

MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP

April 2001 Newsletter



Quips N' Tips

by Rick Howell

I want to start this month by giving you something for free. Everybody likes free things, right? Several years ago we maintained a library of shareware for the group. Several of our members volunteered to collect shareware or freeware, put it on floppy disks, and bring it to the meetings to make it available to our members for a small fee. It was a great way for people to pick up some pretty cool programs and the club made some money to boot. The internet has made this club function obsolete. If you are not familiar with the concept of shareware, I will try to explain it to you. There are a lot of talented computer programmers out there who develop programs for their own use or to try to make a little money. By making the software available as a free download, they can let people try their software, and if they like it, they can send the author a small fee for using it. Sometimes this is an honor system, or sometimes the author disables some features on the shareware version of the software, and only provides full-functioned software when you pay for it. Either way, it is a great concept. Software is distributed over the internet by web sites specializing in shareware distribution. That is my gift to you this month...a listing of web sites where you can go to get shareware. Check them out. Chances are if you need a program for a specific application, someone else has already written it.

For free shareware downloads, go to:
www.zdnet.com/downloads
download.cnet.com
www.freedownloadcenter.com
www.programfiles.com

If you happen to need some royalty-free clipart to use any way you want, check out:
www.clipartconnection.com
www.allfreecart.com

Free email services are available at:
www.hotmail.com
www.netaddress.com
mail.yahoo.com
www.eudoramail.com

That's about enough freebies for this month. Let's get down to some more system-oriented information. Right now, sales of computer systems are way off. Last year, chip manufacturers were anticipating a long continuance of the bull market and stepped up production of memory chips for computers. This oversupply of chips on the market and smaller demand for computer systems have made memory chips about as valuable as cow chips. If you have ever wanted to see how your system would work with more memory, now would be a great time to find out as there are some great bargains on standard memory chips. Rambus and DDR DRAM are still commanding premium prices, but these are only used in the higher-end systems on the market today.

If you're thinking about building a system, there is no time like the present. The glut of processors and motherboards has sent component prices spiraling downward as well. You can build a heck of a system these days for not a lot of money, especially if you are willing to settle for a system that is not in the above-1GHz range. If you are thinking about building a system, but have been reluctant to attempt it on your own, contact **Steven Turner** for information about the Hardware Special Interest Group. It

is a great opportunity for you to learn how to build and maintain computer systems.

MEETING NOTICE

by: *George Miner*

When: Tuesday, April 10th at 7:15 PM

Where: Old Bedford School (in 1800 block of Bedford Road)

Program: Our speaker for April will be **Todd Phillips** from Intel. This should prove to be a very informative and interesting program. Please come and bring a guest.

A new dimension is going to be added to the internet after the second quarter of this year. Voice-XML is scheduled to appear on the market at this time. Voice-XML, an extension of the XML language, will provide voice recognition and speech synthesis capabilities for web-based applications. In laymen's terms, this could be the method by which we have web pages that talk to you and listen when you talk. It's gonna get interesting folks.

Also this year, we are going to see

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Seasonal Festive Finds

Submitted by Sheryllynn Roberts



Trees are blooming, skies are bluing, and spring fever is about to hit. Here are some seasonal festive finds and gardening links to surf while the weather is changing.

<http://www.eeggs.com/>

"What is an "Easter Egg"? - The term "Easter Egg", as we use it here, means any amusing tidbit that creators hid in their creations. They could be in computer software, movies, music, art, books, or even your watch. "

<http://www.htsoft.com/easter/>

Another e-egg page, dated, but listing some classics.

<http://www.holidays.net/easter/>

A page full of Easter links-- history, games, and recipes. A word of caution-- there are banner ads right below the title that look like a real windows dialog warning; just scroll down to the many legitimate links.

<http://www.billybear4kids.com/holidays/easter/fun.htm>

Here is another great Billy Bear's Playground page, with lots of art, games, stories, and crafts.

<http://www.night.net/easter>

Another page of activities, including ways to decorate eggs and to make natural dyes

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/7134/Easter/>

"Absolutely Easter" page has a village that can be printed, cut out and assembled.

