

PC Post



Official Newsletter of the
Modesto PC User Group.
Modesto, California

26 YEARS OF USER HELPING USER

SEPTEMBER 2008 – VOLUME 26.09

OUR NEXT MEETING

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Word and backups

Modesto PC User Group president Mike Kumler and webmaster Jim Goodman will present a two-pronged program at the group's monthly membership meeting on Thursday, Sept. 25, centering on Microsoft's Word and on a new system for backing up a computer hard drive.



Kumler will explore some of the niceties of the latest version of Word, while Goodman will tell members how to take a virtual snapshot of their hard drive, especially handy when systems crash.

The group will meet at 6 p.m. at Denny's Restaurant, 1525

McHenry Ave., for its Random Access Special Interest Group, featuring questions and problems members are facing. Following dinner at 7:30

**82 days to find
new PC Post
Editor**

IMPORTANT MEETING DATES

General Meeting — August 25 — Dennys 1525 McHenry
Board Meeting — October 6 — Ridgeway's Restaurant
Beginner's SIG Meeting — will resume this fall

Claude's Bytes

By Claude Delphia, Editor Emeritus, Modesto PC User Group

Virus in many forms — On September 4, your club through Membership Chairmen Hank Mudge was able to send out an important new tricky virus notification. This one tells you that you have a package they can't deliver and when you click on the supposed invoice attachment, you get a virus instead. Tricky, tricky, tricky. I haven't gotten this message, perhaps because my virus program stopped it.

The problem is that I've seen a number of similar tricky emails. Most of us by now have gotten ones from banks telling us they've cut off our account or something similar and we need to give them our ID info etc. Somehow my anti spam programs don't catch some of these although they undoubtedly catch the more common ones.

But some come through. I still don't know what the Adobe Acrobat one does. It says I need to upgrade to version 8. When I click on the link it takes me to Adobe's website where the latest version number 9 is available to download. I suspect it's an effort to capture information from me, but I don't know how it works or exactly what the danger is.

For those of us sitting at our computers most of the day, it's really tempting to click on some of these emails even when we know that it is probably spam. I can't always resist these, and as long as I just read them for the amusement, I'm probably OK, but we shouldn't let ourselves be tempted further.

The old rule applies: don't click on an attachment unless you are expecting it, or you know the person sending it. In any case, the email should spell out what the attachment is. If it doesn't, don't open it until you've checked with the person who sent it. That's a no brainer, just make it a practice to check it out first.

More on Spam — My oldest current email account was getting hundreds and hundreds of spam to my annoyance. I finally decided to end it and get on with my life. I just don't need to have to delete 10 Nigerian scam efforts a day. Do any of us? What do they think they are accomplishing by addressing it to "Dearest one..." If an email has the word "dearest" it should automatically go in the trash.

I recently had to go through a bunch of emails trying to decide which were spam. I did a search for all those that had the word "bank" in it. I was able to delete over a thousand spam in on account. Using your email programs search feature can help you minimize your efforts to filter out spam. In fact you can have your "filter" move all files with the word "Dearest" to the delete file and take a quick look through that directory before you hit delete all. We have to keep up with the tricks to keep safe and sane.

Speed of email delivery — I think we are all aware that the speed at which emails are delivered can be different depending on things we have no control over. I've recently had some emails that took overnight to receive between Modesto and Patterson. Neither communities are far off high speed internet lines. So what causes the delays?

My experience is as follows: If I send an email to a friend who is on Comcast, I can receive it right away because I'm also on Comcast. If I send an email to someone on Charter, the timing of the delivery could vary even to several hours. If someone has a less than major Internet provider, it could go to overnight.

If I send an email that is on the same Internet server, the delivery time is almost instantaneous depending on

(Claude—Continued on page 3)

the time of day.

I know that this is probably getting too complicated for most of my 11 faithful readers, but the point is that unless you are on the same Internet service, you shouldn't be surprised at a delay. The size of the email also comes into the timing factor. Bigger attachments may cause a delay. Also as we've learned long ago, the time of day may be the biggest factor.

Battery accident — A big savings at Radio Shack. I was waiting for a sales clerk while shopping for something else and sat down on a little utility ladder. I turned to a display to see what I was sitting next to. Right at eye level was a display of closeout batteries on sale. It quickly caught my eye that these batteries were the same as the ones in my Nikon camera. The price: about \$6 each. The normal price: up in the \$30 range. I had to do a double take. My current batteries that I got at the time I bought the camera 5 years ago, weren't keeping a good charge. I'm surprised they lasted as long as they have. I almost forgot what I was originally waiting to buy as I grabbed the only two batteries and plunked down my money. If I hadn't sat down there...

