

## MPCUG prepares to build a computer

The Modesto PC User Group is preparing to build an Intel computer – or computers, depending on how many members want to participate.

Accordingly, Nick Davies, manager of the new PC Club in Modesto, which will supply the parts at a discount, will offer the presentation at the October general meeting. The computer building is scheduled to take place in November.

Davies will be joined by his district manager, Ken Rutherford. The pair will explain how their computer stores differ from others at this month’s meeting on Thursday, Oct. 27.

The PC Club is located just south of Costco in the shopping center at Pelandale Avenue and Sisk Road in Modesto.

The user group will meet as usual at 6:30 p.m. at Destiny Christian Center on Carver Road just south of Roseburg Avenue for its Random Access Special Interest Group. Discussion there offers solutions to members’ everyday computer problems.

The PC Club presentation will follow a break for refreshments at 7:30 p.m.

**For directions to the meeting location see page 10.**

**Next Meeting**  
**Thursday, October 27,**  
**7:30 p.m.**  
**Random Access SIG**  
**6:30 p.m.**

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**Next board meeting**  
Come have dinner with the board, 7 p.m. Wednesday, November 2, Ridgeway’s, Modesto.



## President's Corner . . . . Mike Kumler

Let's start off with the good news. Our Digital Photo SIG is being resurrected! Our own Jim Goodman will take the helm with the help and able assistance of Bud Bondiotti and his equipment. Details are not quite settled, but the SIG will tentatively meet on Saturday (perhaps the second Saturday of each month), and, if the facility is available, the meeting place will be at Denny's restaurant at 1525 Mc Henry Ave., Modesto.

Next we will cope with our ongoing need for set-up/tear-down help. One detail at a time.

I am eagerly awaiting our Intel "build yourself a computer" program. This will be the program for November's general meeting. We will then choose another day to actually build a computer. It sounds very exciting and I hope more than one of us will want to build one. I know a couple of members have expressed interest—we will see. Don't forget, the retailer PC Club is partnering with Intel in this presentation and offers quite a good price for the components. Representatives will appear at the October meeting.

The November general meeting will have to be moved since the fourth Thursday is Thanksgiving. We are in the process of verifying that is ok with the church and then will issue a formal notice.

Well that's about it for this month. We should all thank Jim and Bud for agreeing to keep the Digital Photo SIG alive—I am so glad. If you know someone who shares our interests and is not a member, why not invite them to a meeting? Don't forget we are all about "users helping users," and our club is an excellent way to be exposed to the latest and greatest in computing hardware and applications.

Until our next meeting—HAPPY COMPUTING

## Membership Report . . . . Hank Mudge

### **New members - Welcome to the club:**

None

### **Renewals - Thank you for your continued support:**

None

### **Members Dues Expiring in October:**

Dorothy Libby - Vivian Neuman - George McMahon - Leonard Olives - Amberse Banks  
Sid Loshier - Glenn Davis

## SIG Meeting Dates

**Digital Photo SIG** - Stay tuned for new time and date

**Beginners' SIG** - Denny's 1525 McHenry Ave, Modesto ..... Second Monday of the month

**Random Access Q & A** - Destiny Christian Center, Modesto ..... Fourth Thursday of the month prior to general meeting

Be sure and check our web site for last minute information [www.mpcug.net](http://www.mpcug.net)

# Club Notes . . . . Club members, Officers

## Meeting Location Help

By Jim Goodman

We need volunteers to assist with the following chores prior to and after each meeting. By performing these tasks, we meet the church's criteria for keeping our meeting costs down:

Prior to the meeting:

Set up projector screen. Move chairs to back of room. Move tables.

After the meeting:

Put away projector screen. Return chairs. Move tables back. Clean up room. Take trash out and replace plastic bags

If you can assist with these tasks, please show up early and be willing to stay late.

