

User Friendly

January 2003



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FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday February 11, 2003
Tuesday March 11, 2003 ♦

Happy New Year

LACS General Meeting

Finding Medical Information on the Internet Dr. Garred Sexton

Tuesday January 14, 7 P. M.

Fellowship Hall, 8065 Emerson Ave., Westchester

What do you do when you need information about some illness or affliction? Sure, there's Google or other search engines, but perhaps there are other ways to find the information you want.

After serving in the U.S. Navy as an Electronics Technician, Garred Sexton completed studies at University of Arkansas and became a physician. After 14 years in private practice he spent 20 years with the Federal Aviation Administration, then 5 years with American Airlines and then he retired. Dr. Sexton has additional Board certifications in Occupational Medicine and Aerospace Medicine. He has gathered a lot of useful information about sources of medical info on the Internet and will share them with us.

Gary is President of the Greater South Bay User Group and has been an active participant in the Southern California Regional User Group Summit (SCRUGS) and the Southwest User Groups Conference (SWUGCon) in San Diego. We look forward to sharing and learning from his presentation. It will be an interesting evening. Information: (310) 289-7177 or <http://www.lacspc.org> ♦

December Holiday General Meeting

The December Holiday General Meeting was a big success with several interesting presentations by members, lots of delectable goodies to

eat and a chance to visit and chat with other members. Much credit should go to those who planned the affair such as Herb Van Brink, Todd Martin, and Cora Kamerman. More specific details on the presentations by President Charlotte Semple, Karl Springer, Cap

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

(DECEMBER MEETING REPORT)*(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)*

Kierulff and others follows for your information.

That is, there would be a full report if we only had a meeting Reporter. Since no one has volunteered there is no Meeting Report this month or in the future unless we get a volunteer. See below to volunteer..

Editor ♦

Meeting Reporter Needed

Volunteers are needed to write a brief report each month on the LACS General Meeting. It's easy —no computer expertise required — and help in formatting and editing will be provided . **Volunteer now** by sending an e-mail to: editor@lacspc.org or call Dick Smith at (323) 294-3441 and leave a message. ♦

COMDEX/APCUG 2002, Las Vegas

By **Richard S Harmetz**, LACS

With less space and fewer exhibitors than last year, Comdex opened in mid-November for the 23rd time in Las Vegas. According to one rumor, the company that owns Comdex would soon declare bankruptcy. A different rumor insisted that Comdex would be sold to another company or merged with the January Consumer Electronics show.

Things may have been edgy at Comdex, but elsewhere in Las Vegas, the Association of Personal Computer User Groups was packing meeting rooms and banquet halls with delegates from across the country and as far away as Japan and Australia who had arrived for the APCUG group's annual conference.

The delegates had gathered to attend Comdex, to view demonstrations by major computer vendors, and to hear a talk on how to protect computers from hacker invasions.

WILSKER TALK

One of the best attended sessions was led by Ira Wilsker of Beaumont, Texas, and titled "Security After September 11."

After declaring that fewer than half of all computer users boot-up their anti-virus software on a daily basis, Wilsker listed four major rules for protecting a computer from invasion:

1. Use an anti-virus program daily;
2. Never open suspicious email;
3. Use a firewall;
4. Never use file-sharing programs with strangers.

Wilsker had plenty of other rules. Keep up-to-date with security patches. Check security settings at least twice a year. Be prepared before a problem hits by knowing what you will need to do in case your computer is ever infected. Don't use a password like your birthday, your marriage date, your child's or spouse's name, or anything equally obvious. Use a combination of numbers and letters for each password since a combination of letters and numbers is more difficult to break than a sequence of only letters or only numbers.

DENNIS COURTNEY SEMINAR

Another interesting seminar was conducted by Dennis Courtney of the Capitol PC UG of Washington D. C. Capitol is one of the larger user groups, but its membership had dropped from over six thousand paid members to around thirteen hundred. Attendance at monthly meetings had shrunk to about one-quarter of the four to five-hundred people who once overflowed the club's meeting hall. Capitol's accounting system was in shambles and would allow a single SIG meeting to cost \$200. Members were aging, vendors had lost interest, big name speakers would no longer address meetings, and its finances were in a steep decline.

Club morale was at an all-time low, and the club had lacked a treasurer for more than two years. Only six people ran the club even though it still had more than a thousand members. Although the six loved what they were doing, they were worn out.

The first thing Capitol did to recover was to use focus groups to form a vision of where the club should go. Then, using the information gleaned from the focus groups, the leadership formulated a business plan, which it put into writing. It also sought outside opinions and used those opinions as well as help from business-savvy members. And the leadership group went to a national organization of retired business people for additional help as well as to local organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and fraternal organizations like the Rotary Club.

The officers committed themselves to a minimum of three years each to help carry out the business plans. During the first year of the new business plan, they picked out the evangelists within the group to help sell the plan to the other members. They doubled the number of volunteers in leadership positions and shared the workload more equitably. And, most important, they started to get their finances in order.

Previously, 87% of the Capitol's treasury had come from dues. Now, the club was raising money by going after grants and gifts and by offer-

ing training programs and seminars. On one occasion, the club held a general meeting about HTML as a teaser. Soon after, the club raised a lot of money by charging \$40 a person for a four hour HTML seminar.

Within a short time, Capitol had tripled the number of volunteers in leadership positions, and within six months, the club was operating on a profit.

