computers there was an additional increment in bus speed to 133 MHz. The motherboards had 2 to 4 168-pin memory slots. The maximum usable memory of such systems ranges from 512 MB to 1 GB. These motherboards for this CPU class are generally able to use 100 - 133 MHz DIMMs. The 133 MHz DIMMS are capable of working at [133 MHz or ] the 100 MHz speed. The Pentium 4 motherboards came with a whole new array of chipsets and memory chip types and speeds. The maximum memory now ranges up to 4 GB. Intel's initial Pentium 4 motherboards required the use of RDRAM or Rambus DRAM memory chips. RDRAM is a serial memory technology that arrived in three speeds, PC600, PC700, and PC800. RDRAM designs with multiple channels, such as those in Pentium 4 motherboards, are currently the fastest in memory throughput, especially when paired with the newer PC1066 RDRAM memory. A Rambus channel is 2-bytes wide, so we get a maximum 1.6GB/s transfer rate for a single RDRAM channel using PC800 RDRAM or 2.1GB/s for PC1066. The other form of memory chip is the double data rate DRAM. Intel and other manufacturers now have motherboards and chipsets that can utilize these memory modules. They are less expensive than the RDRAM. DDR memory modules are named after their peak bandwidth - the maximum amount of data they can deliver per second - rather than their clock rates. This is calculated by multiplying the amount of data a module can send at once (called the data path or bandwidth) by the speed of the front side bus (FSB). The bandwidth is measured in bits, and the FSB in MHz. Note that the RDRAM bandwidth is in bytes. One byte is equal to 8 bits.

A PC1600 DDR memory module can deliver bandwidth of 1600Mbps. PC2100 (the DDR version of PC133 SDRAM) has a bandwidth of 2100Mbps. PC2700 modules use DDR333 chips to deliver 2700Mbps of bandwidth and PC3200 - the fastest widely used form in late 2003 uses DDR400 chips to deliver 3200Mbps (3.2 Gbps) of bandwidth. You may see the term "dual channel" applied to memory. When properly used, the term refers to a DDR motherboard's chipset that's designed with two memory channels instead of one. The two channels handle memory-processing more efficiently by utilizing the theoretical bandwidth of the two modules, thus reducing system latencies, the timing delays that inherently occur with

one memory module. For example, one controller reads and writes data while the second controller prepares for the next access, hence, eliminating the reset and setup delays that occur before one memory module can begin the read/write process all over again.

Consider a model in which data is filled into a container (memory), which then directs the data to the CPU. Singlechannel memory would feed the data to the processor via a single pathway at a maximum rate of 64 bits at a time. Dualchannel memory, on the other hand, utilizes two pathways, thereby having the capability to deliver data twice as fast or up to 128 bits at a time. The process works the same way when data is transferred from the processor by reversing the flow of data. A “memory controller” chip is responsible for handling all data transfers involving the memory modules and the processor. This controls the flow of data through the pathways, preventing them from being over-filled with data. Now that you are totally confused by all this memory type and speed terminology, let’s look at the next question.

**How much memory should you have in your computer?** The answer is: probably as much as your motherboard and chipset can handle. For the newest motherboards, that may be excessive unless you are involved in digital video editing or graphic design. For most home users running WinXP or Win2K I would recommend 512MB up to 1GB. So why those figures? I have found that WinXP uses over 200 MB of RAM for its own files, if that much is available. So on a 256 MB system that leaves very little for other applications and data. The net result is a lot of swapping with the virtual memory space on the hard drive. That slows everything down. In WinXP the Windows Task Manager (bring up by pressing CTRLALT-DEL) shows your current performance and the amount of memory available in real time. With 512 MB and several programs running, I have over 300 MB of real RAM available. That greatly increases the responsiveness (speed) of the system as moving data to and from RAM is many times faster than using a hard disk. The Page File window shows you the virtual memory swapping your system is doing. At the moment, mine is zero.

You can do similar analyses on Win98/WinMe systems. The System Monitor application that comes with Windows can supply this information.

However, you may need to modify it to get the memory info you want. Go to Start-Programs-Accessories-System Tools and select System Monitor. If this selection is not available on your menu, then you need to install the program from your original Windows disk or from \WindowsOptions\Cabs file. You do that from the Control Panel (Add/ Remove Software) and Windows Setup. Once you have the system monitor you can ADD memory information by clicking on Edit, then add item. Select Memory Manager. The individual items that will be the most helpful are: allocated memory, unused physical memory, page files in/ out, swapfile in use or swappable memory. The kernel reading tells you how much of your CPU capacity is being used. Generally, Win98/WinME will do very well with 256 MB - 384 MB of RAM. You just have to be certain that your motherboard and chipset can support this much RAM. Most of the home computers I have worked on really don’t have enough RAM for the most efficient operation. Does Yours?