## Treasurer's Report . . . . Barb Cameron

<u>Income</u>	Modesto PC User Group Financial Statement	<u>Expenses</u>
Membership	\$ 72.00	No Expenses for September
Interest on Savings	\$ 0.03	
Donations	<u>\$ 0.00</u>	

<b>Current Assets</b>	
Checking - US Bank, Modesto	\$ 1,801.91
Savings, US Bank, Modesto	<u>\$ 332.12</u>
	\$ 2,134.03
Fixed Assets	<u>\$ 0.00</u>
Total Club Assets	\$ 2,134.03

## Have you ever wondered?

What makes my computer tick? Just what does the inside of my computer look like? How hard would it be to build my own computer?

If these and other questions have ever crossed your mind, then next month will be a meeting not to miss. Intel Corporation will be providing a presentation on building your own computer with the opportunity to purchase a good quality computer in a kit and then a seminar to build it as a group.

Intel is a well known manufacturer of computer chips and in conjunction with PC Club has provided a package so you can build your very own computer. In a two-part seminar, at the general meeting in November, we will view a PowerPoint presentation on what to look for when purchasing a new computer and how to decide on what features you need or want.

After the general meeting, you will be given the website address for PC Club, and you can go online and order your computer at substantial savings. Then at a special meeting within 30 days of the November general meeting, we will gather at a soon-to-be-discussed location and do the workshop seminar which will involve putting the computer together in a group atmosphere with helpers for those of us who aren't ready to charge ahead and build it on our own. Look for more details in next month's Post and on the club's website.

# Claude's Bytes

By Claude Delphia, Editor Emeritus, Modesto PC User Group — [EdEmer@mpcug.net](mailto:EdEmer@mpcug.net)

## Hard drive upgrade •

## CompUSA buyer beware •

**Hard drive upgrade** — As I explained in my last column, I was considering installing a new hard drive rather than trying to fix the programs on my old one (18 months old) because of the cheapness of the newer drives. They are also bigger and faster.

So about the time you were reading that article, I had begun the process. Of course it wasn't as easy as I'd hoped. It never is, is it? So here are some of the problems and considerations.

The first thing was getting the drive in. That pretty much went as planned. No unusual problems. That said, it became clear, after the installation was started, that not just anyone can consider this option. Unless you've opened up your computer and done a hard drive installation before, **don't** consider it an option. At the very least, you need to have a friend or someone knowledgeable to help you. If you have to pay someone else to install it, the economics start to change. It may be easier and less expensive to fix your existing drive.

Now for the actual setup for the new drive. I did leave the old drive in the computer as a second drive. That way all my old files are still there ready to access. I did do a complete backup of my data, so I had personal data files well covered against loss.

Remember that there is no value in backing up the programs from your old drive. All programs must be completely reinstalled from scratch on the new drive and you must have the original program CDs. If you don't, then redoing your old drive is not an option either. All current Windows software must be installed from scratch. There are so few exceptions that it isn't worth considering.

This brings us to the new setup of the hard drive and the problems that you can run into. As previously mentioned, having all your original software available is a must. You also must have your software keys. These are the codes, usually on the original software, that are tied to the CDs as a code which confirms that you own the software and that it is properly licensed. You might in some cases be able to install without the software key, but most likely not. Also you may need to reregister with Microsoft or wherever your software came from. This is no big deal as long as you have the correct information for each program.

Before I put in the new drive, I made a list of all the software installed on the old drive. I was also able to get many of the software keys from the old programs by looking in the "About" box that is found in most software.

I was pretty well convinced, without an actual inventory, that I had all the software at hand. But that turned out to be wrong. I was missing my original box and discs for Quicken. So I had to go and buy that. It was only \$29, so that was a big deal. I don't know where the original box went to. It might even have been a download but I had no info on that. Without the software key, it didn't make any difference.

Of course doing all this taught me a few lessons. For example, as I had learned in the past, setting up a new hard drive isn't just an issue of reinstalling the software. That just takes a lot of time for the disks and software to do their thing. If you have a fast computer, it won't take that long depending on the number of programs you have.

