

PC Post



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

26 YEARS OF USER HELPING USER

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OUR NEXT MEETING

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I-Tunes for Mac or PC

Modesto PC User Group secretary Terry Fix, a secret Mac expert, will present a program at the membership meeting on Thursday, Oct. 23, demonstrating how to download from iTunes with a PC or Mac.

Fix says he will show how to use free audio or video podcasts for entertainment, educational or technical informational purposes. He notes: "For those who don't have audio or video iPods, you don't need them. All you need is your ordinary Mac or PC laptop or desktop running Window or Mac OS!"

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 p.m., Fix will make his presentation.

50 days to find
new PC Post
Editor

IMPORTANT MEETING DATES

General Meeting — October 23 — Denny's 1525 McHenry
Board Meeting — November 5 — Ridgeway's Restaurant
Beginner's SIG Meeting — November 10 — Denny's

Claude's Bytes

By Claude Delphia, Editor Emeritus, Modesto PC User Group

Spell check — many of you don't believe in Spell Checking. To you, you feel that your spelling is perfect, and perhaps most of the time it is. But there is no one alive who can't do a "typo." That's where your fingers type something other than what you meant. And that's the second reason for at least running spell check before submitting your writing to someone else or for publication. Why force someone else to fix your spelling errors regardless of what caused it?

Directories — As I get older, I find that I appreciate the concept of Directories and Folders for holding all the different files I have on my computer and other memory devices. I always new that the old fashioned filing systems used in physical filing cabinets was an important concept, but I never really full appreciated the concept until I started really using it for my computer files. I still have a bit of a hard time keeping up with proper filing. In fact I create Directories/Folders with out any real plan, at least part of the time.

One of the most important areas of my life are photos. I have a Directory under My Documents called My Pics. I store most of my photos in this directory under perhaps several hundred Folder names. Just a few examples of Folders would be Family, MPCUG, Historical Society, Sales, EBay, Church, Politics and many more representing my various activities involving photos. Under each of these may be subdirectories. For example, under family could be Brother (his name), Mother, Dad, Cousin J, Grandma, etc.

Another major directory would be various projects. Historical is one of those. Under that is Patterson history, Modesto History, and numerous additional groupings.

While it's possible that many of you don't have enough categories or files to create a hard drive filing system I would guess that quite a few of you do, at least is you using your compute on a regular basis.

For example, how about your travel trips? Each trip should be in its own Directory, and each town you visited could be in its own Folder.

The real value of all this is that you can find your files easier.

Virus protection foul up — I was wondering around the Internet looking for information on the winner of "Who's Got Talent" a show I got hooked on but didn't see the final episode. I was clicking on links when I was offered the chance to view a video but it required, as I recall, an Active X component. So I said yes. Within seconds I was being bombarded by something called SAV, supposedly an anti virus program. It immediately disabled my McAfee program and took over my computer and then offering me all kinds of options that I needed to buy in order to continue.

Since I couldn't find anyway to stop the program, I realized fairly quickly that I was go-

(Claude—Continued on page 10)

Sarah Palin - Password Protection

by Sandy Berger, CompuKISS

<http://www.compukiss.com> / [sandy\(at\)compukiss.com](mailto:sandy(at)compukiss.com)



When technology is good, it is very, very good, but when it is bad it can be truly atrocious. So it is with the hacking of Sarah Palin's Yahoo email account. The bad guys are out there using technology for their own advantage. Whether they are serious hackers who want information for devious purposes or young students who just want to show their technological prowess, this theft shows that everyone is vulnerable.

The recent hijacking of Sarah Palin's email account is also a great example of how a hacker can gain access to an email account and how email accounts need to be better protected against such penetration.

We currently rely on passwords to protect most of our online activity. Professional hackers often use "password crackers" to guess passwords. Anyone can easily find these hacker tools on the Internet. They can even be purchased on CD. There are wordlists for common passwords and dictionary combinations of possible passwords in a variety of different languages. These tools are all aimed at giving a person all the technical tools that they need to guess passwords.