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Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail at bwsail@yahoo.com or voice mail at 941/925-3047. :

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## IRS Again Offers Free Online Filing Services

Historical development of and
(bolded subtitle) how much should you have?

By Ira Wilsker

We should have received all of our W-2's, 1099's, and other tax forms by now. Many of us struggle filling out tax forms manually, trying to decipher forms that have so many links and connections you feel that you have to be a genius octopus to connect all of the parts. Some of us use one of the popular tax software packages such as Tax Cut or TurboTax, and others use accountants or commercial services to prepare our most dreaded of forms.

For those looking for an alternative, the IRS is again coordinating a variety of free online filing services. The logical starting place is the IRS website at www.irs.gov. At the top of the page is a link "Free File – Start Here for Free Online Filing". Clicking on the link opens a new page with pre-filing tips, step-by-step instructions, and a "help center" with frequently asked questions. While the free filing services are coordinated and regulated by the IRS, the services themselves are provided by a number of individual profit seeking companies or non-profit organizations. Any company listed is prohibited from mandating the purchase of any additional services, and the listed services must be absolutely free to those qualified to use the services.

The IRS site also states, "IRS Free File does not endorse Refund Anticipation Loans (RALs) or any other advance refund banking products". The site also states that your privacy and financial information will be protected by the providers listed, and that these providers must meet commercial privacy and security standards, and be certified as such by a recognized issuer of privacy and security certifications.

The process of getting started is a rather simple three step process. First is the "Start Now" button on the "Free Online Filing" web page; second is a determination of eligibility, as different providers have different requirements; finally the third step is linking to the private provider's website, separate from the IRS site. If you find that you are ineligible for a particular company's free offerings, simply return to the IRS site and repeat the process by selecting another likely service. It should be noted that while millions of us are eligible for these free services, many of us will find that we are ineligible for any of many reasons. Once a satisfactory service has been selected, then the tax return information is completed online, with the completed documents being "e-Filed", or electronically filed with the IRS.

Fifteen online providers of free filing services are listed. Each has its own requirements that may be based on residence, income, age, military status, and other factors. While some services are clearly for lower income individuals, some of the free services are available for individuals who have an adjusted gross income (AGI) of up to $100,000. Some are available to residents of specific states, regardless of income level. None of the listed services offered free filing to Texas residents without regard to income level, though an even dozen of the services are available at no charge to Texas residents who meet other requirements. One of the services, FreeTaxUSA, is listed as available to all Louisiana residents at no charge.

Several of the companies listed provide free service to all active duty military personnel, regardless of residence or income. Some services provide unrestricted service based on age, either younger than early 20's, or older than 62 years of age.

For those unsure about which service to consider, a button on the IRS page "**Guide me To A Service!**" uses a simple form to direct the user to appropriate services based on a short series of personal questions. These questions are age, estimated adjusted gross income, state of residence, number of W-2 forms, possibility of using a form 1040EZ, probable eligibility for the "Earned Income Credit", and military service. Once completed, a list of likely service providers is presented, allowing for the user to easily choose a provider.

All of the providers in what the IRS refers to as the "Free File Alliance" provide for electronic filing of tax returns. E-Filing, as the IRS calls it is relatively safe and secure, and, according to the IRS website, can generate refunds in as little as 10 days, with faster refund service available to those who select having their refunds direct deposited to their bank or credit union accounts.

While these services are freely available online at no charge to many, they **may not necessarily be the best alternative**. Even if eligible to utilize one of these free services, the onus of decision making is solely on the individual, as most provide no comprehensive tax advice, meaning that it is quite possible for the user to miss deductions or credits that he may be eligible for, thus overpaying. It is also the responsibility of the user to accurately and completely enter data, as there is no one to verify the accuracy of the data entered. To use an early cyber cliché, "GIGO", which means "Garbage in – Garbage Out", the final return can only be as accurate as the information entered.

Clearly, the free filing alternatives may be attractive to many individuals, but for many others the more traditional tax preparations resources may be a superior alternative. The choice is yours; choose wisely.

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Ira Wilsker is the Advisor for Region 8, APCUG Representative & Bylaws Chair for the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for The Examiner in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows. He also graciously shares his articles with the APCUG editors.