*(Claude's Bytes Continued on page 9)*

# Indexing the Web: Spiders, Web Crawlers & Bots

By Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D., Sarasota PC Monitor, Sarasota FL PC Users Group —[www.spcug.org](http://www.spcug.org)

Have you ever wondered how search engines such as Google manage to get the answers to your queries so rapidly? How could they search the web that fast, I mean usually less than one second to find the words you ask for? Well --- They don't. Actually the searching goes on constantly, 24/7. And, the mechanism they use is just a modification of what you use for browsing the web.

Although you may have heard about spiders, web crawlers and web bots, they don't actually traverse the web any more than does your web browser (Internet Explorer or Firefox or whatever browser you use). Instead they download web pages that are then scanned and the significant words added to an index.

To simplify the terminology, I will refer to all the web searching programs as “spiders”. (It takes less space and is easier to type.) These spiders are programs designed to find web addresses (URL's) and to download the pages. Some also do the indexing of the words on the page. However, Google uses a separate indexing program and stores the downloaded pages for future reference. Now if a single spider were being used to locate and download pages, the task would really be impossible. Sergey Brin and Lawrence Page, the originators of Google, published a paper while they were graduate students at Stanford that utilized three spiders. Each spider kept about 300 connections open simultaneously. With four spiders they could download about 600 pages per second. This paper referred to the prototype that became the commercial Google enterprise. Even with the prototype system they were able to download and index 24 million pages in a week. Their current methodology is proprietary and so is not public, but it is probably a significant improvement over their prototype system.

We can use the original Google system as a model of what could be used by search engines to prepare the index and database of web pages that you access when you send a query. The first step is to send a list of URLs to the spider to download. This is done by a server that maintains a list of URLs. The spider will download pages and also follow any hyperlinks to other pages. Addresses of pages that were linked to the original search list are also sent back to the server to be checked to see if they were already on the list. If not, they are added to the URL lists. Not every spider uses a URL server. The spider will continue crawling the web until it reaches a dead end or a page with no further links.

As I mentioned earlier, a spider isn't just working with one page, but has hundreds of connections open to different pages. Given that there are billions of pages on the Web, even with thousands of spiders collecting information, only a small fraction of the entire web is scanned. Some web sites, such as those with news or rapidly changing information are visited hourly. Every spider has a re-visitation policy that determines how frequently a page will be revisited and checked for changes.

There is another general policy that is usually programmed into these spiders. That is called the “politeness” policy. This is used to prevent the overloading of web sites. After all, there is a finite limit to bandwidth and it would be possible to overwhelm a web site with visits from multiple spiders in a short period of time. This policy provides for an interval of time to elapse between accesses by a spider. This time interval seems to vary from 20 seconds to 3-4 minutes. This would be the case where multiple pages need to be downloaded from a single server. Revisiting indexed and stored web sites occurs at less frequent intervals.

However, even this politeness policy is sometimes inadequate. Frequent visits by spiders may result in complaints being sent back to the owner of the spider. So it is also possible to enter code on a web page which asks the spider to not access or download a page or pages. This can be done by the addition of meta tags in the page

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*(Indexing the Web— Continued from page 5)*

header or by a robots.txt file placed in the root directory for the web site. This is especially appropriate for game pages. These pages use a dynamic format that changes when pages are viewed or links are followed. When a spider downloads these pages the game program may respond as if a very high-speed player were logged on. This can create problems for the program and may result in crashing the game server. So we now have the robot exclusion protocol being used by owners of web pages that do not want their pages included in the search engine indexing.

In the original Google system the web pages were sent to another program referred to as the indexer. This program sorts through every word on the page and stores them in a database. The exceptions are the simple words such as a, an, the. However, simply entering the words into a database is not sufficient. They have to be identified to the particular page from which they came, the location on that page and a relative ranking in importance. The frequency with which they appear on the page as well as the position on the page may be used in determining the weight or relative rank. Words in the title or near the top of the page may be ranked as more important. So the storage of the words include the URL, and a calculated weight in an encoded format.

