

SIXTEEN BITS - ISSN 0817-0991

July 2004

PC Users Group: ABN 94 130 344 129

SIXTEEN BITS is published by the PC Users Group (ACT) Inc.

July Monthly Meeting

7:30 pm Monday 26th July. Manning Clark Theatre ANU

NET PROFIT: Investing on the Internet

Do you do your own share investing? Or do you leave it to others because you don't have the information to make decisions? The introduction of internet share brokers over the last 5 years has revolutionised investment by providing a wealth of information for those who use the Internet.

The speaker at our July PCUG Monthly Meeting is Julia Lee, Commonwealth Securities Ltd Client Education Manager. Apart from looking after their nation-wide seminar program, Julia specialises in stock-market seminars, training and media finance reports. She is an authorised representative of Commonwealth Securities Limited, a licensed dealer in securities and a Level 2 licensed dealer in derivatives. Commsec is Australia's largest online broker and provides fundamental and charting information, as well as live market information, through their web site www.comsec.com.au.

Julia will be speaking about the web-site and how it can be used to make more informed investment decisions. She will show you how to use the tools provided by Comsec in researching and selecting stocks. With over 1500 companies on the stockmarket, it becomes essential to have tools that help you filter information to enable better investment decisions.

If you are interested in online share investing, or merely want to see how it is done, come along to Theatre 3, Manning Clark Centre, Australian National University on 26 July 2004 at 7.30pm. It's free and open to the public. Free door prize for PCUG members. So bring your family, friends and fellow investors. More details and map at <http://www.pcug.org.au/mmm.htm>

All Welcome - It's free and open to the public

PCUG Internet Service Again Increases Download Quotas

All PCUG Internet Subscribers who connect through TransACT (both cable and ADSL) are advised that effective 1 July their download quota per month is increased to 600 MB (previously 500MB), with no increase in charges.

Further enhancements to the PCUG Internet Service are planned and will be announced when implemented. The PCUG Internet Service Sub-Committee particularly thanks Stephen Rothwell and his helpers among the volunteer internet administrators for doing the hard work to make this increase possible.

Thanks to John Saxon, you can view the PCUG connection Procedures:

<http://www.tip.net.au/connect>

Here are some procedures for setting up various operating systems to connect to the Canberra PC User's Group Internet system. The procedures include both dial-up (Modem) systems or Broadband (Via TransACT). ADSL is not covered. Each procedure is complete for easy printing. Procedure for Modem Installation and other items can be found in the trouble shooting procedures.

Committee Meetings -Time 7pm

Monday	9 August
Monday	13 September
Monday	11 October
Monday	8 November
Monday	13 December

Committee meetings are always held at the PC Users Group (ACT) Centre, Northpoint Plaza, Belconnen.

All members welcome



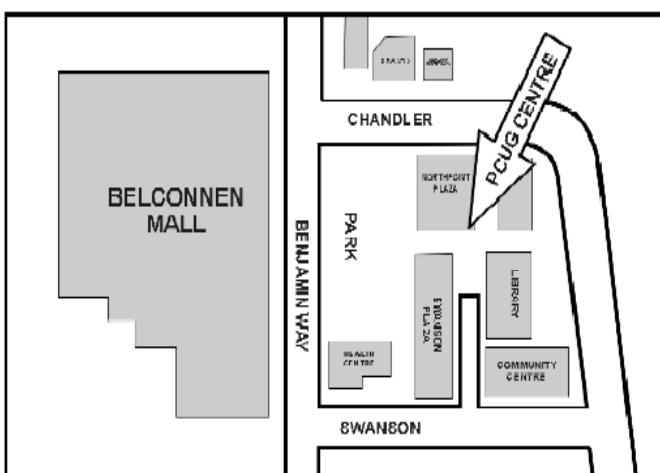
PC USERS GROUP (ACT) Inc.
<http://www.pcug.org.au>

Main phone number: (02) 6253 4911
(answering machine when Centre unattended)

Fax number: (02) 6253 4922
Email: pcug@pcug.org.au

Postal address
P.O. Box 42 Belconnen ACT 2616

Executive Secretary: Madeline Mould
Email: pcug.execsec@pcug.org.au



PC Users Group Centre
Northpoint Plaza, Belconnen

Opening Hours:
Weekdays (Monday to Friday) 10 am-2 pm
Saturdays and Sundays 10 am-4 pm (closed long weekends)

PCUG - PRELIMINARY NOTICE - 2004 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2004 Annual General Meeting of the PC Users Group (ACT) Inc. will be held on Monday 27 September 2004 in Manning Clarke Theatre 3 at the Australian National University starting at 7:30pm.

Copies of the draft minutes of the 2003 AGM and of the audited financial statement for the 2002 - 3 financial year can be downloaded from the PC Users Group documents page in the PCUG web site at <<http://www.pcug.org.au/docs.htm>>.

Attribution Acknowledgement

The article "Don't Like Spam? Don't Bounce Or Respond To Spam Messages!". which was published in the June 2004 16 Bits Newsletter was loosely based on a TIP newsgroup response provided by Jeremy Bishop.

PCUG Broadband Internet Service Now Available

PCUG now offers members Broadband Access to the internet using the ADSL system. Of course this is in addition to the services we already provide to members in our Internet Service - dial-up and broadband through TransACT.

The PCUG ADSL service is available anywhere in the ACT and NSW (and later anywhere in Australia), where the telephone lines are suitable for ADSL, that includes everywhere in the ACT and NSW that TransACT does not service.

Not the cheapest, but the best value for money! Do not be tricked by apparently cheaper offers that finish up costing you an arm and a leg in excess usage charges! Our charges are low and our download quotas the highest.