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## Accessibility for Everyone

. . . even you, today or tomorrow.

by Billy Mabray
Oklahoma City PC Users Group
eMonitor - February 2004

Many people, including a lot of Web designers, think Web-site accessibility is only about making sites work for blind users with screen reader software. Accessibility should be about all of us. There is a wide range of physical conditions that can make using the Web difficult. The Internet can be a frustrating place when you have poor eyesight, colorblindness, or trouble using a mouse. You may not fall into any of these categories right now, but consider this statistic: 100% of Internet users are growing older. At some point, we will all need help navigating the Web.

There are many things that can be done to make the Web more accessible. Some of those things are already built into your Web browser. Others require Web designers to implement accessible features on their Web sites. If you are one of the many people who has difficulty using the Web, you will want to know what help is out there.

One of the biggest complaints people have is that text is too small. It is also the easiest to remedy. If you are using Internet Explorer, choose View>Text Size from the top menu. Also, if your mouse has a scroll wheel, you can hold the CTRL key and scroll up and down to change the text size. Now, this will not work on all Web pages – later, we will discuss why that is and what Web designers can do about it. The Netscape/Mozilla browser, however, can change text size on all Web pages. Choose View>Increase Text Size, or hold CTRL and press the + key.

There are many shortcut keys available for those who have difficulty using a mouse. For example, the backspace key will take you to the previous page, F5 will reload your current page, and ALT plus the Home key will take you to your home page (the page set to load when you open your browser). Also, if you have gone back to a previous page, ALT plus the right arrow will take you forward again. Another useful key on any Web page is the TAB key. You can use the TAB key (and SHIFT plus TAB to go in reverse) to quickly navigate forward through all the links and form fields on a Web page. Once you have tabbed to a form element, other keyboard shortcuts may come in handy. For drop-down boxes, you can use the up and down arrows to highlight your selection. For radio buttons or checkboxes, use the space bar to select your choice. If you are using a recent version of Netscape/Mozilla, you can also use “Find As You Type.” Start typing at any page and it will automatically do a search for what you are typing on that page.

Some people, particularly the colorblind, find Web sites hard to use because the color of the text does not contrast enough with the background colors. If the color scheme of your favorite Web site makes it difficult to read, you can override that as well. You will find this under Tools->Options or Edit->Preferences, depending on your browser. You can set your default fonts, font sizes, and page colors. You can also specify that your defaults always override what is set by the Web page.

While these browser features can be helpful, there is still much Web designers must do to make their site accessible to the widest possible audience. A good example is text sizing. If Web designers use fixed text sizes – sizes that specify an absolute unit of measurement, such as points or pixels – on their pages, Internet Explorer users cannot change their text size as I described earlier. Web designers can, and should, use relative text sizes to make their pages more accessible. Designers who prefer to use absolute sizes for text should provide a "style switcher." This is a link on the page that allows the site's visitor to make the text bigger and saves that preference in a cookie.

Another accessibility feature that some designers use is access keys. These are just like the shortcut keys I mentioned earlier; except they are defined by the Web page you are on. For example, the designer could define ALT plus 4 to take you directly to the search function. If you visit a site regularly and know their access keys, they can be useful.

Web designers should also use labels for forms. Labels make the text next to a form field clickable, just like the field itself. For example, if a form has a checkbox that reads, "Click here to subscribe," and that text is set as a label, the user can click anywhere on that text to check the box. It can be very helpful to have a larger target when trying to click things with a mouse.

We still have a long way to go before the Web is accessible to everyone. But now you know some of the helpful features you have at your fingertips already, and you know what to ask for from the Web sites you frequent. Hopefully, as users learn what they can do, and designers learn what they need to do, we can all enjoy the Web a little more.

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Billy Mabray and his wife, Angela, own Smart Goat, a local software development and web design business. They are members of the OKCPCUG. Comments or questions on the article are welcome and can be addressed to: billy@smartgoat.com.



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## Under Attack by Cyber Worms

by Ira Wilsker

If you use email, as you most likely do, you may have noticed the recent increased on-slaught of worms and viruses. Using a variety of techniques, the latest attacks are once again flooding our inboxes with dangerous content, as well as seeking out security holes in our systems and attacking us through our internet and network connections.