The club got rid of its multiple phone line bulletin board which had cost \$300 a month but was used by only twenty members. To replace it, Capitol convinced its ISP provider to create a private newsgroup for Capitol members only. Today, about one-hundred members use the newsgroup each month.

Capitol publicized itself at local conventions and did PR at large companies, bookstores, libraries and at local tech vendors. Today, Capitol once again is thriving.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Besides attending seminars, delegates to the APCUG conference attended meetings and banquets with the various vendor-sponsors of the conferences.

As usual, Handspring brought out some of its top guns to make its usual effective presentation.

Handspring

Peter Skiller, one of Handspring's founders, discussed some of the company's newest products well as some of its market strategy.

He demonstrated the latest versions of Treo, which can include instant email, web access, and GPSR.

Skiller said that Handspring spends a lot of time and energy developing its products. Just getting the right tactile touch for the keys called for lots of prototypes and many failures.

He said that to develop a product, the company must make many prototypes and test them. The failures must hit during the early stages of development before it becomes too costly to correct them.

He also argued that, "It's best to encourage wild ideas and to defer judgment. We're all too good at criticism. What we really need to avoid is stifling creativity."

Skiller's company uses the Palm Operating System for its handhelds and prefers to pay Palm a license fee rather than develop its own operating system. As for Microsoft's Windows operating system for handhelds, Skinner insists that Microsoft has yet to create a compelling product. "You don't need Windows in your handheld." For Microsoft "to have gotten it right, it should have started from scratch," he argued. The Palm O. S. controls eighty per-cent of the U.S. market, and Skiller doesn't think anything is going to make much of a change in that percentage.

Adobe

Mike Riley of Adobe demon-

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

(COMDEX/APCUG 2002)

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

strated his company's *Photoshop Elements*, a popular lite version of Photoshop. The program boasts a browser that easily allows the user to find pictures already stored in the computer. With *Elements*, it is possible to select multiple pictures and to put them together in a group and then name the group and date the individual pictures within the group.

The program also allows the user to click any tool to open a window that will guide the user through the use of that tool. Frames can be animated or can be stitched together to create a panoramic picture. Pictures can be loaded onto a CD and then shown on a monitor or screen. They can be printed individually or as a contact sheet.

Adobe also demonstrated *In-Design*, a high end Page-Maker aimed at pros. Riley called *In-Design* "the most advanced publishing program out there."

Microsoft

Alan Chitlik again headed Microsoft's excellent presentation. Much of the presentation was about the efforts Microsoft has been making to expand, yet simplify the various computerized media devices within the home. Mark Prendergast discussed the *Windows XP Media Center*, which is designed to transform the home computer into an entertainment center. It allows the

user to "view, navigate, and find TV programs to watch or record, play music and videos, view photos, and adjust volume levels," all with one remote control. For more information about Media Center, go to www.microsoft.com/windows/mediacenter.

Of course, the question remains: will people want to use their computers for home entertainment? Anyway, to find out, they will have to buy a new computer since the XP Media Center works only on some new computers.

Wireless broadband laptop computers were also demonstrated. A Microsoft representative sitting at my table let me fool around with his laptop. Without being plugged into anything, the laptop was able to bring up both my daughter's and my homeowners association's websites. For more information about Microsoft and user groups, go to mindshare@microsoft.com. User group members can also subscribe to Mindshare Monthly at that address.

Windows Movie Maker 2.0, was also discussed. The program automatically synchs video and music and appears to do so without much effort on the user's part. *Digital Image Pro*, a program very much like Adobe's *Photoshop Elements*, was also discussed, and a copy was given to each person attending the Microsoft presentation.

Logitech

Logitech's **io** was another of the

more interesting products demonstrated at the conference. The **io** is a fat pen that is used to write on specially prepared paper. The pen picks up and stores up to forty pages of digital signals from the pad. When finished, the writer sticks the pen into a pen holder attached to his computer, and the computer stores whatever was written exactly as it was written. While the computer cannot convert handwriting into type, the **io** would be ideal for people like this writer who would prefer to store notes from meetings in a computer rather than in manila files. A scanner can do the same job but would be much more cumbersome to use. At \$200 for the **io**, the product is a bit pricey, especially since a pad of paper could cost an additional eight to ten dollars. But one thing is sure, at a meeting, an **io** would cause more eyes to turn than a fancy and more expensive Montblanc. ♦

NOTICE

The columns, reviews and other expressions of opinion in *User Friendly* are the opinions of the writers and not necessarily those of the Los Angeles Computer Society. LACS became a California non-profit corporation on July 17, 1991. ♦



TIPS 'N Tricks

Compiled by **Charlotte Semple**, LACS President

CREATING YOUR OWN BACKUP DISK

Windows 9 x and Me allow you to create a floppy disk to start your system in case anything goes wrong with your hard drive. The start-up disk boots your PC into MS-DOS and contains various diagnostic and repair tools.