For more information on how the ADSL system works and detailed instructions on how to install it in your home, go to the website at <http://www.pcug.org.au/res-dsl/adsl_info.html>, or alternatively go to the PCUG Home Page at <<<http://www.pcug.org.au>> and follow the link to PCUG ADSL.

If you would like to find out if ADSL is available at your place, telephone the PCUG Centre and ask.

No More Give Away Table at PCUG Centre

The Centre Manager has decided to terminate the Give Away Table at the PCUG Centre.

Members who have computer books or equipment that they no longer need are invited to put an offer of the stuff in the "tip.pcug" newsgroup or submit a short advertisement to the Editor of the Newsletter.

For Your Fridge Door
EVENTS 2004
PCUG Centre: 6353 4911

PROGRAM Monthly Meetings: Time: 7.30 pm

Monday	26 July 2004	Computer use in Investment	
Monday	30 August 2004	Open Source Software	
Monday	27 September 2004		(Annual Meeting)
Monday	25 October 2004		

SIGS- Special Interest Groups

Coffee & Chat (North)	Western District Rugby Union Club	10:00am 11:30am Alternate Tuesdays	Jim Dick mobyj@pcug.org.au
Bytes	6pm Asian Bistro ANU Union	PCUG Meeting nights	Andrew Freeman 6258 7411 afrorman@pcug.org.au
Computers & Vegetarianism	Meets with Bytes SIG	PCUG Meeting nights	Andrew Freeman 6258 7411 afrorman@pcug.org.au
Investment	PCUG Centre Belconnen	7:30pm 4th Thursday	Roger Penhale 6290 0807 rpenhale@pcug.org.au
Networking	PCUG Centre Belconnen	7:30pm 1st Wednesday	Allan Hepworth allanh@pcug.org.au 0418 445 006
Internet Daytime Demo & Discussion	PCUG Centre Belconnen	10:00 am- Noon Every second Thursday	Allan Mikkelsen Amikkels@pcug.org.au
Linux User Group	Room N101 Computer Science Dept. ANU	7:00pm 4th Thursday	Stephen Rothwell sfr@canb.auug.org.au
Linux Learners	PCUG Centre Belconnen	10 until 12 Every second Thursday	Rodney Peters rpeters@pcug.org.au
Evening Internet	PCUG Centre Belconnen	7:00 pm Last Tuesday	Marion van Wely 6258 8750
Coffee & Chat (Southside)	Irish Club Weston	10:00-11:30 Alternate Tuesday	Jim Dick mobyj@pcug.org.au
Digital Imaging	Irish Club Weston	1:00 - 2:30 pm Alternate Tuesdays as for C&C Weston	Jeff Colwell jeffmeg@webone.com.au

FOR ALL ENQUIRIES AND PAYMENTS

regarding broadband, dial-up and other PC Users Group (ACT) services

Please contact THE PC USERS GROUP (ACT) Inc.
Email: pcug.execsec@pcug.org.au

Telephone: 02- 6253 4911
<http://www.pcug.org.au/pcug/>

TransACT Communications does not handle any PCUG internet accounts nor PCUG memberships.

2004 COMMITTEE

To reach all Committee members via email: pcug.committee@pcug.org.au

President David Lewis	pcug.president@pcug.org.au	Tel: 6226 8811 Mob: 0417 708811
Treasurer & Public Officer Noel Matthews	nomatthe@pcug.org.au	Tel: 02 6257 1962
Secretary Tom Hayes	pcug.secretary@pcug.org.au	Tel: 6254 2596
Vice President Vacant		
General Committee		
Graeme Evans	evans_digdiv@yahoo.com.au	Tel: 6251 6849
Paul Free	paul.free@pcug.org.au	Tel: 6251 1030
Allan Hepworth	allanh@pcug.org.au	Tel: 0418 445 006
Keith Sayers	kmsayers@pcug.org.au	Tel: 6258 6238
John Hodge	hodgej@pcug.org.au	Tel: 0404 328 468
Ken Ford	kenford@pcug.org.au	Tel: 6259 0475
Annette Fischer	abfischer@pcug.org.au	Tel: 6241 1829

Renewing your PCUG Membership or Internet Service Subscription (Dial-up or Broadband)

Members are reminded that they must provide both their log-in id (part before @ of your basic e-mail address) and membership number when they renew membership for Internet Service Subscription or Broadband.

PCUG membership renewal in particular does require your number as there are quite a few people who not only have the same surname but also the same first name.

When renewing by mail or telephone please fill in the renewal form at the end of this newsletter, it is essential that you correctly identify yourself with both username and PCUG membership number.

Members who fail to provide correct information may find that their payments have not been credited to them or that their renewal is withheld until details can be checked.

Help us to keep you up to date.

Please ensure that all details regarding your membership is up-to-date.

"Please advise the Executive Secretary at email <pcug.execsec@pcug.org.au> of all changes of address, telephone or email address."

Please Note: *The web based facility to pay PCUG subscriptions is temporarily unavailable*

CHECK THE SECURITY OF YOUR INTERNET CONNECTED COMPUTER

Gibson Research Corporation offers a free service which will do a thorough check on which ports on your computer are vulnerable and also tells you what to do. The service is called "Shields UP" - Just browse to this web site and follow the instructions - <<https://grc.com/x/ne.dll?bh0bkyd2>>.