One insidious family of new pests is the group referred to as the “Bagel” or “Beagle” virus and worm family. Now spreading endemically, as I type this, are sixteen variants, referred to by the sequential letters “A” through “K”. These nasties were explicitly designed to slip through most spam filters, and many antivirus scans by concealing their malicious payload in a password protected zip (compressed) file, which can only be opened by opening the email, and clicking on the attachment, and entering the password shown. The rapid appearance of the many variants also makes it easier to slip through our antivirus defenses, and more difficult to protect against. While most of us are reluctant to click on attachments from unknown senders, these creatures try to use “human engineering” to trick us into opening the email and activating the attachment. This is accomplished by spoofing the “From:” line and making it falsely appear to be from the management, tech support, email server, billing department, or other department of your ISP (Internet Service provider). They use an internal template to create a variety of subjects and messages incorporating the name of the ISP in order to appear to be authentic. Some of the common subject lines are “E-mail account security warning”, “Warning about your e-mail account”, “Email account utilization warning”, “E-mail account disabling warning”, and similar subjects. The body of the message typically starts with some variation of “Dear user of (the name of your ISP)”, followed by text indicating that your email account is about to be disabled, you have been sending out infected emails, the email server will be shut down, and similar attention getters. The punch line may be of the type “For more information see the attached file” or “Please, read the attachment for further details.” To make it look even more legitimate and secure (and to bypass spam and virus filtering) it may contain a closing line to the effect of “For security reasons attached file is password protected” or “The password is (password).”

The infected email is signed with “Sincerely,” or “Best wishes,” or some nicety, and often has a tagline “The team, http://www.(the name of your ISP)”

Attached to the email is an innocent looking file possibly with the filename (ending in “.zip”) “Information”, “Readme”, “Document”, “Message” or some other innocuous name. If this file is opened, and your antivirus software does not detect the payload, the computer will be instantly infected. Once infected, the worm will search your computer for any email addresses, and use its built-in email utility to replicate itself to the email addresses found on your computer, again spoofing the name of the recipients ISP as the sender. If you think about it, this is both a clever way to entice even a suspicious victim into opening the attachment and infecting his computer, and an insidious thing to do to countless thousands of innocent victims. One of the common payloads in the Bagel/Beagle series is a utility that deactivates many of the popular antivirus programs, and prevents them from being updated, leaving the computer open to later attacks. Some versions also open a port through a firewall (ZoneAlarm is often targeted) allowing external “backdoor” access to the computer, and broadcasting the IP address of the vulnerable computer over the Internet. Fortunately, many of the Bagel/Beagle variants have code in them that will cease their propagation between March 14 and 25.

In another trick, some of the new virus and worm writers are trying to fool us into believing that their content is safe by including a falsehood either in its subject or as a closing tagline that the message has been scanned by a major antivirus program (most often Norton AntiVirus). Just because an email is from someone you know, and contains a line indicating that it is certified as safe, do not believe it. The creator of the worm is lying to you by conceal-

ing the real sender by spoofing the “From:” line to appear that it is from an acquaintance, and including the “certified virus free” tag.

The massive recent attacks by the authors of the Netsky, MyDoom, and Bagel/Beagle viruses and worms have created a battle among themselves, indicated by messages encoded in their respective payloads. According to several antivirus companies, the code includes attacks on each other, such as when Netsky attacks a computer already infected with MyDoom or Bagel/Beagle, Netsky tries to deactivate them, while installing its own malicious code, and stating “We kill malware writers. They have no chance”. The author of Bagel responded in a quickly released variant “Hey Netsky... Don’t ruin our business. Wanna start a war?’’. Later variants of these three malicious products have continued the dispute.

Wouldn’t it be nice if these virus authors spent more time and effort fighting each other, and less time trying to infect our computers?

FREE online virus scans are available at the following websites:

housecall.antivirus.com

www.pandasoftware.com

www.bitdefender.com

us.mcafee.com

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## Hi! I’m from the Government and I’m Here to Help Your Computer

by Ira Wilsker

Our computers are apolitical inanimate machines not influenced by our personal politics. While we as individuals may differ in our beliefs of how much the government should be involved in our personal computing, there is an increasing amount of influence government agencies are having in our routine computer utilization.

Recently the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, acknowledging the role that our personal computers have in national security, announced a series of email alert services to notify us of potential cyber attacks and other threats to our cyber infrastructure. As has been explained previously in this column, our computers and net access have become a potential target of terrorism, and can be utilized to launch cyber attacks without our knowledge. As I type this, the Utah based software company SCO, has had its net access shut down because it was one of the targets of a denial of service attack launched from countless thousands of computers infected with the "A" version of the MyDoom worm. The free alert system from the Department of Homeland Security, coincidently announced as the MyDoom worm infected millions of machines and slowed down the net, is available both online and by email subscription at www.us-cert.gov. Warnings will be posted on this site, and emailed to subscribers as soon as they are released. The **free email alerts are listed at www.us-cert.gov/cas/index.html and distributed in four varieties**. Two of the alerts are highly technical versions, and two are non-technical "plain English" versions. If you decide to subscribe to these free alerts, be sure to follow the subscription instructions explicitly. In order to prevent the unauthorized "spamming" of subscriptions, a double opt-in process is utilized. **When you send the initial email subscription, a confirming email will be sent** by the email list server **containing a unique reply code**; **be sure to follow the instructions exactly in that reply email in order to effect the subscription**.