In Sarah Palin's case, however, the perpetrator didn't even have to use tools like this. A hacker identifying himself as "Rubico" claims to have been able to change the password on Sarah Palin's Yahoo Mail account quite easily. All he had to do was use her email name to log into the Yahoo Mail's interface and select the option to reset the password. Yahoo then asked him to provide her birth date and zip code, which have become public knowledge. He then had to answer her self-chosen security question which was where she met her husband. After several television interviews of Sarah and her husband, the answer to that question also became public knowledge.

Sarah Palin was thrown into the public arena quite quickly, but even those of us who are not public figures may find that their passwords and answers to security questions can be easily guessed. Do you use the name of your spouse, children, pet, favorite sport, birthday, or wedding date as your password? Have you entered security questions like place of birth or favorite color that are easy to guess?

Privacy as we knew it before the Internet is now a thing of the past. With the Internet, more of our lives are online than most of us realize. Many people use blogging as a past time and post information on MySpace, Facebook, and other social networking websites. Once posted, all of that information is publicly known. And the Internet is archived, so even when you remove current information, previously posted information can still be found in Internet archives. That information can be used to guess passwords and access personal information.

So here are a few ground rules that may help keep your private information a little safer online:

1. Use passwords that are not easy to guess and cannot be easily cracked.
2. Choose a security question that others will not be able to guess the answer to. Or answer the security question with an answer that you create which is not necessarily the true answer.
3. Use unique passwords, especially for important services and websites like banking sites and email.

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4. Keep your passwords private. Don't leave them on a sticky note on your computer screen or keep them in an unencrypted file on your computer.
5. Change your passwords often.
6. Do not change your password by clicking on a link in an email from someone claiming to be a system administrator, bank representative, or other seemingly reputable party. They may not be who they say they are. When you want to change your password, always type in the address yourself so you know you are at the real website rather than a bogus one.
7. Use one credit card for all online purchases. This will limit your financial exposure.
8. Keep your operating system up-to-date.
9. Use a good anti-virus and anti-spyware programs.
10. Consider using an encrypted password manager program.

Check the Compu-KISS website at www.compukiss.com for more information on choosing good passwords.

Traveling Then and Now - "Technically" Speaking

by Gregory West, Editor for the Sarnia Computer Users' Group (SCUG), Canada
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(This article was originally published in Sarnia's "FIRST MONDAY" magazine, August 2008 issue)

In 1974 Richard Nixon was the first US President forced to resign, while gasoline pricing rose to a whopping 55 cents a gallon US (14.5 cents a liter). They claim the reason was that "gasoline shortages and price increases throughout the world help to cause problems in most of the western worlds' economies" (ory.com).

Sound familiar? What isn't familiar is the technology that accompanies us on vacations.

I remember in 1974 driving to Fort Wilderness Disney World, Florida in a Volkswagen van built into a home-made camper, all decked out with plywood beds and a Coleman cooler for a fridge with a never-ending request for ice. CAA supplied the trip tik maps that marked out the route and the construction sections of the highway. We had the best of the best for navigating the trip. As well, we had a brand new Instamatic camera with 7 rolls of 126 film that cost us a small fortune. Our son, four years old, rode a small tricycle back and forth inside the van to while away the hours and hours of monotonous driving as seatbelt legislation was non-existent.

Today, we still face the gas increase excuses and we are well aware of the price of a liter of gasoline today. In that regard, nothing has really changed, only the numbers and the fact that we are all buckled into our seats. Although, one thing that has changed for travelers in 2008: "tech toys"; they have now become a "must have" for every family that does ground travel on vacations.

Our kids have been replaced by grandkids and the Volkswagen homemade camper van is long gone. People today are now hauling RVs of all sorts that host most of the comforts of home.