EVENTS FOR JULY 04

JULY

Thu 1	Linux learners	Centre	10am to noon
Fri 2			
Sat 3	Internet clinic	Centre	11.30 to 1pm
Sun 4			
Mon 5			
Tue 6	Coffee & chat	Irish Club	9.30 to noon
Wed 7	Networking	Centre	7.30pm
Thu 8			
Fri 9			
Sat 10			
Sun 11			
Mon 12	Committee	Centre	7pm
Tue 13	Coffee & chat	Wests	9.30 to noon
Wed 14			
Thu 15	Linux learners	Centre	10am to noon
Fri 16			
Sat 17			
Sun 18			
Mon 19			
Tue 20	Coffee & chat	Wests	9.30 to noon
Wed 21			
Thu 22	Linux learners	Centre	10am to noon
	Investment	Centre	7.30pm
	Linux	Room 101 Comp Science ANU	7.30pm
Fri 23			
Sat 24			
Sun 25			
Mon 26	General Meeting	ANU	7 for 7.30pm
		Manning Clark Theatre 3	
	Bytes + vegearianism	Asian Bistro ANU	6pm
Tue 27	Coffee & chat	Irish Club	9.30 to noon
	Internet evening	Centre	7.30pm
Wed 28			
Thu 29			
Fri 30			
Sat 31			

AUGUST

Sun 1

NOTE: The Centre is open every Monday to Friday from 10am to 2pm and from 10am to 4pm on Saturday and Sunday except on public holidays.

"The Linux Learners SIG has set up a Linux Demonstration PC in the PCUG Centre. Any member of PCUG may try this system. Please check with the Staffer before using the PC"

The LAN Manager and Exec Sec have been advised of the above.

Rod Peters - Linux Learner's SIG Convener (6251 2580)

TRAINING 2004

Date	Time	Course	Comments
August			
Sunday 1	9:00 to 3:00	Introduction to MS Access	Teacher: Henk ten Brummelaar
Sunday 29	9:00 to 12:30	Improving your photos with PhotoShop - an introduction"	Knowledge of Windows 98 an advantage Teacher: Shane Barker
All full day courses cost \$44.00 for PCUG members.			

TRAINING COORDINATOR: Terry Giesecke

Email: terryg@pcug.org.au Tel: 6254 2896 (9 am- 9 pm)

VENUE: PC Users Group Centre, Northpoint Plaza, Belconnen

BOOKINGS: contact Madeline on 6253 4911 or email at pcug.execsec@pcug.org.au

Interested in a Youth Special Interest Group?

I have been thinking of forming a Special Interest Group for young people in the 13-25 years age group who are either members of PCUG or children of members.

The idea is to get together to exchange ideas and information about the things that affect our use of computers. It could be courses on software or hardware, safe use of chat and email, building a cheap computer, where to download software legally, digital photography and media, protection from viruses, spam and hackers, effective internet researching, etc. We could meet at the PCUG centre afternoons, evenings, weekends or school holidays, as necessary. If you are interested, or have any more ideas we can follow up, then email me at midas@pcug.org.au.

John Plumidis

PCUG Needs Volunteers

PCUG relies on the work of a team of volunteers to continue providing its many programs for members. We have a small but dedicated team of volunteers, but many have been working hard for PCUG for years. We need more people urgently.

Our internet service would not operate without the small group of dedicated and technically expert volunteers who manage our servers.

PCUG could not operate without the small group of dedicated members who volunteer their time to staff the PCUG Centre seven days a week (except on long weekends). The few volunteers who prepare the Computer Skills Centre for use by our trainers and training organisations which hire it do a critically important job.

Other volunteers run our stalls at the regular computer fairs in Canberra, organise our monthly meetings, print, envelope and mail our membership renewals, and do the many other small but important tasks that keep the club operations going.

We all owe them a big debt of gratitude.

But many of them are getting tired, so if you can give us up to four hours once or twice a month you will make a real contribution to the health of the Club. Please contact the President at email <pcug.president@pcug.org.au>.

The Club cannot function without volunteers

Can you Help?

We have need of 3 computers; preferably pentium 2 or 3.

If any member has one of these and is prepared to part company with it for a good cause please ring Madeline at the Centre - 6253 4911.

Report on Committee Meeting 12 July 2004

The Committee briefly reviewed progress on updating the PCUG web site and the automated payments system. It agreed that the proposal for an Internet Only Membership should be circulated to members for comment and expressions of interest (see elsewhere in this newsletter).

The next Members Information Session will be held in the PCUG Centre starting at 2pm on Saturday 11 September. Work on updating the Help Directory is continuing and hopefully the updated Directory will be published in the August Newsletter.

The Committee met with John Plumidis who has offered to start a Youth SIG. The Committee welcomed this initiative and assured John of its support.

The Treasurer reported that the financial result for the year ending 30 June was much as expected. The cash surplus for the year was \$38,000. He warned that the continuing fall in membership will make it difficult to maintain a positive financial position in the coming years.

The Committee reviewed planning for the Annual General Meeting, to be held on Monday 27 September at 1930. Calls for nominations to the Committee in the following year will be issued soon. A copy of the draft minutes of the 2003 AGM will be placed in the web site for perusal by members, and the audited financial report will also be placed there if it is available in time.

Paul Free reported on the results of the consultation with members which ended recently. Over 25% of the membership had responded to the survey - a most satisfactory result. A wide range of opinions and comments was submitted by members. A full report on the results of the consultation and the Committee's response to them will be published before the Annual General Meeting.

A report on the ongoing discussions with the Belconnen Community Service was considered. A submission had been made to the ACT Government seeking funding for a jointly operated service in the Belconnen area aimed at assisting people who are currently disadvantaged in the use of computers and the internet. If the joint service is established PCUG will be committed to providing volunteer support and the availability of the Centre to the project.

The bulk of the time at the meeting was taken in discussing options for the future of the PCUG Centre. The current lease expires on 30 November. Options to move to a smaller set of rooms elsewhere were considered as well as the option of remaining at the present location but reducing the area we rent. The financial implications for the club were a major consideration as the cost of the Centre currently absorbs 70% of membership fees.