Windows 2000 and XP take a different approach to booting in PC emergencies. Some of their solutions don't even require a floppy. For instance, if Windows 2000 or XP hangs while loading, simply reboot and press F8 as your PC begins to reload the operating system to see a menu of boot options (you may have to press F8 twice to get the full menu). Your best option for restoring your PC is probably to select Last Known Good Configuration. If this choice doesn't work, try selecting Safe Mode. Keep in mind that your mouse won't work on this menu; you must use your keyboard's arrow keys. Such non-floppy restoration methods rely on Windows itself, however. If Windows won't even start to boot, you'll need a boot disk. Here's how to make one:

Start with a blank, formatted floppy disk. It may seem counterintuitive, but this disk shouldn't be bootable. If you need to format a floppy, simply insert the disk into its drive, double-click My Computer, right-click the floppy drive icon, select Format, and then click Start. Next, open your C:

drive in Windows Explorer. If Explorer displays a warning, click Show the contents of this folder. To display the particular files you need, select Tools, Folder Options, then click the View tab. Make sure Show hidden files and folders is selected, and uncheck Hide protected operating system files (Recommended). At the warning, click Yes, then OK.

Copy the files [boot.ini](#), [ntdetect.com](#), and [ntldr](#) to your floppy. Remove the disk, open the write-protect switch in its bottom-left corner, and label the floppy "Boot Disk." Return to the Folder Options dialog box and recheck Hide protected operating system files and folders (Recommended). Place this floppy in the drive and reboot your system. Your PC will bypass the basic boot files on your hard drive, but it will otherwise load Windows normally.

PRINT YOUR ADDRESS BOOK

Do you think handheld PCs are overkill? If you use Outlook Express, you can take all of your contact information with you and access it instantly, anywhere, with paper. Outlook Express's address book prints out a nifty little report with some or all of your contacts. Press Ctrl-Shift-B to open the address book; select the identity, group, or individual contact you want to carry around in your pocket; and click the Print button. To include all contact information in your report, choose Business Card under Print Styles; or choose Phone List to print just names and phone numbers.

Then click Print.

FINDING YOUR E-MAIL IN-BOX

Where your messages are stored. E-mail programs rarely make it easy to find stored messages or to locate your (even more valuable) address book. Even if you know where the files are, getting your e-mail program to open them can be tough. Here's how to back up or move your e-mail messages and address book contacts in Outlook, Outlook Express, and Netscape Mail/Messenger:

Outlook:

By default, Outlook stores your e-mail, contacts, appointments, notes, and tasks in a single file called [outlook.pst](#). In Windows 9 x, this file is usually located in the C:\Windows\Application\Data\Microsoft\Outlook folder. In Windows 2000 and XP, Outlook stores the file in the folder C:\Documents and Settings\username\Local Settings\Application Data\Microsoft\Outlook, where 'username' is your Windows XP user account (logon) name. You can also find the file by choosing Start, Search in Windows XP, OR, Start, Find in earlier Windows versions, and then searching for outlook.pst. Be careful, if more than one user logs on to the PC, it may contain multiple outlook.pst files. Once you've located the file, use Windows Explorer or your favorite backup program to copy it, move it, or back it up.

Outlook Express:

Outlook Express 6 stores the

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(TIP 'N TRICKS)*CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)*

contents of your in-box in a file that's called inbox.dbx. To find it and navigate to it quickly, open Outlook Express, select Inbox in the Folders pane, and choose File, Properties. Your file's location will appear in the resulting dialog box. Alternatively, you can find this folder path by opening your address book and clicking Help, About Address Book. Simply select the entire file path (including the part that scrolls out of sight) up to, but not including, 'inbox.dbx'. Press Ctrl- C, choose Start, Run, and press Ctrl- V to paste the file path into the Open field. Press Enter and you'll be staring at an Explorer window with the folder's contents.

Netscape or Mozilla Mail:

These two sibling programs store data files in accordance with similar logic. To navigate to your mail folders in either program, select Local Folders in the left panel and then click the View settings for this account link. At the bottom of the resulting dialog box, you'll find a field that displays the path to these folders. As described in the Outlook Express tip above, copy and paste this text into the Start menu's Run dialog box to open the folder in Explorer. Both Mozilla and Netscape store every mail folder's contents in a separate file, each with a simple and clear name--such as Inbox, Drafts, or Sent--without a file name extension.

IDENTIFYING VIRUS HOAXES:**Detect the undetectable.**

Beware of warnings that claim a virus is undetectable. In general, if you keep your antivirus software up-to-date, your system will nab the latest viruses.

Study the subject.

If the e-mail message's subject line includes words such as "Urgent," "Warning," or even "Virus Alert," it's often a good indication that you're dealing with a hoax. Read the e-mail message with great skepticism, not great urgency.

Beware of tech talk.

Look out for pseudo-technical discussions on the dangers of the virus. Some hoax messages include pure gobbledygook.

Check the sources.

To create an aura of credibility, a hoax often quotes a well-known company or agency, such as Microsoft, the Federal Communications Commission, or an antivirus company. Check the Web sites of the sources quoted (or see your antivirus vendor's site). Remember also that Microsoft never posts virus alerts via e-mail.

Scrutinize the instructions.

Beware of messages that insist you delete a file manually. True, at times you should do so, but in the context of the other tip-offs, this instruction should raise a red flag.

Don't spread the word.

False alerts always urge you to tell everyone you know. Genuine alerts never do. Ignore the instructions, delete the mes-

sage, and don't alarm everyone on your mailing list.

COMPOSITING (LAYERING TWO IMAGES INTO ONE).