The CAA maps and my son's tricycle have been replaced by the latest technical and computer gadgets. Let's have a peek at how technology has changed road travel, some 34 years later.

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Kids today are buckled tightly into the back seats as airbag protection in the front restricts them to the back seats only. While in the back seat they have the option of viewing DVD movies run through a DVD player onto 2 separate monitors that attach to the head rests of both front seats. They listen to the movies via the vehicle stereo system or individual headphones. When they tire of the movies they can play video games by switching over to their PSP or a PS2 that plugs through the inverter. Of course there is always travel bingo if the tech stuff gets boring, but we won't hold our breath on that one.

For the driver and co-pilot there is a GPS display with voice directions, saving the hassle of trying to read the fine print on wrinkled and torn maps. Many travelers bring along laptops while traveling as their uses are many. For example, you can record your trip's information, download pictures and videos from digital cameras. The big thing these days with computers is reading digital books, or listening to audio books that have been previously downloaded from the Internet. Of course, when a live Internet connection becomes available (most RV parks have free Wi-Fi) you can check email, use Skype to call home, and research the places to see, all from your laptop.

The days of praying that there will be a pay phone nearby if we break down are long gone as many people have both a Canadian and American cell phone. For instance, one can purchase a Motorola TracFone that works only in the USA for under \$10 and



buy a "pay-as-you-go" card, making long distance calls back home cheaper and giving one

Don't leave without your MP3 player. Podcasts can be easily downloaded from the Internet. All for easy listening and do not disturb the

buy a "pay-as-you-go" card, making long distance calls back home cheaper and giving one

Walkie talkies are not a new item while on vacation and the range has expanded greatly. A quick stop in the grocery store for supplies will help you utilize your group to ensure precision targeted shopping whereby we all search out different items and meet at the same cashier, thus saving time. The walkie talkie is also used in many other scenarios for security and locating purposes. These units are a must have for anyone traveling with children. The Instamatic camera has been replaced by the digital camera, thus allowing people to take hundreds of pictures during a trip without any real cost. If some of the pictures are not that great they are easily deleted and forgotten without the worry of paying for more film.

buy a "pay-as-you-go" card, making long distance calls back home cheaper and giving one

An inverter will allow the truck battery to convert power from DC to AC so you can run the laptop while traveling to edit photos, read books, watch movies and connect to Wi-Fi hotspots. This also allows for the use of a PS2 plugged into the truck battery power as if you were at home plugging into a wall outlet. You can even plug in a refrigerated cooler with this inverter, making life just that much easier.

We can only imagine what traveling 34 years from now will be like and what 2042 will offer its road travelers.

Circular argument

Tech support: How may I help you?

Customer: I'm writing my first e-mail.

Tech support: OK, and what seems to be the problem?

Customer: Well, I have the letter 'a' in the address, but how do I get the circle around it?

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15 Vista Tips

Tips & Hints by Dick Carricato, member of the Tri County Computer User Group, Florida
/ d_carricato(at)bellsouth.net