The Committee agreed to begin immediately discussions with the landlord to explore the cost of retaining the current Centre.

PCUG Internet Service

PCUG has recently made more improvements to the PCUG Internet Service

Transparent proxying on our internet service has now implemented. This means that you no longer MUST specify a proxy server in your browser configuration. The proxy server will continue to be used for all standard world wide web traffic. Existing configurations will continue to work and there is no need to change them.

If a proxy server is configured, that will be used. If none is specified, the TIP system will automatically forward all standard web traffic to our proxy server.

The TIP servers are now protected by a firewall. The servers are set up so that any connections initiated from them are OK, but inbound connections are only allowed to certain standard ports.

Currently the following ports inbound to all our machines (including members) are blocked:

TCP: 69 sunrpc ldap ldaps 135-139 445

UDP: tftp sunrpc snmp snmp-trap 2049 ldap ldaps 135-139 445

And outbound TCP: 135-139 445

The 135-139 range and 445 are to prevent the spread of the recent MS viruses that seem to be still with us.

Please send any requests for ports to be "opened" and report any problems to <help@tip.net.au>.

Effective the beginning of February we have added six more modems for use by dial-up users, giving our dial-up users access to a total of ninety modems.

To subscribe to the PCUG Internet Service contact the PCUG Centre.

Problems Logging into the Internet Service?

If you ever find yourself failing to log in to TIP, STOP and don't waste any more money trying to dial in again. The two major reasons for failing to login are firstly, you have run out of TIP or PCUG membership, or secondly, your Username and or your Password have become corrupt. Paying more money fixes the first problem, re-typing your Username and Password into the Log In dialogue fixes the second problem 99% of the time. If neither of those fixes works for you then telephone the PCUG Centre and ask for help (unless you can access someone else's email, in which case send an email to <help@tip.net.au>.



Using TransACT for Broadband?
Connect through PCUG.

"Minimum payment \$75 for three months or 1800 MB."

now that's clever

Proposed New Membership Category

The PCUG Committee is considering a proposal for a new category of membership in PCUG, and invites members to comment on the proposal. The new category would be "Internet Only Membership".

Internet Only Members would pay a single annual PCUG membership fee, which would pay for their internet service and club membership. The fee would be slightly higher than the current price for the various Internet services alone, as the current pricing is based on best price for PCUG club members, but less than the current price for Internet Service plus Full Membership. Internet Only Membership Fees would only be offered as an annual subscription and not 3 or 6-month plans. The Membership Fee for Internet Only Members would entitle them to access the PCUG Internet Service, but would not entitle them to any other services available to Full Members.

Internet Only Members would receive Internet help (connection or technical) via Email or newgroups only. Telephone assistance would not be offered. The Internet Only Members would not have access to the Belconnen Centre other than to pay their renewal fees, nor to the members price for training courses. They would not have access to any of the PCUG supported SIGS. The Internet Only Member would not have access to the HIT teams or would be able to be a member in a HIT team for support.

Internet Only Members would need to remain financial at all times, as no grace periods for renewal will be offered. Mailboxes and home pages would be deleted once the member becomes non financial. A reconnection fee will then be charged if the Internet Only Member wants to reconnect after disconnection.

Members who wish to comment on this proposal, or who are interested in registering interest in joining this new category, should Email PCUG.consultation@pcug.org.au.

CHEAPER INTERNET SERVICE

PCUG Internet Service charges for dial-up Full Service users are now -

- Pay in Advance for 12 Months or 360 hours on line (which ever comes first) - \$119.00 (\$9.92 per month)
- Pay in Advance for 6 Months (or 180 hours on line (which ever comes first) - \$69.00 (\$11.50 per month)
- Pay in Advance for 3 Months (or 90 hours on line (which ever comes first) - \$39.00 (\$13.00 per month).

Broadband service via TransACT charges are as follows -

- Pay in Advance for 12 months or 7,200 Mb downloaded (which ever comes first) - \$280.00 (\$23.33 per month)
- Pay in Advance for 6 Months or 3,600 Mb downloaded (which ever comes first) - \$145.00 (\$24.17 per month)
- Pay in Advance for 3 Months (or 1,800 Mb downloaded (which ever comes first) - \$75.00 (\$25.00 per month)

Members are encouraged to take advantage of these very competitive prices with the assurance that they will never pay excess charges and when internet prices come down further they will again benefit.

Local newsgroups on TIP

A number of local newsgroups are available on the TIP news server for the benefit and use of TIP members. The names and purpose of each group are outlined below.

<[tip.announce](#)"news:[tip.announce](#)>[tip.announce](#) Official announcements from the Internet Project Management Committee (IPMC), TIP Administration, the PCUG and AUUG Committees and other important announcements. This is a moderated newsgroup, which means that all postings to this newsgroup must be approved by the moderator before they are published.

If you subscribe to no other tip.* newsgroups, PLEASE subscribe to [tip.announce](#)!

<[tip.general](#)"news:[tip.general](#)>[tip.general](#) Anything of general interest to TIP users. Examples might be questions about TIP pricing, connection policy, or tips on how to get the latest software, good places to surf the net, new software that others might be interested in.

<[tip.help](#)"news:[tip.help](#)>[tip.help](#) Questions (and hopefully answers) relating to using TIP, Internet connectivity and the Internet in general, problems with personal computers (hardware and software) and so on.

Please be aware that the [tip.help](#) newsgroup is completely separate from the TIP Help email alias (help@tip.net.au). The email alias should ONLY be used for urgent TIP-specific problems, and only when a personal reply is needed, instead of a general reply that may be useful to others.