Google's New "Chrome Browser" (Beta) Not Yet Ready for Prime Time

by Ira Wilsker, APCUG Director; Columnist, The Examiner, Beaumont, TX:
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WEBSITE: <http://www.google.com/chrome>

As I type this, the national media is playing up the fact that today is Google's tenth anniversary. In that time it has become the predominate player in the search industry, with a market share of about two-thirds. By more than coincidence, Google also recently announced the public release of a beta version (pre-release) of its free new browser with the moniker "Chrome". It is no secret that Google is in a competitive war with some parts of the Microsoft dynasty, and Chrome is intended to be a competitor of Internet Explorer (IE). By design, Chrome may be a superior browser to IE, but in the few days that I have used it, I have to conclude that the current beta version is "...not yet ready for prime time." Several of the websites that I routinely visit, including two different webmail accounts, My Yahoo, my weather page, and some other sites would partly load and display, and then disappear with a black window with a white font and graphic displayed. The graphic is of a frowning web page, and the expression "Aw Snap! Something went wrong while displaying this webpage. To continue press Reload or go to another page." Reloading would not fix the problem on any page where the error appeared. This is why I believe that this beta version, while fast, attractive and feature rich, is not quite ready to take its place as a primary or secondary browser. For the record, every page that failed to load in Chrome, loaded flawlessly in IE and Firefox. Despite this nagging bug, Chrome is still a worthwhile free download, because it has several interesting features lacking on the competing browsers, especially its obvious target, Chrome's nemesis, Internet Explorer.

Chrome (beta) was fast and easy to download from www.google.com/chrome, and effortlessly installed on my XP machine. During the install I was given the option to import bookmarks (favorites), cookies, and passwords from Internet Explorer, which I chose to do. While unstated by Google, it appears obvious that later versions

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of Chrome will be able to import data from Firefox. Chrome will also run on Vista, and versions for Mac and Linux are in the works.

After reading about Chrome and its features, I was excited about its potential. It is written in open source code using some of the best features of other open source products such as Firefox and Apple's WebKit. The code is tight and compact, and when it works, appears to load and display websites much faster than IE. Some of the technical websites have actually tested the load times of popular websites, and Chrome may be the fastest browser available. One feature about Chrome, which I was especially interested in, was its default display of thumbnails of the websites most frequently visited by the user. Clicking on the thumbnail would instantly open the website either in that window, or in another tab (window) at the user's discretion. The appearance of the Chrome browser is clean and uncluttered. Each Chrome tab or window is loaded in a virtual "sandbox" such that if one web page crashes, it will not take down the entire browser, but instead only close the affected tab.

More and more applications are being integrated, many of which can be run directly from Chrome. Clicking on the control icon on the toolbar of Chrome gives several options, one of which is to create instant application shortcuts which can load applications into Chrome. An icon is created and placed on the desktop by Chrome, and clicking on that icon directly opens the application in a Chrome tab, even if Chrome is not loaded or is off-line. This can give near instant access to such services as Gmail, Google Calendar, or most other applications.

Utilizing a concept "one box for everything" enables the traditional address bar of the browser to perform several simultaneous functions. As information is typed in the address bar, Google (by default) will identify previous websites visited as well as suggested search topics which become more detailed as more is typed. While Google is the factory default search setting, it can be easily changed to other major search engines, such as Yahoo. Multiple sites, such as EBay, Amazon, and others can also be selectively searched as determined by the user.

Chrome uses tabbed browsing long a staple of Firefox, but fairly new in IE. The tabs are dynamic, in that they can be dragged changing their order on the top of the screen, or into a window creating a new window. This gives the user total control over the appearance of the pages displayed for comparison or other purposes, and is an attractive feature. Another useful feature in Chrome that also previously appeared as a default in Firefox is a safe browsing function. Chrome dynamically checks websites entered in the address bar against a continuously updated database of malware and phishing (identity theft) websites, and displays the following in a red warning window in a large font, "WARNING: Visiting this site may harm your computer!".

Many users like to create lists of bookmarks and favorites, and Chrome makes book marking sites very fast and easy. There is a small star on the address bar, and clicking on the star creates the bookmark, with the option to modify the bookmark. Another common task that Chrome handles very well is downloading files. Rather than using a download manager, Chrome displays download progress in the bottom of the window. When completed, the downloaded file can be dragged to the desktop or elsewhere, or opened directly by clicking on the filename in Chrome.