The word database is then indexed to speed the retrieval of the information. This is usually done by the building of a Hash Table. Hashing evens out the alphabetical sections so that it takes no longer to find a “z” than it does a more popular letter like “m”. It also separates the index from the actual entry for the word. This improves the efficiency of the storage of this information. The indexing and the Hash Table also speed the overall retrieval of the information. The complete web page is also stored in a separate location. Once the indexing process is completed, the information is available for your query.

Given the size of the web and the continuing changes to web pages, the spider's search is never ending. It may also be one where we will never have every page indexed. One other aspect of the size of the web and the time required for the crawling process is that broken links will always occur. If a page is not re-visited frequently, it may still be in the index and the database long after it has been removed from its server. Another situation may be where the URL has changed and the new location has not yet been crawled. So, the process is not perfect by any means.

The other aspect of searching the web is the design of the query you want to submit to a search engine. As I'm sure you know, you can simply list a few keywords in the search engine and hope you will get a useful result. Many times you will also get results that have no relationship to the information you are seeking. In some of these cases, you need to try the advanced search or learn to use Boolean operators. Those most frequently used are:

AND – all the terms joined by “AND” must appear in the pages or documents.

OR – at least one of the terms joined by “OR” must appear in the pages or documents.

NOT – the term or terms following “NOT” must appear.

Quotation marks – Words between quotation marks must appear as a phrase.

Followed By – one of the terms must be followed by the other.

Near – one of the terms must be within a specified number of words of the other.

Generally, search engines can use these Boolean operators to provide results more closely aligned to the topic you are trying to locate.

Like everything else related to computers, web indexing and searching are not static technologies. The search engine companies are researching “natural language” queries such as those handled by “Ask Jeeves”. Currently, these queries can accommodate only relatively simple phrases. However, there is heavy competition to develop an engine that can work with much more complex queries. Another area that is being pursued is

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# The Mystery of File Extensions Explained

By Dave Gerber, Advisor, Region 1, Dave's Bits & Bytes, A Periodic Newsletter for the Members of the Sarasota PC User Group and the World!! Director, Sarasota PCUG, Florida

[www.spcug.org](http://www.spcug.org) / <http://davebytes.com/>

GIF, JPG, TXT, DOC, HTML, WAV, BMP, ETC

You'll see them over and over again as you encounter manuals, web sites, and anything related to your computer. Tons of file extensions. Whole pickup truck loads of 'em running back and forth on the info highway.

File extensions are easy enough to understand, and with just a bit of history, you'll know everything you need to know about files, and not a bit more.

Back in the DOS days (DOS stands for Disk Operating System), before the invention of Windows, every file had to be named with a maximum of 8 characters, and could include a three letter "file extension."

For example, lets say you want to save that recipe for Quevos Rancheros. You were forced to use a maximum of 8 characters. So you call it queranch. Hmm, in Spanish, that's like, "What ranch?" Or that's a loose translation, at least.

You were limited. Severely. So along comes the long file name. You can use a whole mess of characters now, calling your file "My greatest recipe using eggs and tortillas since the invention of the wheel." The sentence between the quote marks is the name of the file, or "filename."

The stated character limit is 255, but in reality it comes in just a tad under, like 253 or something. The techies can quibble over that. Regardless, it's l-o-n-g. And more than adequate to describe the content of your creation!

Now, notice that many files have extensions. They all do, really. In fact, your computer doesn't know what to do with a file if it doesn't have an extension.

The extension is the three letter part following the main name. (You didn't see an extension on my quevos rancheros example, because I left it off.) Here's an example:

My Word processing report.doc

The ".doc" part of the file's name tells Windows to use the program that's associated with .doc files to open it. So, let's say you've got Microsoft Word installed. Whenever the Windows operating system realizes you've clicked a file with the extension ".doc" it fires up Word, and Word opens the file.