<http://www.cs.unc.edu/~yakowenk/pysanky/index.html>

"Pysanky - Ukrainian Easter Eggs" beautiful pictures, with instructions and links.

[Http://www.pasterywiz.com/season/easter.htm](http://www.pasterywiz.com/season/easter.htm) "Easter Recipes, Easter Modeling & Easter Cake Decorating." Luscious pictures. Yumm!

<http://www.virtualchocolate.com/easter/index.cfm>

These mouthwatering greeting cards and wallpapers are too tempting.

[Http://www.geocities.com/Paris/Rue/4819/](http://www.geocities.com/Paris/Rue/4819/) Send a Faberge egg card.

<http://www.garden.org/> "National Gardening Association" site has pictures, articles, and info

<http://www.aabga.org/>

"The American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta (AABGA)"

<http://www.bhglive.com/gardening/index.html>

"Better Homes and Gardens"

<http://www.yardcare.com/>

"Ask Earl, the lawn care guy" Way too much advice about grass.

<http://www.noproblemgarden.com/>

Good fun for the rest of us.

<http://www.ergonica.com/>

"The World of Weeds" Weed history, weed poetry, its all here.

<http://members.aol.com/gdhose/hosehome.html>

"Garden Hose Safety" That poor servant of the yard gets attention.

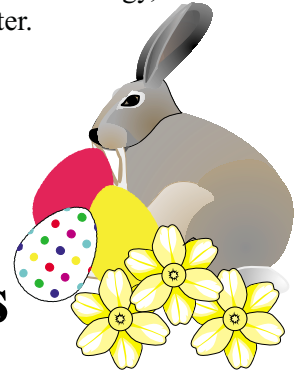
<http://www.notsogreenthumb.org/>

A very classy personal site that mixes music with hobbies of flowers and photos. The slide shows are beautiful.

[Http://www.istec.demon.co.uk/](http://www.istec.demon.co.uk/)

<http://www.thomasregional.com/newtrd/showhds.html?us=AA:3ac6d1af09c73&word=130>

And for those of you whose "spring has sprung"... learn why at the Institute of Spring Technology, and find a replacement in the Thomas Register.



Quips N' Tips

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tablet-style computers. These are computers which are basically a flat screen. They are being developed for the e-book market and for people who feel the PDAs are just too small. Most of the tablet computers will feature input by writing on the screen with a stylus, kind of like the old Apple Newton. I expect to see these systems appear on the market by third quarter of this year. It's going to be interesting to see if these systems can make e-books a more desirable product. For more information on ebooks, go to www.gutenberg.net.

OK, I'm getting too long-winded again, so I'm going to sign off until next month. See y'all at the meeting.

Being Optimistic About Windows XP

Compiled by Pat Hester

Beta 2 code for Windows XP, Microsoft's forthcoming successor to Windows Me and Windows 2000, was released to Microsoft Developer Network, TechNet, and marketing review customers. Last month, Lee Schlesinger of ZD Net visited the Microsoft campus in Redmond to get an in-depth preview of Windows XP. He came away impressed with Microsoft's commitment to stability and application compatibility. He wrote the following:

Over the course of two days of meetings with product managers, the word I heard most often was "experience"--not surprising, as that's where the XP comes from. Microsoft's mission in this release is to focus on the way users interact with the system. It's aiming to make it not just possible, but easy, to accomplish common tasks.

The Windows XP client will come in two flavors: a Home Edition and a Professional version. The Home Edition brings some of the multimedia features introduced in Windows ME to the more stable Windows NT code base that serves as Windows XP's foundation. But only the Professional version, which includes all the features of the Home Edition, will run on multiprocessor boxes, multimonitor configurations, and 64-bit platforms. Professional also includes management tools, in the form of group policies, IntelliMirror support, and roaming profiles; and security, in the form of an Encrypted File System, file-level access control, and C2 certification. Many of these features are already part of Windows 2000 Professional. Another nice feature in the Professional version is Remote Desktop, which takes advantage of Windows Terminal Services. Remote Desktop lets you connect to your desktop at work from any other XP Professional client and take it over, so seamlessly that it appears as if you're working on the remote computer. The remote PC is locked while you're accessing it this way; if you want to collaborate on applications, you need to use the T.120 features of NetMeeting or some other T.120-compliant product.