Please DON'T post to [tip.help](#) AND send email to the help alias - one or the other, but not both!

<[tip.pcug](#)"news:[tip.pcug](#)>[tip.pcug](#) Discussion of PCUG affairs other than TIP, particularly member services, voluntarism, group management, etc.

<[tip.coffee-chat](#)"news:[tip.coffee-chat](#)>[tip.coffee-chat](#) Discussion and announcements related to the Coffee 'n' Chat special interest group (SIG), and anyone else who's vaguely interested in relaxed conversation on a wide variety of subjects.

<[tip.test](#)"news:[tip.test](#)>[tip.test](#) THE place to test your newsreader, see what your signature looks like, and play with newsreader options without annoying the TIP populace.

Thanks to Noel Mathews for compiling this list.

Windows Security Update CD Free from Microsoft

Microsoft is offering a Windows Security Update CD-ROM that includes most of the critical updates for Windows 98 (first and second editions), Windows Millennium Edition (ME), Windows 2000, and Windows XP. The CD includes all of the critical updates released up to October 15, 2003. There is no charge for the CD - not even a shipping charge. You can order it by going to <<http://www.microsoft.com/asia/default.asp>>.

I recommend you order the CD if you are using any of the ` operating systems that it covers, even if you have regularly installed the updates. If you already have the updates, it will save you time and trouble if you ever have to reinstall Windows. If you have not kept pace with the updates, by all means get the CD and install the appropriate ones for your operating system.

Please note that the CD does not include any updates issued after October 15 of last year. There have been a number of them. Therefore, if you have been keeping up with the Windows critical updates, please continue to do so. If you have not installed any of the updates, I suggest that you wait until you get the CD, install the appropriate updates, then go to the Windows Update Web page and get the ones that you don't already have.

Editors Note: Thanks to Noel Matthews for providing this article

PCUG - CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR ELECTION TO COMMITTEE

The 2004 Annual General Meeting of the PC Users Group (ACT) Inc. will be held on Monday 27 September 2004 in Manning Clarke Theatre 3 at the Australian National University starting at 7:30pm.

The Constitution of the PC Users Group (ACT) Incorporated (As Amended to September 2003) states (among other things)

17. Election of Committee members

(1) Nomination of candidates for election as office-bearers of the Association or as ordinary Committee members can only be made by current and financial members of the Association, and shall be made by delivering a completed Committee Nomination Form to the Association no later than six days before the date fixed for the annual general meeting at which the election is to take place ("the election date").

(2) If insufficient nominations are received to fill all vacancies on the Committee, the candidates nominated shall be deemed to be elected.

(3) A vacant position remaining on the Committee shall be deemed to be a vacancy for the purpose of Rule 16(4).

Nominations are now called for election to the PCUG Committee at the 2004 Annual Meeting. Nominations will close at 5pm on Tuesday 21 September 2004.

The nomination form is at the end of this newsletter.

All Members of the PC Users Group (ACT) Inc. are invited to submit nominations of suitable people to serve on the PCUG Committee for the year beginning in September 2004. Please lodge your nominations as soon as possible.

Please lodge your nominations at the PCUG Centre no later than 5pm on Tuesday 21 September 2004.

Note that the PCUG Centre is open between 10:00 am and 3:00 pm on Fridays. Nominations lodged after 3:00 pm on Tuesday 21 September 2004 may not reach the Secretary before nominations close.

Tom Hayes
PCUG Secretary

3D Magic Mahjongg Holidays review

John Plumidis

I once promised myself not to become addicted to simple, easy-to-play games. Instead of losing all those hours to Minesweeper and Solitaire, I could have been... oh wait, it's school holidays.

Thus I find myself reviewing 3D Magic Mahjongg Holidays. The game consists of a board full of colourful tiles. Match two identical 'free' tiles to remove them from the board, eliminate all tiles to complete the game. Simple?

Wait, the game is in 3D. Tiles are stacked on top of and around each other, hiding tiles from view. Worse, the designs on each tile can be deceptively similar. This increases the difficulty of the game. Fortunately, the intuitive controls, interactive help pop-ups, and online help each make learning the game relatively painless. Viewing the complete board is made easy via the rotate and zoom controls,

The tile designs, backgrounds, and even the MIDI soundtrack can be customised according to 'holiday' themes - 4th of July, Christmas, Easter, Valentine, and Halloween - as well as some less festive designs. I wasn't impressed with the default theme, filled with American stars and stripes. In my preferred Halloween theme (set to the 'Nightmare' soundtrack), translucent ghosts cross the screen, disappearing in a puff of smoke with a click of the mouse. I appreciated the attention paid in 3DMMH to such details.

What makes this game addictive is the countdown timer. This means that clearing the board becomes a race against the clock in an effort to set a new high score. Making use of the 'hint,' 'undo' or 'shuffle' functions (the latter rearranging the tiles - handy when no available moves are left) incurs a time penalty, rewarding the bright sparks who can think two moves ahead.

The developer of 3DMMH, Suricate Software (www.suricate-software.com <<http://www.suricate-software.com>>), specialises in family-friendly games. Suricate has kindly offered 30% off the purchase price of 3DMMH to PCUG members who order via their website (8.1Mb download). Be sure your PC has DirectX 8.1 pre-installed, and is at least a PII 300Mhz with a 3D accelerator card. The test machines were a P166 (the game failed to load) and a P4 (Seamless!).

Also available from the website are similar Mahjongg and other family-friendly games, including free demos. I look forward to an Australian Holiday Mahjongg - complete with themes for ANZAC Day, the Melbourne Cup, and the trip to the beach.