A lot of pictures don't turn out quite right. When we shoot digitally, we're not wasting film; we're just using a few extra electrons to experiment. Sometimes we get lucky with an unexpectedly great photo. Most of the time we are experimenting with our cameras. This usually means that you have a large stockpile of not-so-great photos on your hard disk. Why not experiment further by loading a few of these photos into your favorite image editor, and see if you can manipulate them into something more memorable?

Pick Two Photos, Any Two.

The idea behind a composite is simple: You layer two images so both of them contribute to the final photo. When most people think of compositing, they imagine reducing the Layer Opacity of the top image until the one underneath shows through. That's one way, but there is another technique. Start by finding two photos that you think might go together to make a great shot and load them into your image editor (Paint Shop Pro is a good one, but this works in most programs).

Copy and Layer

Using Paint Shop Pro, make sure the Layer Palette control is on screen. Most other programs will have a similar button in the toolbar. Click on your first photo and choose Edit, Copy. Click on the sec-

ond photo and choose Edit, Paste, AS New Layer. You may think the second photo has disappeared, but it is still there. To check, drag the Layer Opacity slider in the right window of the Layer Palette towards 0 percent. You will see the first photo disappear and the second one appear. When you're done checking, make sure that the transparency slider is set back at 100 percent.

Blend It

In the Layer Palette hold down the Ctrl key, right-click Layer One, and select Properties. Try resetting the Blend Mode and you'll see a menu of options appear. Experiment with the choices — something should appeal to you.

Different kinds of images work best with other blend modes, so experimentation is not just fun, it's important. Compositing just might breathe new life into some of your old photos.

◆



Bug-Bear Warning – A Dangerous Computer Worm

By **Ira Wilsker**, Golden Triangle PC Club

I started writing this week's column on freeware utilities. I just checked my email again, and so far, I have received over 40 copies of the highly dangerous and recently released BugBear computer worm, also being referred to as the Tanatos worm. According to reports published in recent days in the computer media, BugBear has surpassed the infamous Klez in becoming the fastest spreading computer worm or virus in history. Trend and Panda, two major providers of free online virus scans, each now report that nearly 20% of computers infected with malicious code now have the BugBear worm. The Helsinki based antivirus and computer security firm F-Secure rates the BugBear worm as the worst current computer security outbreak. Symantec, publisher of the popular Norton AntiVirus rates the threat as "severe." McAfee considers the risk as "high."

CHARACTERISTICS

This new worm, or piece of code, is written in the common and popular C++ language, and combines the worst of the Badtrans virus, the Klez worm, and a backdoor Trojan into one extremely dangerous program. Capable of destroying both antivirus software and firewall protection on an infected computer, this nefari-

ous program can also spread rapidly through a network to all computers connected, and through email utilizing its own integral mail program.

ENTRY

Just like the Klez, which until the recent introduction of the BugBear, had been the most rapidly spread virus or worm, BugBear targets the highly publicized security holes in Microsoft's web browser Internet Explorer versions 5, 5.5, and 6, as well as Microsoft's popular email programs Outlook and Outlook Express. Despite the fact that Microsoft released a heavily promoted patch to close these holes about a year ago, and is included in "Windows Update" integral in all versions of Windows since Windows 95 (click on START – WINDOWS UPDATE while online, and download the customized and free "Critical Update" compiled by Microsoft), millions of Windows users have never installed the patch. Now, in exchange for their complacency, these users are at extreme risk of having their personal information stolen by hackers. There is a real chance of having their identity stolen (referred to in law enforcement as "Identity Theft"), private or confidential information accessed, credit card and banking information compromised, and any files on the hard drive available to a hacker to read, modify, or delete at will.

EASILY ACTIVATED

The BugBear, just like the Klez,

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(BUG BEAR WARNING)*(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7)*

Yaha, and similar variants, can be activated by simply opening an email containing the malevolent code, or allowing the infected email to appear in the preview pane of any of the unpatched versions of Outlook or Outlook Express. With email programs other than the Outlook series, opening the attachment containing the worm will infect the users' computer.

Once infected, antivirus and firewall utilities will be crippled, with no indication of that fact being noticeable by the user. BugBear will then attempt to replicate itself both by repeatedly emailing itself to addresses in the user's address book (the idea of beginning an email address with "!0000" to prevent this is a HOAX), using a variety of subjects, email content, and attachments, as well as sending itself out over a network to all computers so connected.

Using the popular human engineering technique of sending the infected emails to addresses in the victim's address book, the malignant messages will appear to be from a person known to the recipient. Multiple references to the worm are written to the registry and ".INI" files, ensuring that BugBear is loaded each time the computer is booted. There are no clearly visible indications to the user that a computer is infected. Once installed on the victim computer, a utility to capture the user's keystrokes is activated, enabling a hacker to see user names, passwords, credit card

numbers, and any other information or data entered. A "backdoor Trojan" is activated allowing access to the infected machine, the downloading of the keystrokes by the hacker, and unrestricted access to all files and documents on the computer. Since BugBear itself is transparent, and not apparently destructive, the user will likely never know his computer is infected, and outsiders can access his computer remotely. Antivirus software will still appear to be loaded and updated, and firewalls will appear to function, but in reality they will be useless.

PREVENTION

What is a shame is that this infection is easily preventable. Properly updated Microsoft files have significant immunity to the infection. Frequently updated antivirus software offers excellent protection, but only if updated with the BugBear information prior to the infection. Practicing "safe hex" and deleting suspicious emails and attachments before they can appear in a preview pane can greatly reduce the chance of infection.