Chrome has been a lot of fun to play with, despite my frustrations trying to open some web sites. Google will be releasing frequent updates, and hopefully the page loading bug will be quickly remedied. If you want to try the latest in browser technology, being fully cognizant that it is currently a beta version, then Chrome may be a worthy browser to download and install. Chrome coexists just fine with IE and Firefox, and does not interfere with them.

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Painter 4 Essentials, a First Impression

by Dave Chalmers, Editor, Kern Independent PCUG, CA
www.kipug.org / newsletter(at)kipug.org

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Corel's demonstration of their products at the recent Southwest Computer Conference showed one new product that really interested me. Corel Painter 4 Essentials is a real painting program, not a photo editing program. It has the features of being able to paint or draw with a computer. If you have a shred of drawing talent, you might really like this program.

Now I have no talents this way unfortunately. Why I would buy a program like this, being a photographer, might surprise you. Painter has a great feature that will auto paint or draw from a photo. In this mode you pick a style from many artistic techniques and stand back.

Will this look great for all photos? The simple answer is no. If you have a lousy picture you will probably end up with a lousy painting. Photos that are dependent on a lot of fine detail to work will also not be a good candidate for this product. Simple landscapes or portraits or more abstract photos will probably work the best. Now having said that, there are always exceptions that will work, trying the process only takes some time.

You start with a photo that has been corrected and cropped using a photo editing program. Jpeg's, tiff, and PhotoShop psd files will work. Just open them in Painter and start selecting the artistic medium you want. Once the program commences you will see a very blobby and abstract image in the beginning. As the process continues, details emerge; you can stop the drawing at any time or let it go to completion. Once done you can go into using your own painting efforts to add or subtract details to enhance the painting. A good example of this would be a portrait. Increasing the details around the eyes usually helps the overall composition. If some of the background contrasts too much with the person, you can blur and tone down the background.

A graphic tablet is a real plus with Painter, as it uses the stylus for changing the brush characteristics, as you go. A mouse works fine, but it doesn't have as much flexibility as the tablet. Wacom makes some tablets that are fairly inexpensive. Please note, a tablet is not required to get this program to work.

Printing with this program is quite simple. It doesn't have a dedicated color management system as more expensive programs, but if you can print a good photo, then printing with Painter is no problem.

Painter comes with some excellent video tutorials that really clue you in on the features and give a great how-to aspect to it. They are logically arranged and each segment is not too long. Painter even comes with a nice printed manual, with illustrations. The manual generally follows along with the tutorials.

Retail price is \$99 and the member price is \$79. It installs on both PC's and MAC's. As a supplement to a photo editing program, I certainly recommend it.

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When to Turn Off Personal Computers

U.S. Department of Energy

Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. A Consumer's Guide to Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

www.energy.gov/forconsumers.htm

If you're wondering when you should turn off your personal computer for energy savings, here are some general guidelines to help you make that decision.

Though there is a small surge in energy when a computer starts up, this small amount of energy is still less than the energy used when a computer is running for long periods of time. For energy savings and convenience, consider turning off

- the monitor if you aren't going to use your PC for more than 20 minutes
- both the CPU and monitor if you're not going to use your PC for more than 2 hours.

Make sure your monitors, printers, and other accessories are on a power strip/surge protector. When this equipment is not in use for extended periods, turn off the switch on the power strip to prevent them from drawing power even when shut off. If you don't use a power strip, unplug extra equipment when it's not in use.

Most PCs reach the end of their "useful" life due to advances in technology long before the effects of being switched on and off multiple times have a negative impact on their service life. The less time a PC is on, the longer it will "last." PCs also produce heat, so turning them off reduces building cooling loads. For cost effectiveness, you also need to consider how much your time is worth. If it takes a long time to shut down the computer and then restart it later, the value of your time will probably be much greater than the value of the amount of electricity you will save by turning off the computer.

Power-Down or Sleep Mode Features

Many PCs available today come with a power-down or sleep mode feature for the CPU and monitor. ENERGY STAR® computers power down to a sleep mode that consume 15 Watts or less power, which is around 70% less electricity than a computer without power management features. ENERGY STAR monitors have the capability to power down into two successive "sleep" modes. In the first, the monitor energy consumption is less than or equal to 15 Watts, and in the second, power consumption reduces to 8 Watts, which is less than 10% of its operating power consumption.

Make sure you have the power-down feature set up on your PC through your operating system software. This has to be done by you, otherwise the PC will not power down. If your PC and monitor do not have power-down features, and even if they do, follow the guidelines below about when to turn the CPU and monitor off.