Note - PCUG Members are eligible for a 30% discount on all Suricate Software. ACT PC Users Group members can purchase any game from their site <<http://www.suricate-software.com>> at 30% off. To qualify for the discount, just enter the word "actpcug" (without quotation marks) in the field "Your coupon code" at the bottom of each of the secure order forms.

Thanks to John Plumidis for this review



CANBERRA GAMES FESTIVAL 2004

'More than you Imagine...'

The Academy of Interactive Entertainment Ltd (AIE) is gearing the Nation's Capital up for the first ever Canberra Games Festival as 'More than you imagine...'. The Festival is open to both hard-core gamers and anyone who is willing to have a go. Entry is free!

Here are just some of the activities celebrating interactive entertainment and strategic game play at this year's Festival: 36hr LAN, Tribes Vengeance Focus Group Testing, AIE Diploma of Computer Game Development Focus Testing, Game Play Rooms (LAN games and PS2 games), Exhibits, Workshops, Laser Games, Euro Games and Strategy, Tactical and War Games. Thousands of dollars worth of prizes are up for grabs. It is going to be HUGE!

Public Workshops are only \$2.00 each and include: The Future of Video Games, What Makes a Great Game For Kids and Games Made Me Do It. Or if you're after something a little more advanced, why not check out one of these workshops: The Why and How of Rapid Prototyping and Digital Art, Traditional Techniques.

The exhibition is open from 9:30am to 5pm on Saturday 24 July and 9:30am to 4:00pm on Sunday 25 July in Block E at Canberra Technology Park, Phillip Avenue, Watson. Come and check out computer game and strategy game retailers, educators and interactive technology businesses. Visit the PCUG stall in Booth 8 while you are there.

Entry to the Festival is FREE* (*fees for selected activities).
Visit www.canberragamesfestival.com for more information.

CD's Are Not Immortal!

by George Carrington

Despite claims by manufacturers, CDs – and DVDs, which are after all made in exactly the same way – have now been shown to be anything but immortal. In fact, some CDs, recorded in the 80's, have shown distinct signs of what has been called CD rot.

I feel that it was somehow ironic that I came across this article (<<http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,1759,1585525,00.asp>>) in the evening of the day when I'd just run a session at Chez Georges on transferring LP's to CDs. Apparently the discovery was made by somebody who has an extensive (something like 2000+) CD collection, that they had packed away during a move. On unpacking these CDs, the poor sod discovered that some CDs, mostly the older ones, wouldn't play, or if they did, sounded terrible, with cracks and skips. And here he had thought that the bane of Vinyl had been defeated!

Apparently his collection was suffering from what the experts now term CD rot. If you look at a CD, or a DVD for that matter, you will notice that it consists basically of an aluminium disk, with a thick (you'll have to take my word for that!) layer on one side and a thin layer on the other. The thick layer is where you record stuff when you burn a CD, the thin layer simply covers the label, if any, on the top side of the CD.

And that is where the problem lies – in the thin top layer. Mechanical abuse – which apparently can be something as simple as using a biro to label your CD to the flexing that can occur when you get one of those sticky Jewel cases that virtually force you to bend the CD to get it out – is the primary cause. Such mechanical abuse can break the thin top layer of plastic, and let the air in. And, believe it or not, aluminium “rusts” just as much as iron. For the benefit of those who slept through Chem101 at school, rust is simply the result of an interaction of oxygen and a metal. Most of us are well and truly familiar with that phenomenon when it comes to iron products. When you clean off the rust, you're left with tiny pits. If the sheet of metal is thin, these pits will go straight through.

But, as your CD depends on the shiny aluminium disc to reflect the laser beam back into the player, when you get pits (or, more precisely, holes) in that disc, the laser beam will go straight through. If you're playing music, I presume this will result in a spot of silence – and if there are not too many of them, you'll probably won't even notice these “silences”. But, with data, it's a different story. As you know, digital data is really simply a collection of zeros and ones. On a CD these are represented as holes in the plastic – which means the laser beam gets reflected one way – or flats, meaning the laser beam gets reflected another way. In actual fact, only the laser beams reflected from one (or the other – my references aren't explicit on this) are counted, the others are ignored. But, if the laser beam should have been reflected, but wasn't, because there is a hole in the bucket (err... aluminium disc), you'll get something else that what was intended – an error.

Some of the experts have said, we were all only too well aware that our vinyl discs were “vulnerable” – to dust, scratches, finger prints and mould in the tropics! – Ivan), and we treated them with care. But CDs, we were told, were virtually indestructible. It seems that CDs are vulnerable to much the same things as our vinyl records, except that it is the non-playing top side that is actually the problem.

What do the “experts” recommend? Well, for a start, they suggest that you have a good look at all those “old” CDs you have lying around, and check them for any sign of discolouration. “Rust” on aluminium looks like a white powder. Any that are affected, the “experts” recommend you either replace or, if that is still feasible, re-record. They are, however, remarkably silent about how to cope with data CDs – or possibly there were none that far back?

Second, they recommend that you should handle CDs with the same care that you'd handle vinyl records – fine, if you're old enough to remember what vinyl records looked like! Apparently pasting labels onto CDs is a distinct No-No – makes me wonder what the printing process (by which means you get those pretty labelled application CDs!) does to that “fragile” top layer. Another No-No is using anything but soft pens – water or alcohol based – to write on CDs, because pressing hard down to write on a CD can break the top layer.

And, last but not least, finger prints. On the underside of the CD they can cause trouble by deflecting the laser beam, on top they cause trouble because they contain acids. And, as the experts point out, all it takes is one minute break. For maximum longevity, CDs should, just like your vinyl records, be stored vertically. Both plastics and metals expand and contract with heat – another way of getting a crack. Store your CDs therefore in a cool dry place. Handle them by the edges, and try not to bend them.