The free online scans available at housecall.antivirus.com and www.pandasoftware.com can detect and kill Bugbear. Most major antivirus publishers, including Symantec (Norton), F-Prot, and Panda have free utilities available for download that can detect and kill BugBear.

POSSIBLE VARIATIONS

Since BugBear is written in the common C++ language, it is likely that some wicked programmers may modify the

code, and create variants to get around the protections offered by recently updated antivirus software, just as what happened with many variants of the Klez worm.

It is a darn shame that I have to do so many columns on the topic of high-tech vandalism, but BugBear is especially insidious. I hope that next week, I can write my column on the topics I originally planned, rather than warning all of you about some new danger.

Ira belongs to, the Golden Triangle PC Club, has a radio show and writes a column for the examiner, and is on the Board of Advisors for APCUG as well as a faculty member of the Lamar Institute. You can email him ira@apcug.org. This article is brought to you by the Editorial, Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs. ♦

Welcome To You All**New Member (1)**

Jerry Schultz

RENEWING MEMBERS (12)

Mel Ader

Elena Beck

Loye Bohannon

♥ Jack DeCamp

♥ William Garber

Dan Ginsburg

♥ Herbert Gross

Laurie Hiney

Bill Hughes

Doug Mechaber

Karl Springer

Elizabeth Weinberger

♥ Contributing Member ♦

January 2003 into February 2003

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 January	2	3	4
6 Board meeting 7 PM sharp	7 Daytime SIG 12 PM (lunch) Office SIG 7 PM	8	9 Genealogy SIG 7 PM	10	11
13	14 General Meeting 7 PM Forum 6:00 PM	15 Internet/ e-mail SIG not meeting today.	16 Membership Committee 7 PM	17	18
20	21 Daytime SIG 1 PM Hardware SIG 7 PM	22	23	24	25
27 Digital Photo SIG 7 PM	28	29	30	31	1 February
3 Board meeting 7 PM sharp	4 Daytime SIG 12 PM (lunch) Office SIG 7. PM	5	6	7	8

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs)

SIG meetings are run by and for LACS members. Visitors are welcome to attend up to six SIG meetings (three of the same SIG) before joining LACS. To inquire about a SIG, please call or e-mail the contact person in advance. SIG Coordinator: Vacant, sig.coord@lacspc.org.

SIG	Contact	Telephone	When and Where, Notes
After Meeting	Cap Kierulff	310-472-9206	Dinah's Restaurant on Sepulveda, southwest of Centinela.
Beginners	Dorothy Miliman	310-473-1391	4th Tuesday, 7 PM. Cal. Fed. Community Room (basement)
Computer Forum	Beginners Welcome		2nd Tuesday, 6:00 PM before General Meeting. Front of hall.
Daytime	Cap Kierulff	310-472-9206	First Tuesday, 12-1:30 PM, Golden China Restaurant, L.A
Digital Photo	Helen Karagozian	310-454-3426	capk@juno.com Third Tuesday, 1-3 PM, Felicia Mahood Center, W.L.A. helenk2@earthlink.net. 4th Monday, 7 PM American Legion
Genealogy	Leah & Joe Clark	310-677-2792	Hall, 5309 Sepulveda Blvd., Culver City Second Thursday, 7 PM once a quarter at the Clark's home lclark@ucla.edu.
Hardware	Charlie Semple	310-398-5052	Third Tuesday, 7 PM, Cal. Fed. * csemple93@earthlink.net
Internet/e-mail	Patsy Bellah	310-280-0951	Third Wednesday 7 PM at American Legion Hall, 5309 Sepulveda Blvd., Culver City
Investment	Stephanie Nordlinger	323-299-3244	TBA If interested, Call or e-mail pastpres@lacspc.org.
Membership	Bert Stock	818-905-1756	Third Thursday, 7 PM. Call or e-mail 74274.2312@compuserve.com, for location.
Office Suites	George Wolkon	310-459-2671	First Tuesday 7 PM. Cal. Fed.* wolkon.gbvolkon@verizon.net

* California Federal Bank Community room (in the basement), 12101 San Vicente Blvd. (at Saltair), Brentwood, \$1/meeting donation requested for room rental at Cal Fed and at American Legion Hall. ♦

Members Helping Members

LACS members volunteer to help other members solve hardware and software problems by telephone during the hours listed below. Select the topic from the list and then call a person whose number is listed next to it. We hope that you find this free service useful. ***If you are experienced in a particular program or topic, please volunteer to be a consultant.*** To volunteer for this list or to make corrections, please e-mail editor@lacspc.org or call Dick Smith at (323) 294-3441. More Quick Consultants are always needed. You can always decline or postpone a call if it catches you at the wrong time. You perform a valuable service and often learn something unexpected! ♦