1. If you hate the look of Aero, click Start/Control Panel/Themes and you can choose a non-Aero theme, such as Windows Classic.
2. Windows Vista's installer can detect serial-ATA (SATA) drives without the need to provide a driver diskette. Don't bother creating a diskette for your SATA drives before you install Vista.
3. If, for some reason, the Vista installation gets interrupted due to an unintentional shutdown or reboot, start the computer without booting the Vista DVD. Windows Vista's installer should pick up where it left off. If it doesn't, then restart the installation over from scratch.
4. When you perform a search with Vista's new, instant search feature, you can save the search in a special folder. This powerful feature allows you to create a virtual folder which, by default, is saved in your \\Searches\ folder. Every time you open such a folder, the search results are updated.
5. In Windows Vista, you can add additional clocks to the system tray. Click the clock, and then click Date and Time Settings. Click the Additional Clocks tab. You can add one or two additional clocks to the tray and select their time zones.
6. You can save your progress in most of the games included with Windows Vista—even the carry-overs from earlier versions of Windows.
7. You can create XML documents, which are more secure than regular text files or even word processor docs. Just create a document in a word processor, print it via the options menu, and select the XPS printer.
8. If you upgrade your graphics card in preparation for Windows Vista, be sure to get a new card with as much local memory as possible. Since Windows Vista renders everything—even the desktop and windows them-selves—as 3D surfaces, local 3D memory greatly improves performance...sometimes even more than a more powerful GPU.
9. Windows Vista games deposit their saves into a special directory, called Saved Games, in your personal folder. In theory, that will make upgrading to a new system much easier for gamers, who like to migrate their game saves.
10. When using the Help system, it's usually advantageous to include Microsoft's online database in your search. The online/offline status of your search is located on the bottom right of the Help window. You can click it to toggle.
11. The Games folder is a powerful repository of all things gaming. From within, you launch games, update games with the latest patches, enable parental controls to protect younger users from harmful content, and more. Invoke it by clicking Start/Games.



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12. Several applications are available to help you tweak Windows Vista for maximum performance. They include TweakVI (www.totalidea.com), TweakVista (www.tweakvista.com/tweakvistautility), and Vista-BootPRO (www.vistabootpro.org). And don't forget about Windows ReadyBoost, which lets you use a removable flash memory drive to boost system memory.
13. Do you use the icon in the upper left corner of system and application windows? A quick double-click closes the window (instead of a single click on the X at the upper right). Though Microsoft left the icon out in Vista, the function remains.—Sarah Pike
14. In Microsoft Windows Explorer, you can use column headers (Name, Size, and so on) to sort files. Savvy users may right-click on a column head to remove items or add some—say, Dimensions for images. There are around 45 such columns available in Windows XP. Windows Vista has well over 250, covering a multitude of metadata.—Sarah Pike
15. If you've become used to surfing your Program Menu to get to applications, you'll be in for a shock when you first use Microsoft Windows Vista. The new Program Menu shows you only recently used applications and requires extra clicks to navigate to submenus. This can be very frustrating but, thankfully, the Search box Microsoft has added to the Start menu is a great replacement—as long as you're an accurate typist. As quickly as you can type, it returns intelligent results in apps, files, even e-mail messages.—Dave Cardinal, freelance writer

WORD OF THE MONTH

What is Blu-ray?

Blu-ray, also known as Blu-ray Disc (BD) is the name of a next-generation optical disc format. The format was developed to enable recording, rewriting and playback of high-definition video (HD), as well as storing large amounts of data. The format offers more than five times the storage capacity of traditional DVDs and can hold up to 25GB on a singlelayer disc and 50GB on a dual-layer disc. The name Blu-ray is derived from the underlying technology, which utilizes a blue-violet laser to read and write data. The name is a combination of "Blue" (blue-violet laser) and "Ray" (optical ray, not Hunton Ray). According to the Blu-ray Disc Association the spelling of "Blu-ray" is not a mistake, the character "e" was intentionally left out so the term could be registered as a trademark.

Special Interest Groups and Meetings

Meeting Name	Leaders	Phone	Date / Time / Note
Beginners/Internet 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

Smart Computing Tips & Fun Facts

www.smartcomputing.com



Clean Your Laptop

To remove lint, dirt, and other buildup, find a laptop care kit that includes small cleaning swabs, so you can keep dust from clogging even the smallest crevices.

Keep It Clean

To clean your computer's monitor, use a screen cloth designed for wiping LCD or plasma screens. You can also purchase monitor cleaning solution with a cleaning kit. Use only a cleaning solution that's specifically formulated for cleaning monitors.

Notebook Batteries

Over time, you'll notice that your notebook battery doesn't hold the same charge as it did when it was new. When your battery's charge is less than 80% of its original rating, it's time for a replacement. There are many resources that help you choose which battery to buy.