Windows XP Guided Tour

From ZDNet Reviews, March 30, 2001

New Interface

The entirely new look of Windows XP is sure to grab lots of attention. The so-called Luna design--which you'll see popping up in other products from Microsoft--has big icons, rounded dialog boxes, and bright, colorful backgrounds. The desktop has fewer icons, the Start menu and System Tray show only the applications you use most frequently, and commonly-accessed dialog boxes such as the Control Panel have been simplified. The overall effect is a less cluttered and easier to use OS. But for those traditionalists who miss good old Windows, you can always revert to the "Classic" look.

Digital Photography

Building upon Windows Me's enhanced support for imaging, Windows XP should become the top operating system on the market for working with digital cameras and scanners. An enhanced My Pictures folder simplifies the process of transferring, browsing through, and manipulating images, and Windows XP also offers the ability to send images straight to an online printing service.

Digital Audio

Windows XP will include an updated Windows Media Player (version 8), and makes it easier-than-ever to burn your own CDs (you can bet the Recording Industry is really happy about that one).

Digital Video--Windows Movie Maker

In Windows Me, Microsoft introduced a new digital video editing application called Windows Movie Maker. It's still there in Windows XP, but it's easier to use. When you attach a DV camcorder, Windows XP should automatically recognize it and launch Movie Maker.

Internet Explorer 6

Windows XP includes a new version of the Internet Explorer browser. Like Windows XP itself, IE 6 has a streamlined look and lots of enhancements, mainly to the Explorer Bars. Related features in Windows XP include an improved home networking wizard (for sharing an Internet connection), a personal firewall for broadband users, and enhanced Web Publishing Wizard.

Behind the Scenes

Although Windows XP looks totally different, its foundation is Windows 2000, which offers better reliability than Windows Me or Windows 98 SE. Microsoft says the final version of Windows XP will offer the broadest support yet for other hardware and software. On top of all this, Microsoft has added some new services--and updated others--that are designed to make the user experience trouble-free.

Editor's Note:

The format for the newsletter has been changed to accommodate the web sites we have been finding for you. When you read the newsletter on-line you can automatically jump to the site right from our page. Hope you have fun surfing!



THE MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP

The Mid-Cities PC Users' Group is a not for-profit organization whose objectives are:

- * to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and experience,
- * education in the form of seminars and programs, and
- * community as pertains to the computer industry.

Annual membership is \$24.00 per family with one vote per membership. Members are encouraged to notify the Membership Chairperson of any change of address as soon as possible to continue receiving their monthly newsletter. Please address any notifications to: Mid-Cities PC Users' Group: Attn. Membership Chair, P.O. Box 54141, Hurst, TX 76054

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THE MID-CITIES PC USERS' GROUP NEWSLETTER

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Article Style: Type all copy flush left without justification; use word wrap feature for your paragraphs. This includes headings, by-lines, and the first line of each paragraph. Place a credit by-line (author's name) between the title and first paragraph. Leave no blank lines between paragraphs. Use only one space between sentences.

File Formats: MS Word or Word Perfect is preferred. If formatting is crucial and you do not have access to the above programs, send a hard copy to show the layout.

Submitting Articles: You may use one of two methods. Uploading the article to Nancy Hester at newsletter@mcpcug.org or you can hand them to her on diskette (3.5" preferred) during the general membership meetings .



Thanks a lot!

Deadline: The last Friday of the month prior to intended publication.

Advertising Rates:

7½ in. x 9 in.	Full Page	\$40.00
7½ in. x 4 in.	Half Page	\$20.00
3¼ in. x 4¼ in.	Quarter Page	\$12.50
3½ in. x 2 in. Business Card		\$5.50

Discounts: 3 months = 5%; 6 months = 10%. 1st month full price, discount applies to months thereafter.

Payment: required with 1st ad copy.

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