Note: Screen savers are not energy savers. Using a screen saver may in fact use more energy than not using one and the power-down feature may not work if you have a screen saver activated. In fact, modern LCD color monitors do not need screen savers at all.

Wireless Technologies

by Sandy Berger, CompuKISS

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Cell phones and Wi-Fi networks work wonderfully without wires. I love both of them and have become quite dependent on them. This leads to an expectation that perhaps someday all devices will be wireless. However, looking behind my computer desk, I see a gaggle of wires that thwarts any such expectations. Going wireless is a monumental task, but we are now making some great strides in the wireless arena.

Technology experts and trade show exhibitors have talked about wireless technologies for years. Bluetooth, a wireless technology that can be used for data transfer, has found a home with cell phones. Many phones use the Bluetooth technology to hook up wirelessly with headsets, car speakers, and other cell phone accessories.

Bluetooth can be used to connect PCs and peripherals but because of its slow transfer rates (maximum transfer rate of 1-3 Mbps) it is not often used for this purpose. Bluetooth is currently in its 2nd generation. The next generation is proposed to have much higher transfer rates, but that is still in the future.

However, a new technology is currently offering hope for a more untethered computer experience. It is called Wireless USB (WUSB). Like the current version of USB, USB 2.0, the maximum transfer rate is 480 Mbps if the devices are within about 9 feet of each other. If the devices are farther away, the data rate lessens.

There are two big differences between USB and WSBU. The first is that you don't need to run wires between the two devices. The second is that you need the devices to have native WUSB support or you need to purchase and install a WUSB adapter for each of the devices you want to connect. The WUSB adapter is a small device with an antenna that plugs into the USB port on the computer and/or on the device itself.

WUSB works on the UWB, Ultra Wide Band frequency, rather than the 2.4 GHz frequency used by WiFi and Bluetooth devices. According to the USB consortium, this "turns the radio spectrum available to wireless applications from a country road into a high-speed ten lane super freeway". Using the wide band frequency

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Special Interest Groups and Meetings

Meeting Name	Leaders	Phone	Date / Time / Note
Beginners' SIG	Jim Goodman	579-0122	6:30 p.m. 1st Tuesday, Denny's 1525 McHenry Ave.
Board Meeting	Mike Kumler	531-2262	7 p.m., 1st Wed. of the month.
Random Access Q&A			6:30 p.m. before general meeting

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eliminates the interference that often infiltrates the 2.4 GHz frequency from wireless telephones, microwave ovens, and baby monitors. With less interference, multiple ultra wide band devices can easily share a single channel.

This provides us the ability to wirelessly connect devices that previously needed to rely on wires. Computer monitors can be connected to the computer wirelessly with WUSB, as can audio speakers, audio cards, and many other devices.

WUSB offers the speed and integrity of wired connections within a wireless environment. WUSB has been talked about for several years, but now it is appearing in the market place. ASUS has released a WUSB wireless monitor and several computers including the Lenovo ThinkPad X300, the NEC LaVie J notebook PC have integrated WUSB. Fijitsu and several other manufacturers are planning integrated WUSB models for late 2008. Also manufacturers, including Belkin, D-Link, and IOGEAR have WUSB adapters and hubs that can be used to turn regular USB devices into WUSB wireless devices.

And there is even more wireless news to come. Last week at their annual developer's forum, Intel demonstrated a new wireless technology for electricity. Electricity was sent without any cords or cables to a lamp on

Going Green

By Jerry Grommes, Past President, Sandwich Computer Users Group, Illinois
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During our June program, there was quite a discussion about whether to leave your computer on verses shutting it off when not in use.

I, personally, like to leave my computers run so they are kept up-to-date with auto updates and backed up with scheduled backups. These tasks are done in the early AM so my computers are fully functional when I sit down to use them.

However, others asked why not just leave them on the nights that the backup runs instead of 24/7. I didn't think it was using much energy by running 24/7 but decided to check it out and run some tests using my "Kill-AWatt" meter. (Measures watts, amps, hours, kill a watt hours, etc.) I started with my newest computer (which is approx 2 years old and probably the most efficient). This machine is running Vista and I had the Power Options set to turn off the monitor after "20 minutes" and put computer to sleep to "never". With these settings the computer was drawing between 110 and 140 Watts of power with a total average of 2.63 KWH (kill-a-watt hours) per day. Cost per day was \$0.26 (\$7.87 a month) based on my most recent bill.

I then changed the Power Options to turn off the monitor after "20 minutes" and put computer to sleep "after 2 hours".