Your laptop should indicate in its manual what type of battery you need for your particular notebook. It should also give you care and maintenance tips and instructions for conditioning your new battery. Always check your manual first to familiarize yourself with your notebook and its battery model.

There are many useful Internet sources that can help you choose a replacement battery. Freshbattery.com is easy to use and helps you identify which type of battery you need. Similarly, Best Buy has an online battery-finding tool. Navigate your browser to www.bestbuy.com, select Laptops from the Computers drop-down menu, and then click Battery Finder near the bottom of the page to begin using this service.

Installing your new battery is simple. On most notebooks, batteries easily slide off the bottom of the notebook by popping two locks that secure the battery in place. Remove the old battery by popping any locks and sliding it from the notebook. New batteries can only be installed in one way, by sliding into the empty slot and clicking into place.

Power Conditioners

Power conditioners help protect your home-theater system and enhance its audio and video quality by enabling crisp, clear audio and video that isn't degraded by signal interference. Clean power results from the power conditioner filtering out noise caused by RF (radio frequency) interference, EMI (electromagnetic interference), and other signal degraders, which result in what is commonly called "dirty power." Some units also include built-in voltage stabilization, which ensures that fluctuations in electricity are stabilized at 120 volts, protecting your new HDTV from power surges.

Power conditioners come in many shapes and sizes. Some are designed to sit on the floor and are the same size as a surge protector; some are rack-mountable; and others can be placed in your entertainment center like a DVD player. The more features a power conditioner has, the more expensive it will be. More expensive models, for example, may offer digital ammeter/voltmeter displays, which monitor the incoming and outgoing voltage to detect and prevent power fluctuations; isolated power outlets that filter video or audio noise from devices such as video cameras; and USB ports, which are handy for charging an MP3 player or other CE device with clean power.

Media Show 4 by Cyberlink

A review by Terry Oden, President, Macon Computer User Group, Georgia
 www.mcug.org
 terryo (at) brmemc.net

There may be hundreds of ways to gather, store, view, edit and show off your pictures and videos. This is one of the best and easiest I have found so far. Your own operating system will do a fairly good job of getting your pictures and videos into your computer for you. On the net you also have programs that are free like Picassa, Flickr and You Tube which all do a very good job of storing and displaying your own work to family and friends.

One of the things that I liked best about Media Show was ease of operation. There are only 5 buttons to control the whole program. Below you'll find a screen shot of the second screen you'll see select the Pictures button.

Starting with the # 1 button, or the Home button here you can see all of your different folders and how many pictures or videos you have in each folder.

For the # 2 button you have Create. Here you can do things like make your own Screen Saver, compose a movie or DVD. You can print your own pictures or order prints on line.

Next you have the # 3 button or the Share button. Here you can share your pictures with friends and family or up-load them to Flickr. Also, you could upload them to U-tube with a single click of your mouse, if desired.



The next button # 4 is the View button, here you can adjust the size of your thumbnails or add any captions to your pictures. You can also change the color of the skin of the program (appearance).

The last button or # 5 is the Folder Tools button. Here you edit, sort, locate, delete or hide some pictures if you like.

This Media Show 4 is one of the top programs when it comes to ease of operation, not to mention what the finished product will look like. To create a movie or slideshow with sound and motion, fading or cell you only have to make about three clicks of the mouse. First you have to decide if you want background music or not, next select what format you want to use, and where to save your work in your computer. Yes, you do have to tell it what pictures or videos to use! At last, all you do is click the Burn button and that's it. Zap you're done!

Yes, you do have to tell it what pictures or videos to use! At last, all you do is click the Burn button and that's it. Zap you're done!

To create a DVD it's very easy. First decide a name for your DVD. Then pick out a menu style for your DVD. Now comes the hard part. You must decide which videos you want to use and if you want any still pictures in it or not. Yes, once again you have to tell the program which videos or pictures you want to use.