Presto.

There are lots of file extensions. Here's a table for you that includes a few common file types you may encounter during your web travels.

*(Continued on page 8)*

## Common file types

### Extension Type of file

- Txt - Text File, such as Notepad produces
- Doc - Document File, for example, MS Word
- gif - Graphics Interchange Format (graphics)
- Jpg - Joint Photographic Experts Group (graphics)
- Htm - Hypertext Markup (special coded text files)
- Html - Hypertext Markup Language (ditto)
- Zip - Compressed file requiring special software to decompress the file
- Tar - Same as zip. Just another compression style
- Pdf - Portable Document File (universal text file)
- Wav - Sound files
- Bmp - Bitmap files (graphics)

If you try to open a file extension that's unregistered (unregistered means Windows doesn't know what to do with it 'cause there's no association in the Windows Registry), Windows throws the Open With dialog box at you.

This dialog box lets you decide what program to open the file with. For example, I tried to open the file named 'java.usj' and I got this screen as a result. Since nothing on my computer is set up to edit or open a '.usj' file, I have to locate and use a program that "understands" that type of file extension. Now that's another trick altogether!

Commonly, people will send Power Point presentation files or Microsoft Publisher files as attachments to people who don't have Microsoft Office installed on their computer. So those files cannot be viewed unless the appropriate software is installed.

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## *Hackers - Good or Evil*

Are hackers bad? Originally the term "hacker" was used as a compliment in the computer community to denote an expert, especially those who experiment with and use code to improve software and computer performance. In popular usage and in the media, it generally describes computer intruders or criminals.

"Hacking" can be looked at as a collection of skills—like a locksmith's ability to pick locks—it can be used for good or evil.

We realize that the positive definition of hacker was widely used for many years before the negative, and could be considered more authentic. But, we prefer to follow the common popular usage since the positive form is confusing and not likely to overcome the negative connotation. We apologize to all the "good hackers" out there.

**From the Internet**



*(Claude's Bytes—Continued from page 4)*

The real problem, and something of an issue, comes when you quickly realize that you have done a lot of customization of your desk top. The new icons don't go in the same place the old one's were, so I'm still having to look around the screen for some of my program icons. Then there is the setup of the software itself. Many programs have different features that you can set or customize. You lose all those when you reinstall your programs. There may be a way to save these, but I just decided to deal with each program as the issue came up. But it is something to be aware of.

A big example is your Word spelling and quick fixes. The quick fixes are when you type a certain combination, and it puts something else in it's place. I used to have a lot of those. I'd type CD and it would enter Claude Delphia. But redoing these isn't that big a deal.

Visually, things change too. I didn't record the video monitor screen size, so I had to play around with that. And the icons and the font they used were different than I had been used to. We don't usually realize that every time we set things to our own preferences these are recorded on the hard drive we are using.

Starting with a new hard drive means we have to reset all these little things. However, the speed and lack of problems is well worth the effort. It's amazing how well this new hard drive works as opposed to the old one that had so much software garbage. I have no desire to go back to that old hard drive although it is sitting there, and, if I needed to, all I'd have to do is switch the cables and it would start right up. That's another advantage of a new drive. The old one can be a backup if the new one doesn't work for some reason.

**Buyer beware** — Watch out for CompUSA's come-on ads. I've found that they change conditions on sale items. One day an item will be delivery only, the next, within the sale period, will be in-store purchase only. I got trapped on this twice, but no more.

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←  
*(Indexing the web—Continued from page 6)*

“concept-based” searching. This would use a form of statistical analysis to determine if the page fit your query. And, as you may have read, Google has plans to put the content of the world's libraries on the web.

Just imagine what it would be like if we didn't have these search engines to help us find information on the web. So good searching and I hope you find what you are looking for.