Adobe Acrobat - 47	Microsoft Access - 48	Printing - 42, 43
America Online - 20, 44	Microsoft Excel - 7, 49, 51	Procomm + - 24
Ami Pro, WordPro - 14	Microsoft FoxPro - 27,48	QModem, QMPro - 24
Basic - 8, 48	Microsoft Office - 41, 43	QuickBooks - 14, 37
C++ - 27	Microsoft Power Point - 49	Quicken - 14, 20
Communications - 24	Microsoft Publisher - 14, 32, 33	Speed Read - 24
Data Bases - 48	Microsoft Word - 9,43, 49	Terminate - 24
Genealogy - 20, 34	Microsoft Works - 32, 34, 44	TurboTax - 14
GoldMine - 41	Modems - 24	Unix - 48
Graphics - 33	Netscape - 43	Viruses - 46, 48
Hardware - 7, 41, 42, 43, 48	Networks - 7, 41, 48	Windows - 7, 32, 48
Internet - 43, 44, 45, 48	OLX - 24	Windows 95/98 - 7, 41,43, 48
LA FreeNet - 14, 24	OnTime - 1, 20	WordPerfect - 1, 20, 33
Linux - 48	PhotoDeluxe, Adobe - 50	WordPro - 14 ♦

No.	Name	Daytime Phone	Eves/Weekends	From	To
1	Broido, Joe	310-829-3736	310-829-3736	9 AM-10P M	
7	Greenberg, Allan	310-576-1310	310-576-1310	10 AM-10 PM	
8	Heller, Elmer	310-839-9764	310-839-9764	9 AM-10 PM	
9	Hershman, Irv	310-397-9453	310-397-9453	11 AM-11 PM	
14	Kammerman, Cora	310-472-7487	310-472-7487	10 AM-8 PM	
20	Nordlinger, Stephanie	323-299-3244	323-299-3244	9 AM-10 PM	
24	Springer, Karl	310-645-3410	310-645-3410	10 AM-10 PM	
27	Rombouts, Tom	310-519-2941	310-519-2941	6 AM-11 PM	
32	LaVere, Hy	310-837-6517	310-837-6517	10 AM-9 PM	
33	Kierulff, Cap	310-472-9206	310-472-9206	9 AM-9 PM	
34	McDonald, Len	310-836-8698	310-836-8698	9 AM-10 PM	
36	Hage, Elias	310-815-8020	310-815-8020	9 AM-10 PM	
37	Ganz, Bill	310-360-7088	310-360-7088	9 AM-9 PM	
41	Engfer, Mark	N.A.	310-451-1942	5 PM-10 PM	
42	Theodore, Carol	310-659-0604	N.A.	9 AM-5 PM	
43	Semple, Charlie	310-398-5052	310-398-5052	9 AM-10 PM	
44	Lang, Bobbi	310-454-9903	310-454-9903	10 AM-5 PM	
45	Gibson, Merrill	310-785-9487	N.A.	9 AM-5 PM	
46	Martin, Todd	818-766-1151	818-766-1151	10 AM-10 PM	
47	Gold, Mike	N.A.	310-379-8321	6 PM-10 PM	
48	Flores, Alexys	N.A.	310-306-8403	8 PM-11 PM*	
49	Beckman, Loling	310-471-7893	N.A.	9 AM-5 PM	
50	Silverstein, Elliot	310-670-1544	310-670-1544	10 AM-10 PM	
51	Katz, Effie (Pager)	310-785-3313	310-785-3313	9 AM-10 PM	

*Weekend: 3 PM-10 PM ♦

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Software for Review

By **Stephanie Nordlinger**,
LACS

Members can get free software in exchange for writing reviews for *User Friendly* and our website. Be a published author! Almost anyone can write a good review, and we supply guidelines and editors to help you. Some products will make you more productive, while others are just for fun. Members wanting to review something make a deposit (usually a check) in the amount shown (the approximate list price of the product, without tax or discounts) that will be returned uncashed if you submit a printable review.

Can't come to meetings? If you want to review a product, some of these programs can be downloaded, and we will make arrangements to give you others at a convenient time and place. Upload your review. Editing questions can be handled by phone or e-mail. So don't miss this opportunity to expand your knowledge

If you want to review a program shown below, contact the Product Review Coordinator (productreview@lacspc.org) or (323) 299-3244. If you would like to review another program and need a review copy, contact me and I will attempt to obtain one for you. All programs require a 4x- or faster CD ROM drive unless otherwise specified. The editor also accepts well-written reviews of products you obtain by purchase,

etc.

New Programs

Microsoft's Pandora's Box features over 400 original 3-D puzzles from the creator of "Tetris." You can follow the game's story line, jump directly to a puzzle, and play singly or competitively. Pentium 166 and lots of hard drive space needed. (\$20)

Wipe Drive 3.0 from Access Data lets you permanently eliminate individual IDE or SCSI hard drive files or quickly clean whole drives to Department of Defense standards. (\$50)

askSam v. 5 - the latest and greatest version of this data organizer. (www.asksam.com) (\$90).

Discovering Your Hard Drive, Part 1, v. 1.3 from User Group Relations (Gene & Linda Barlow's company). (\$20 deposit) Excerpts from this were presented at a meeting last summer. (www.ugr.com). CD; for special UG price of \$20, contact me for the code.