What really got me though was that apparently there is no way of verifying manufacturer's claims of CDs longevity, mainly because they can, and frequently do, change production methods and materials, without telling anybody, least of all the final user. As one expert commented, if you went to a store and bought the same brand of CD now as you had bought six months ago, there is no guarantee that they are the same – so much for sticking with a “reputable” brand.

What I find amusing out of all this is that here goes another myth of the ‘digital’ age. Remember how we were going to be able to ditch paper, and keep all of our records electronically? I have quite a few books in this house which are well over a hundred years old, we own several “vinyl” records that are sixty or more years old, which are still as good as they were when the family first got them (well, most of them – some got a bit worn entertaining the kids!).

So next time you consider transferring your LPs to CDs, do so for the convenience of playing them – in the car or your portable CD player. Just don't kid yourself that the CDs will last.

Editors Note: George Carrington is the Editor of the ACT Apple User Group Newsletter Apple@CT. This article was published in the June Apple@CT newsletter. Thanks to George for his permission to publish this article.

POPFile - More than just a spam filter.

by Andrew Purdam

Whilst many folks are very happy with Mailwisher as their spam filter, I've been experimenting with another spam filtering method, written by anti-spam and open-source enthusiast John Graham-Cumming, called POPFile (source:

<http://popfile.sourceforge.net/>) . Unlike Mailwisher, which you use as a separate mail client for previewing e-mails and deleting suspected spam and viruses, POPFile fits itself into your internet mail protocol. It requires a pretty straightforward change to your mail client (alteration of mail server and account details) and needs the POPFile server to be running when you download mail. It works as a *proxy*, much like many e-mail-virus-checkers. It then tags all downloaded e-mail based on the content, either with an alteration to the subject line or through an additional header, and your e-mail client can deal with the e-mails as you wish.

POPFile implements what is called a *naïve Bayesian* algorithm, which basically uses raw statistics on word occurrences and frequencies within each e-mail body and its headers. As a quick instance, the word Viagra appears in many e-mails that most of us would consider spam. However, if you are a doctor specialising in spinal cord injury in males, it might be a legitimate word in some of your correspondence. In most spam, the word Viagra (or, these days, V1agra, Vi@gra, Via8ra, etc) might also contain the word "click" or "buy" whereas the SCI doctor might find the word spinal or dysfunction occurs in e-mails that also contain the word Viagra. As POPFile learns these distinctions, you have to teach it when it makes a mistake. This way, it builds up a "corpus" ("body") of statistical occurrences of each word, with a probability of whether it will occur in spam or not. After about 100 e-mails, it is about 90% accurate. The nice thing about POPFile (at least in theory) is that as spammers find new methods for defeating keyword identifiers, POPFile adapts to these, often "guessing" correctly the first time. By 500 e-mails, expect about 95% accuracy. By 1000 e-mails, expect about 97% or more accuracy. For me, the accuracy is 95% after 1000 e-mails, and 95.9% after 1500 e-mails.

POPFile accuracy stats (source: http://www.usethesource.com/popfile_stats.html) were gathered from 367000 returns over the last 12 months.

Accuracy	Percentage of all users achieving this	% of users who had processed 500 or more e-mails
>= 90%	90%	95%
>= 95%	79%	86%
>= 98%	54%	60%
>= 99%	34%	37%

So how do you train POPFile? It keeps a separate history of the last two (configurable) days' worth of messages. If you find a new message in your e-mail client that has been misclassified or left unclassified by POPFile, you can either double-click on the reference header that POPFile put in there (at least, Agent lets you do this very easily. Outlook and OE are a bit more fiddly for access to headers), or simply start up POPFile's user interface and select the e-mail from the history list. Either way, it is then just a matter of

The screenshot shows the POPFile Control Center interface. At the top, there's a menu bar with File, Edit, View, Favorites, Tools, Help, and an Address field set to http://127.0.0.1:8080/history. Below the menu is a toolbar with various icons. The main window title is 'POPFile Control Center'. There are tabs for History, Buckets, Magnets, Configuration, Security, and Advanced. The History tab is selected. A sub-header 'Recent Messages' is displayed. Below that is a search bar with 'Search From/Subject:' and buttons for Find, Filter By, Filter, and Reset. A link 'Jump to page: 1 [2] [3] [4] [Next >] (Refresh)' is also present. The main list area shows 12 messages with columns for ID, From, Subject, Classification, Reclassify, and Remove. The first message is marked as spam. The 12th message is marked as Internet. The 'Classification' column contains dropdown menus for spam, ham, or scam. The 'Reclassify' and 'Remove' buttons are visible for each message.

using a drop-down box to reclassify the message.

I should point out that POPFile can do more than simply classify the dichotomy of spam and not-spam (or ham, as I prefer to call it). For instance, I have classes (called "buckets" by POPFile) for spam, ham, virus-or-worm, scams (eg Nigerian ex-trade-ministers, or bank impersonators), and other noise (eg bounce messages from well-meaning postmasters who haven't yet twigged that most return addresses of spam and viruses are forged, or bounce messages from MailWasher users). Whilst this isn't necessary for differentiating wanted from unwanted e-mail, it is of mild academic interest. For instance, of the 220 messages I had received in 16 days before TIP's spam-filtering was turned off, 111 (yes, half of them) have been spam, 59 (about a quarter) virus-or-worm, 6 scams, 1 bounce message, and 43 real messages. The twenty mistakes it