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: [bwsail@yahoo.com](mailto:bwsail@yahoo.com)

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## Computer Crashed

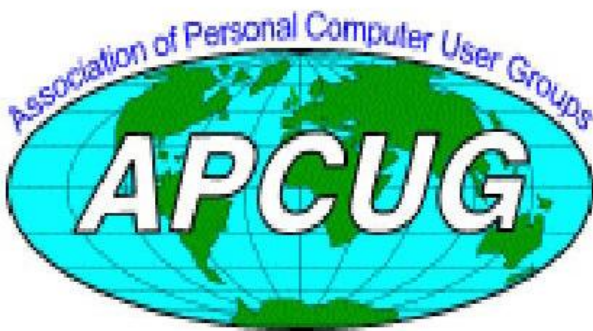
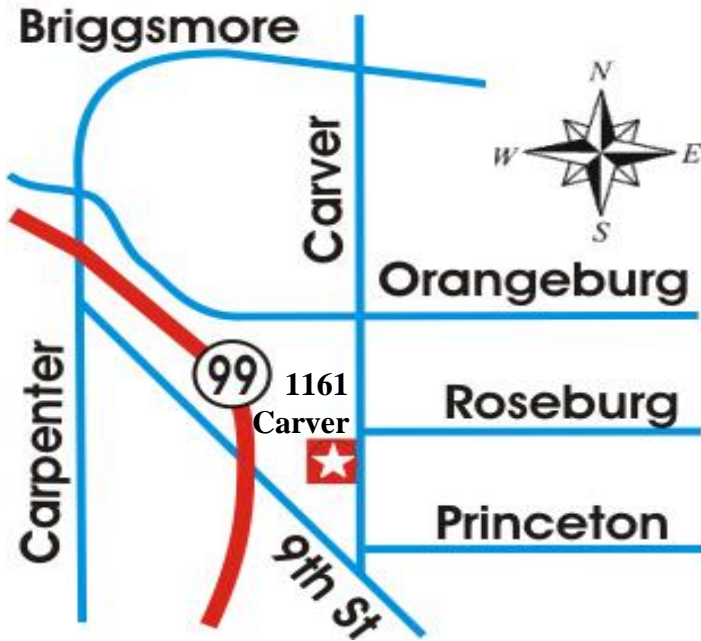
I work in a busy office, and when a computer goes down it causes quite an inconvenience. Recently one of our computers not only crashed, it made a noise that sounded like a heart monitor. "This computer has flat-lined," a co-worker called out with mock horror.

"Does anyone here know how to do mouse-to-mouse?"

**Found in: alt.humor Posted by: Cerberus - The Dog Of Hell <[cerberus@mystacy.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:cerberus@mystacy.fsnet.co.uk)>**

# The Club's Meeting Place

Our general meeting and the Random Access Special Interest Group are held in the Destiny Christian Center, 1161 Carver Road, Modesto, on the west side of Carver Road, right across from Sam's Food City.



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Elizabeth Leedom

Need help hooking up  
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[jgood99@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jgood99@sbcglobal.net)

Modesto, Ceres Area

Be sure and check our web site at least once a week at [www.mpcug.net](http://www.mpcug.net)

# **Modesto PC User Group Officers**

President..... Mike Kumler..... 531-2262..... [president@mpcug.net](mailto:president@mpcug.net)  
Program VP..... Elizabeth Leedom..... 523-4218..... [programvp@mpcug.net](mailto:programvp@mpcug.net)  
Secretary..... Terry Fix..... 524-8062..... [secretary@mpcug.net](mailto:secretary@mpcug.net)  
Treasurer ..... Barbara Cameron..... 522-1389..... [treasurer@mpcug.net](mailto:treasurer@mpcug.net)  
Director At Large..... Hank Mudge..... 529-1936..... [membership@mpcug.net](mailto:membership@mpcug.net)