Next, click on the preview button to see what your work looks like. If you like it, click on the burn button and you're done.

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System Requirements

1. Operating System- Windows Vista / XP (with Direct X 9 or above)
2. Screen Resolution- 800 x 600
3. Printers- All
4. CPU- Intel Pentium D 3.0 GHz, AMD Athlon 64 3500+ or above
5. Sound Card- PCI sound card or on-board audio
6. Memory- 512 MB RAM minimum, 1GB recommended
7. Hard Disk Space- 1 GB required, 20 GB recommended for DVD production
8. Graphics Card- Intel 945GM or above-64 MBVRAM or above
9. Optical Drive- A DVD burner (DVD+R/RW or DVD-R/RW) is required to burn content onto DVD's
10. Import Devices- Cameras via removable disk interface-Cameras support Windows Portable devices interface-Camcorder DV devices via IEEE 1394 (Firewire)
11. Internet Connection- An Internet connection is required for some upload/download features.

As for the overall way the program works, I've not found a program this large at this cost that operates so easily and simply. I have found no shortcomings with this program yet. This is the best program for the money that can be found, under \$50.00

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ing to have to use the Go Back and Restore feature built into Windows XP. This feature has been a god send a number of times and it came to my rescue yet again.

Within a few minutes my computer was restarting back to it's restore point which was yesterday although I could have chosen other restore points.

One quick point: this restore doesn't change any of your date. It just puts all your programs back to how they were setup the day before or when ever your last restore point was. This is a system feature that you should at least know that it exists for your own piece of mind. And you should make sure that it is working otherwise you won't have any restore points to go back to.

Beware of new software — Before you decide to switch to new software, such as a new word processor, decide how much time you are willing to invest in learning a new program or even a new operating system, such as Vista. While I can get some things done in Vista programs, it's a real pain. Sometimes our older versions are really more than adequate.

An example: I started using PageMaker some 20 years ago. It was the page layout program. About 8 or 9 years ago I switched to MS Publisher and it was, for the most part, quite adequate.

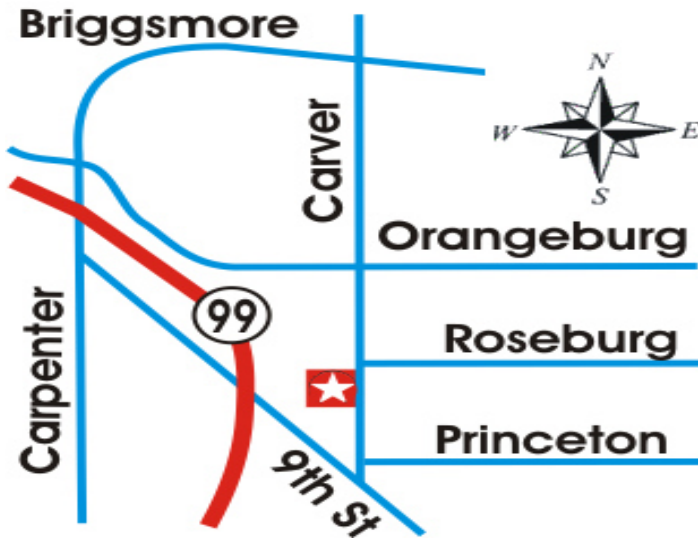
Then it became clear that I needed to upgrade to InDesign, Adobe's replacement for PageMaker. I'm still in shock at how much has been changed and how much I'm having to relearn. If I didn't need it, I wouldn't switch, but some of it's features are going to make future projects great. So in this case the switch will be worth it when I learn where to find the various "tools." Think before you leap into a new program. Maybe the new features aren't worth all the extra learning involved.

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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Elizabeth Leedom

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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.

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) 892-5037 before submission. Please include your name, day and evening phone numbers, and email address for contact.