The screenshot shows the POPFile Control Center interface. The top menu bar includes File, Edit, View, Favorites, Tools, Help, and an Address bar pointing to http://127.0.0.1:8080/buckets?session=AIk5zoX. Below the menu is a toolbar with various icons. The main window has tabs: History, Buckets (selected), Magnets, Configuration, Security, and Advanced. Under Buckets, the 'Bucket Configuration' section lists several buckets with their names, distinct words, subject header modification, and various classification headers like X-Text-Classification and X-POPFile-Link. A color-coded legend indicates bucket types. The 'Classification Accuracy' section shows messages classified (523), errors (38), and an accuracy of 92.73%. It also includes a horizontal bar chart from 0% to 100% and a table of messages classified by bucket. The 'Messages Classified' section shows a table of bucket names, classification counts, and false positives/negatives. The 'Word Counts' section shows a table of buckets and their word counts.

made (it is still learning) were 15 false positives on ham and 5 false positives on spam. Nine more messages it declined to adjudicate on. In the six days since the above stats were collected, spam filtering at TIP was turned off, and my results are now, of 303 new messages, 215 were spam (nearly $\frac{3}{4}$!), 38 viruses (about 1/8 netsky has now died down), 13 scams, 7 bounces and 30 real messages (less than 10%, the price you pay for internet fame?!?). My long term averages are now 66% spam, 14% viruses, 14% ham. So, what does POPFile look like? The most common things in POPFile that I want to do is reclassify e-mails, or look at the stats. Here's a snapshot of the history screen, which shows your most recent messages.

As you can see, it is very easy to reclassify any message. (This capture contains many more reclassifications than what I normally do: less than one in ten, and falling). You can see how I had to teach POPFile about the PayPal scam (a false negative on scams POPFile thought it was spam), the announcement that my XANAX (what's XANAX?) is ready (a false negative on a new type of spam), and worst of all, my friend's HTML newsletter to over fifty friends. Strictly speaking, it had a lot to say it was spam (multiple recipients, HTML content, embedded photos, bigpond as a source), but in this case POPFile was wrong. This raises a very important point in dealing with spam. *Never bin spam before you have checked it.* I had to retrieve this message from the SPAM folder (very easy in almost any newsreader) before deleting the rest.

The buckets page shows both statistics on how POPFile categorises things, as well as category-specific settings (like whether POPFile should add “[spam]” to the subject line, or add an X-Text-Classification header, or a POPFile-Link (a handy URL to the message on the local POPFile server, eg http://127.0.0.1:8080/jump_to_message?view=popfile144=1.msg which of course only works whilst the message is in POPFile's recent history)). The bottom lines are the Messages Classified table, and the Accuracy Graph. These show what your breakdown of messages is, and how well POPFile is doing at automatically sorting it for you. So the above capture shows POPFile made a mistake with 38 classifications, and couldn't confidently classify 20 more. So I've only had to intervene for 58 out of 523 messages, and I'm expecting it to improve. (Since then, accuracy has climbed to 95.9%, and I now intervene in about one in 25 messages).

So what's under the bonnet?

POPFile is written mainly in Perl, implemented in the Windows distribution by a standalone Activeperl. The authors really liked Perl for its portability and its string handling. The database end is powered by MySQLLite. Both of these systems are installed with POPFile, under the GNU Licensing Model (more or less freeware). Most of the processing is done by a resident program (a “daemon”) which you configure your e-mail client to ask for messages. The daemon will then ask your normal mailhost (eg the mail server at TIP, but it can be any host) for e-mail. It scans the e-mail as it comes in, performs its little statistical magic on the content and based on that decides which bucket the message belongs to. Then, based on what you have asked POPFile to do with that bucket, it will mark it accordingly and pass the e-mail onto your mail client. Then, if you have configured your mail client correctly, the message will be filed in an appropriate mail folder, or subjected to other sorting, based on other headers. In fact some users of POPFile use it for sorting their real mail as well.

Whilst installing and setting up POPFile is pretty straightforward, it can have its moments. It worked perfectly on my Win 98SE system first time. However it took some major tweaking on my XP system at work, and I abandoned it due to apparent conflicts with VET antivirus' mail scanning (work already had SpamBully anyway). POPFile used to occasionally hang on my 98SE system, something easily fixed by closing and restarting POPFile, but I have not had any hangs since I removed their handy systray option. Like many open source software projects, it is hard to make one size that fits all operating systems.

Whilst not as hand-and-glove as SpamBully for Outlook Express and Outlook, and missing the sometimes aggressive blacklist facility of MailWasher and SpamBully, POPFile fills an important niche for bold folks who want a spam filter that they can get their teeth into.

Editors Note: Thanks to Andrew for contributing this article.



PC Users Group (ACT)
PO Box 42
Belconnen ACT 2616
Phone (02) 6253 4911
Fax (02) 6253 4922

COMMITTEE NOMINATION FORM 2004-2005

NOMINATIONS CLOSE: 5pm on Tuesday 21 September 2004.

NOMINATED:

I, _____, a financial member of the PC Users Group (ACT) inc, hereby nominate:
(PRINT full name)

_____ for the position of _____
(PRINT full name of nominee)

Signed: _____ Membership No: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

SECONDED:

I, _____, a financial member of the PC Users Group (ACT) inc, second the above
(PRINT full name)
nomination:

Signed: _____ Membership No: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____
(Signature of seconder)

ACCEPTED:

I, _____, a financial member of the PC Users Group (ACT) inc, accept the above
(PRINT full name)
nomination:

Signed: _____ Membership No: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____
(Signature of nominee)

Rules for Nomination

1. All nominations must have written consent of the nominee, who can nominate themselves.
 2. All nominations must be received at the PCUG centre by 5pm on Tuesday 21 September 2004..
 3. Nominations can be delivered personally, faxed (6253 4922) to the PC Users Group Centre which is located in Northpoint Plaza, Chandler Street, Belconnen, or sent by email to <pcug.execsec@pcug.org.au>.
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