## Appointed positions:

SIG Coordinator ..... Jim Goodman ..... 579-0122 ..... [sig@mpcug.net](mailto:sig@mpcug.net)  
Press Relations ..... Elizabeth Leedom ..... 523-4218..... [programvp@mpcug.net](mailto:programvp@mpcug.net)  
Membership ..... Hank Mudge ..... 529-1936..... [membership@mpcug.net](mailto:membership@mpcug.net)  
Web Master..... Jim Goodman..... 579-0122..... [webmaster@mpcug.net](mailto:webmaster@mpcug.net)  
Editor..... Bud Bondietti ..... 667-1980..... [editor@mpcug.net](mailto:editor@mpcug.net)

## PC Post

**Editor: Bud Bondietti**

Editor Emeritus: William "Doc" Holloway - 1920 - 1996  
Claude Delphia, Editor Emeritus, 537-9604 — [EdEmer@mpcug.net](mailto:EdEmer@mpcug.net)  
Bud Bondietti and Elizabeth Leedom, Presidents Emeritus

## Join The Modesto PC User Group

**Web site: [www.mpcug.net](http://www.mpcug.net)**

To join MPCUG (or just get more information about us go to our Web site and fill out the new member form or mail your check to: MPCUG, P.O. Box 5122, Modesto, CA 95352-5122. Membership is just \$24 a year and includes 12 issues of the PC Post along with participation in all meetings and events. You will also receive e-

## The PC Post and Editorial Policy

The PC Post is published online 12 times per year and is available to all group members as a membership benefit. Annual group membership dues are \$24.

For information write:

Modesto PCUG PO Box 5122, Modesto, CA 95352-5122

Opinions expressed in the PC Post do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of the members as a group or the Board of Directors.

The PC Post encourages group members to submit articles for publication. We would like to have articles which deal with the writer's experience with computer hardware and software.

An article may deal with any computer-related subject provided it contains no libelous or offensive material. We can't use information copied from other publications without written permission except for quotes.

Articles should be submitted in MS Word text. Do not spend time formatting your article such as indents or centering. Please use only one space between sentences, and do not use bold, italicize or otherwise format the submission as we can't guarantee results in translation to Publisher. Proof read and run your spelling checker. Watch

for special upper and lower case in brand names. Do not tab or indent to layout text.

If you want to include a graphic, please contact the editor for instructions.

We reserve the right to edit articles, for length or to improve readability. Longer articles may be published in several parts. We will not knowingly promote unlicensed businesses.

Letters to the editor are encouraged. All articles and letters to the editor should be submitted to the editor via email as an attached file. Call him at (209) 667-1980 before submission. Please include your name, day and evening phone numbers, and email address for contact.

The MPCUG exchanges some articles with other user groups around the country via the Association of PC User Groups (APCUG). If for any reason you object to having your article distributed to APCUG member organizations for reprinting, please notify the editor at the time you submit the article. Your wish will in no way affect publication of your article in the Post.

Production notes: Prepared using **Microsoft Publisher 2003**, MS Office 2003, Minolta laser color printer and a lot of sweat and a few tears.

# Special Interest Groups

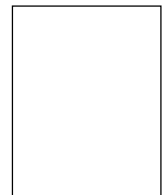
SIG meetings are held at the discretion of the leader and participants. Sometimes the date, location and time have to be changed or a meeting cancelled. Give the leader a call before the meeting if it is your first time.

SIG Name	Leaders	Phone#	Date / Time / Note
Beginners' SIG .....	Bud Bondietti .....	667-1980 .....	6:30 p.m., 2nd Monday, Denny's 1525 McHenry Ave.
Board Meeting .....	Mike Kumler .....	531-2262 .....	7 p.m., 1st Wed. of the month.
Digital Photography.....	J. Goodman .....	579-0122 .....	Time, location to be announced
Random Access Q&A .....			6:30 p.m. before general meeting

Membership renewal: As with all organizations, MPCUG is run solely by volunteers. That means that when your membership comes due, someone must send you a reminder, sometimes several times. We try to cut back that need by e-mailing you that your membership is expiring. Please help by renewing your membership in a timely manor. It saves user group money and



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