The watts dropped from between 110 and 140 while I was using the computer to 6 while in the sleep mode and the total average of KWH dropped to 0.65 per day. Cost is now down to 6 cents a day (\$1.94 a month).

With the current power options (turn off the monitor after "20 minutes" and sleep "after 2 hours") the computer will wake up and get updates as well as run the scheduled

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backups. So with a simple change to a power option, I was able to reduce power consumption by approx 76% and save \$5.93 per month with out affecting my user experience.

I plan on testing my XP machine next to see what it is costing and to see if it can be reduced. Thanks go to Louise and the rest of the group for a great discussion on energy use.

To get more info and tips on energy savings try one of Louise Dieden's favorite links: <http://www.energy.gov/forconsumers.htm> Louise is a SCUG Board Member at Large.

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Treasurer's Report.... Barb Cameron

Financial Statement	July	
INCOME		
Membership	\$0.00	
Interest on savings	0.00	
Donations	0.00	
TOTAL INCOME		\$0.00
EXPENSES		
Destiny Church (June-Aug)	\$75.00	
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$75.00
CURRENT ASSETS		
Checking - USbank, Modesto	\$1,330.80	
Savings - USbank	332.39	

Current Assets:		\$1,663.19
FIXED ASSETS		0.00

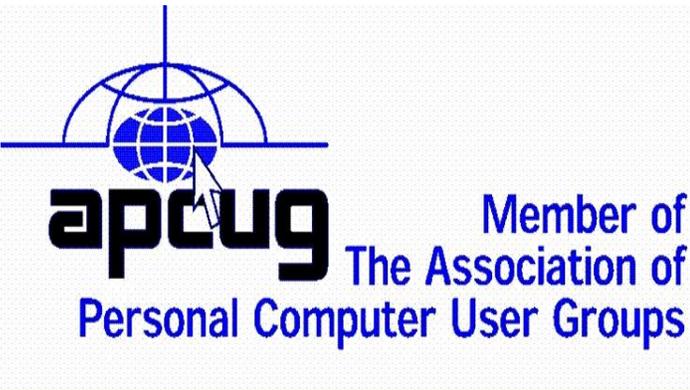
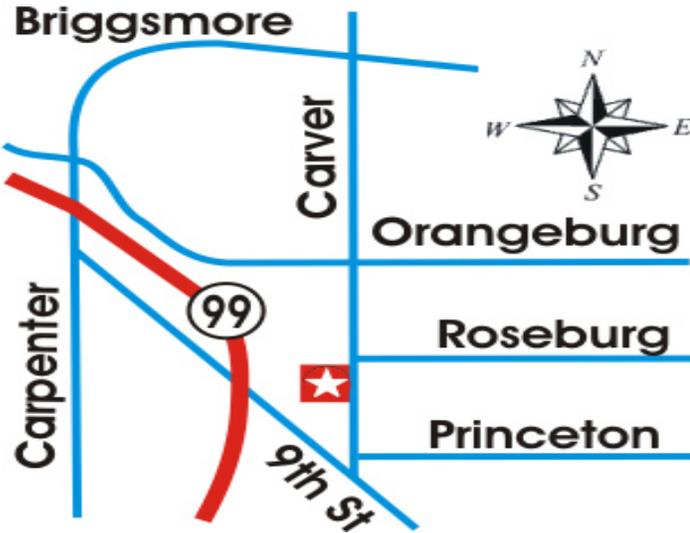
Total Assets		\$1,663.19

For the latest information about the MPCUG — Check our website at

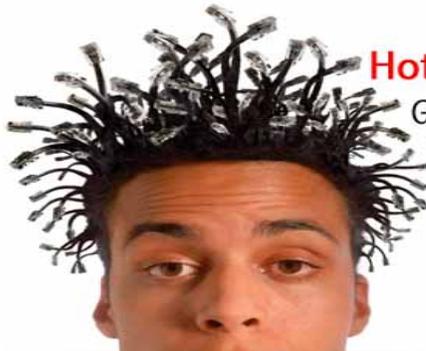
WWW.MPCUG.NET

The Club's Meeting Place

Our general meeting and the Random Access Special Interest Group are held at the Destiny Christian Center, 1161 Carver Road on the west side of Carver across from Sam's Food City. Parking is available both in front of and behind the Center. No parking along side of the Center, please.



Free classifieds for members. Email the text to the editor at editor@mpcug.net



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Be sure and check our web site at least once a week at www.mpcug.net

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Join The Modesto PC User Group

Web site: 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-mail advising you of extra events or news.

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 \$24.00.

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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 or digital photography.

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.

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