The "**Technical Cyber Security Alerts**", as listed on the US-CERT.GOV website, "…provide timely information about current security issues, vulnerabilities, and exploits." The other technical alert is "Cyber Security Bulletins" which "…provide bi-weekly summaries of security issues and new vulnerabilities. They also provide patches, workarounds, and other actions to help mitigate risk."

**For those interested in less technical**, but otherwise current and helpful information, a pair of non-technical alerts is available. One is "Cyber Security Alerts" self-described as, "…provide(s) timely information about current security issues, vulnerabilities, and exploits … that affects the general public. … (and) outline(s) the steps and actions that non-technical home and corporate computer users can take to protect themselves from attack." The other non-technical alert is "Cyber Security Tips" which "…describe(s) common security issues and offer advice for non-technical home and corporate computer users."

These alerts will contain a verifiable electronic signature to ensure that they are really valid alerts, and not some misleading spam intended to spoof authentic alerts and mislead victims. Despite such precautions, there has been some concern that these alerts can still be falsified, leading to the type of damage that they are intended to warn about. In a recent statement released by Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY), "If I were a betting man, I'd put a few dollars down that the next virus that clogs computer networks is going to be transmitted through an e-mail that looks like one of these DHS e-mail alerts."

All four of these alerts, as well as the concurrent information posted on the US-CERT.GOV website, are intended to supplement, not replace, similar alerts already distributed by such cyber security companies as Symantec (Norton), Network Associates (McAfee), Panda, Sophos, F-Secure, Trend, and other publishers of antivirus, firewall, and internet security software and services.

In a less fearsome mode, there is a helpful service available from the quasi-governmental agency, the U.S. Postal Service, to assist businesses, organizations, and individuals who mail items using “Priority” or “Express” mail. Small quantity users can use a free online service “Click-N-Ship” available at www.usps.com to generate and print mailing labels, complete with tracking number bar codes. Larger volume users of Express and Priority mail can download a free utility, “USPS Shipping Assistant Software” from the Postal Service to generate mailing labels on their own computers. Available for free download from www.usps.com/shippingassistant, this interesting utility can be used to track and confirm deliveries, verify zip codes, create mailing labels, calculate domestic and international postage, calculate delivery times, create and store address books, and even generate merchandise return labels. The labels themselves, complete with barcodes for tracking, are typically printed one or two to an 8.5 x 11 sheet of self-adhesive labels. Labels are available from the Postal Service website from a private contractor, our local office supply stores, or online. I recently used both the free online label service, and the “USPS Shipping Assistant 2.2” I recently downloaded to prepare labels to mail merchandise to my kids. I found both were easy to use and produced excellent quality labels on my printer. I then used both the free online tracking on the USPS.COM website and the online tracking service integral with the Shipping Assistant software to track the packages, and both worked equally well.

Now that computers have become a ubiquitous part of our daily lives, it is inevitable that we will see more governmental involvement and assistance with our daily computing.

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Ira Wilsker is the Advisor for Region 8, APCUG Representative & Bylaws Chair for the Golden Triangle PC Club, a columnist for The Examiner in Beaumont, Texas, and has two radio shows. He also graciously shares his articles with the APCUG editors.



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## CCS Mail-in Class Registration

**Look for class details within this issue of The CCS News. Mail this registration form and your check made out to Columbus Computer Society to:**

**Charles Isaacs**
**Educational Services Director**
**5367 Chimney Rock**
**Westerville, OH 43081**

| Please circle your class choice(s): | Starting Date: | Member Price: | Non-member Price: |
|---|---|---|---|
| Introduction to MySQL | 04/15/04 | $129.00 | $179.00 |
| Introduction to Java | 04/01/04 | $169.00 | $219.00 |
| | Total Submitted: | $_____ | $_____ |

**Name** _____ **Membership #:**_____

**Address** _____

**City** _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____ **Home PH:** _____

**Work PH:** _____ **E-mail Address** _____