WatzNew 1.9.5, a personal web portal program for Windows 95 through XP from A.I. Studio. It regularly checks your favorite websites and mailboxes and notifies you of changes. You get the relevant information without banners, ads or graphics, so it is efficient. Needs 32 MB of RAM, 5 MB of HD space. Downloadable. (watznew.com) (\$25)

NaturePainter Digital Canvas 1.0. Would you like to paint but feel you aren't very good at it? Here's a way to try it with no costly materials and the ability

to hide (delete) your mistakes. For artists and art educators. (\$33)

Sammy Surricate 1.45 - Cute 3-D action/puzzle game for all ages. (www.surricate-software.com) Win 9.x-XP, 3D accelerated graphics card, 15 MB of HD space. Downloadable. (\$20)

Essential Net Tools v. 3.1 from TamoSoft, Inc. Win 98 through XP. These are "indispensable" tools for network administrators, security professionals, etc. (www.tamos.com/-products/nettools). Downloadable. (\$29)

Other Programs

Alpha 5 for Windows from Alpha Software. This version of a major database program has been in development for three years and is designed to offer the functionality of MS Access with significantly greater ease of use and the ability to build applications much more rapidly. www.alphasoftware.com. (\$349)

Advanced CATaloguer 2.3, a cataloguer for all removable media files for Windows 95/98/ME/NT 4.0/2000 and XP. It also performs file management tasks, Boolean searches, finds duplicate files on any drive, etc. Be able to access your CDs and other data through easily created databases. (www.evgenysoft.com) (\$35)

Back Up My PC from Stomp, Inc. Award-winning backup software. Many modern features. CD and 158 page manual. (\$70)

Novosoft Inc's **Handy Backup 3.5** for Windows 9x/NT/2000/

Me/XP automatically backs up critical data to virtually any type of storage including CD-R/CD-RW, remote FTP servers, local network drives, ZIP, JAZ, MO, HDD and floppy disks. Designed for a single computer or a network, it can be used to synchronize files between two computers. Its disk spanning option allows backups to be divided among several CD-R/W disks. Award-winning. Downloadable. <http://www.novosoft-us.com> (\$30)

Click'N Design 3d. Are you creative? Create 2D and 3D text and texture mapping. All major CD Label templates are supported. Includes 100's of designs and over 5,000 photos and pieces of clip art. Includes some photo effects. <http://www.stompinc.com>. (\$20)

Screen Creator Deluxe, v. 6. Why just look the Windows logo? Create complex professional quality screen savers quickly. You can add audio files for a background music playlist. <http://www.individualsoftware.com>. (\$30)

XPlay by Mediafour lets you plug an Apple iPod into a Windows computer and transfer MP3 music files back and forth, so that you can organize songs, artists, playlists and albums for on-the-go listening. Automatic synchronization is also available. Even data files and documents can be transferred to an iPod, which Xplay makes appear like a normal hard drive. XPlay was a finalist for Best of PC Expo 2002 (awarded by *PC Magazine*). www.mediafour.com (\$30)

Reviews are grossly overdue from David Trilling (Individual Software's Resume Maker Deluxe) and Carolyn Rosenberg (Family Trees). ♦

Building A Software Library For Your Child

By **Sandra Medlock**; from the Jan, 2002 issue of the PC Ala-mode

If you are a parent or relative interested in providing an educational and entertaining software library for your child, take the time to read reviews and plan your purchases before you invest in several software titles.

FIRST

Take a close look at the age appropriateness of the program. Most "edutainment" software indicates an age range, but you need to study the skills and topics — and know your child's abilities — to make an educated judgment on the purchase. Ask for a demo, if possible, or get online and read several reviews. About 12 months ago, I excitedly purchased a "Magic School Bus" Microsoft two-pack collection, basing my purchase on my daughter's enjoyment of the MSB books and cartoons. Big mistake. I saw the age recommendation of 6-10, but it didn't sink in. After installing the program, we spent a couple of frustrating hours, maneuvering around games and lessons that were beyond her skills and reading ability. Now both CDs sit on the shelf, waiting for her to grow into them. Every three months or so, she tries them again, and I see her skills and understanding improving, but the frustration level is still high, and they're certainly not

games with which she can entertain herself.

SECOND

Know your computer specifications when you're shopping for software. Know which version of Windows is running on your computer, how much RAM you have, and whether or not you have a 3D accelerator card, and what speed the CD player can handle. Check the program's minimum hardware requirements listed on the side of the box. If your computer is the same as the minimum requirements, don't buy the software ... you won't be happy with the performance. Try to buy software for which your computer meets or exceeds the recommended requirements. Recently a dad came to a computer class I was teaching and told me he had bought several software titles from a discount bin for his children to use. To his chagrin, he found out after he opened the packages that he had bought Windows 95/98 titles, but his old computer was only a 386 that used Windows 3.11. His story had a happier ending than some ... he bought a newer, faster computer and everyone's happy with the computer performance and the software.

THIRD

Try to avoid impulse buying. Take time to read reviews, ask parents and teachers for recommendations, and know what your child likes before investing twenty or thirty dollars in a program. For example, some characters like

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 14)

Reader Rabbit, Sam the Lion, Arthur, or Madeline may interest a child for several years while others like Barney or Bear in the Big Blue House are outgrown shortly. And tell yourself (or your child!) that you don't have to buy every title you see. If you've ever visited the software section of a warehouse club, you'll know what I'm talking about. Almost every established children's character has its own version of reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic games at various age levels. While you'll want some variety in titles, you don't really need twelve different characters' takes on phonics or first grade math. You'll see from the following reviews that I depend on a few multi-disc titles to provide variety.

FOURTH

Do you plan your video/DVD library or children's book library carefully? The same type of reasoned, balanced thinking goes into planning the software library. You want a balanced mixture of titles: edutainment, interactive story-telling, perhaps some art and music development, and plain old arcade-like fun. You'll usually get a good variety with about ten titles, particularly if they're multi-disk sets. I try to buy the deluxe editions or combination packs, which generally contain two or more CDs. This provides variety and in some cases growth paths, where the child moves from, say, pre-school level to kindergarten level activities. The Sesame Street Toddler Deluxe edition, for example, contains three

disks — one an art workshop of coloring, costuming, and stamping, and the other two covering the alphabet and numbers -- that have provided almost four years of entertainment and education.

FIFTH

Don't plan on using the software as a babysitter. Know that the young child will need your assistance each time a new software title or topic is introduced, while older children may need assistance understanding the instructions and levels. Together you will explore how to use the program, and in many cases, you'll act as an extra set of eyes and ears to solving the mystery or puzzle. Once the child is comfortable with the program, you'll be called back frequently to see the latest art masterpiece, how he or she got to the top level, or the silly behavior of the title characters. I monitor my daughter's skill level, and if she seems to be breezing through an edutainment program, I'll move her to the next level of difficulty. Or if she's playing a game while I'm preparing dinner, I'll make sure she's on a level that's not too difficult and frustrating, so that she can easily entertain herself for a short period. And then there's the ubiquitous mouse freezes and blue screens that you must resolve...

SHOPPING

When shopping for children's software, compare prices between brick-and-mortar and online stores. Most variety and toy stores carry software titles in addition to the electronic

stores. Software and electronic stores frequently offer bargain bins and closeout buys while warehouse stores provide values and rebates on multi-packs and deluxe editions. There are several sites on the Internet that offer bargains in software; if you're unfamiliar with any, do a search engine search for the title you're looking for and some of these sites will turn up in the top ten. Check the software publisher's site to see if they're offering specials in their online store. If you're looking for a specific title or older program that someone recommends, check the auction sites for used or closeout bargains. [As always, when buying software at an online auction, verify the legitimacy of the titles you're buying. Look for offers with registerable, original packaging so that you get instructions and booklets, or buy only sealed packages. Be careful in substituting inexpensive, shareware-type titles. (see my comments in the interactive books review.)] Now that you have some ideas on planning your child's software library, go in search of the bargains!

Sandra Medlock is a corporate computer trainer and SIG leader for Alamo PC, as well as a dedicated mom. Her daughter's first computer program was Sheila Rae the Brave and her first Internet experience was visiting the PBS Teletubbies web page. ♦

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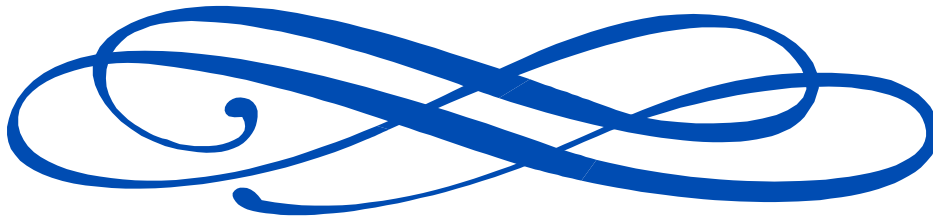
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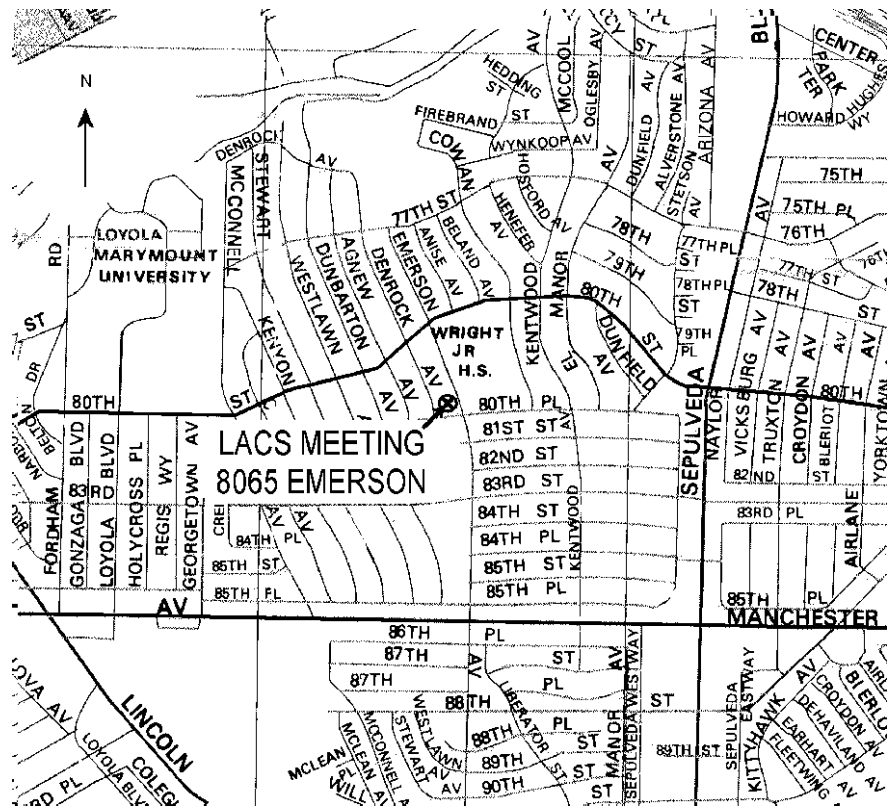
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