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MEGAPHONE

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTRAL MARYLAND USER GROUP

President's Message Visions of Sugar Plums

from Mike Kerwin

Well friends and fellow CMUGers, I am back from the mountain and I have seen a great light, actually lots of great lights, as Las Vegas is really at its best at night when they turn on all the pretty lights. And then there were all the lights blinking and flashing and burning bright at the big event itself; those lights were not only great, but also informative!

I am still a bit jet-lagged after getting back from CES. Plus, my co-geek was off on a trip of her own when I arrived home, and she won't be back until after I leave on my next trip. I guess both Mary's and my arms are going to be tired.

So, I am still trying to sort out all the new and interesting things I saw at CES; you can expect more items to pop up in future columns, but here are some of the highlights for me.

First a number – 1080P – that is the current state-of-the-art in HDTV. This is progress from last year when the end letter was “I”; the difference of course is between progressive and interlaced (one pass or two for a complete image). Personally I could not see a difference, but then my eyes are not that young and agile anymore. Theoretically the difference should result in less flicker.

The other number for HDTV is 100+ as several firms were showing screens larger than 100” in diagonal measurement. They are huge, even in the enormous space of an exhibit hall. How much do they cost? A TV reporter asked a representative in my hearing and got no answer so I guess the old adage still applies: if you have to ask then you can't afford it. I know too that experts say they can see differences between plasma and LCD, but the only way I could tell was by feeling the heat generated by the plasma displays or by reading the signs next to the units.

Digital Books

Another interesting technology present was actually represented by two much different devices. The technology is digital ink or “e-Ink” as the leading firm has trademarked it. What is fascinating about this technology is that it gives a persistent display with no power needed. To accomplish this it currently uses individual cells as pixels and each contains a bead or token with one side black and the other white; by flipping the right pixels the screen “prints” the information desired in the manner of a dot matrix printer. Once on the screen, the display does not need a back light like the LCD screens we all know about, but works on “free” reflected light. Just as I arrive home I read that the firm behind most of this technology had announced a breakthrough in moving beyond mere black and white displays to include color. Maybe that will be shown next year.

The first implementation we saw of this was on a USB minidrive. These devices have become ubiquitous so innovative firms are trying to distinguish their products by adding features. Lexar has added the feature of a “Full Gauge”. This resembles the battery tester strip that Duracell used to put on the label of their batteries only it is always “on” rather than having to press the two end buttons. The gauge uses the USB power present when information is written to the device to display a graphic image of the amount of space currently in use on the device. This is useful information which does not need power of any kind to persist; the



Next General Meeting

John Lafferty from Howard Community College will discuss “phishing” scams and tools to combat them.

Note Special Meeting Location, for this month only!

Wednesday, January 18, 7:30 pm.....Howard Community College
ILB building, Room 100

Next Windows SIG Meeting

Topic: Google - How To Do More

Tuesday, January 24, 7:00 pm.....Florence Bain Senior Center

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representative indicated that test strips had maintained the information for a couple of years. Look for this in the spring.

The second device using this technology is far more useful. Sony has developed an eBook reader, appropriately named "E-Reader". To see this device you can visit the CNet website and search for E-Reader. This was the first place I found a picture as the Sony site does not appear to display this new item. The size is about that of a hard cover book in length and width, but it is only about 3/4" thick and comes with an imitation leather flip cover to protect the screen. Apparently a similar device has been available in Japan for about a year (Librie), but this is the first announcement of US availability.

Sony claims that E-reader will store about 80 books and run up to 60 hours on a single charge. They reported numerous titles available in a suitable format. The demo book was "The Da Vinci Code." This device has additional capabilities such as the ability to display B/W photos in what looked to be VGA quality. It may also serve other functions in its final format, such as HD storage and perhaps even an MP3 player though the battery drain will be much higher. A unique feature of this device is that it is the first Sony labeled item to accept memory cards other than Sony's own Memory Stick; this device also has a slot for a Secure Digital memory card. Perhaps the new president of Sony is recognizing that the rest of the world likes a choice of memory cards. This unit comes with a docking base similar to digital cameras and that appears to be the main method for recharging the battery.

Flash Drives and Memory

I mentioned memory devices above and they were present in great abundance. The various leader firms are trying to distinguish their products by adding features such as the above-mentioned gauge on the Lexar. I saw some flashdrives with biometric security (aka fingerprints), and others offer special configurations to allow applications to run directly from the minidrives (some of which appear to be proprietary). For those of us who have habit of losing the small caps that protect the USB connector, one company now makes the plug end retractable.

This leads me to the next item of interest, the memory chips themselves. These are proliferating like crazy. Last year we identified 24 different types and this year without really trying we found card readers accepting 32 different types. In order to fit all of the cards some of the smaller readers now have slots on three sides to accommodate the cards. As an example of the proliferation I offer the well-known SD format which now has a mini-SD little brother and the TransFlash baby brother. While the capacity has multiplied and cost of these chips has dropped, we did not walk away with any free samples. (Maybe that was reserved for those attendees identified as Buyers).

Another marketing ploy for memory cards is that they are following the example of floppy disks.

When floppies became a commodity item the manufacturers tried to vary the appearance to stimulate sales. Similarly the card makers now have multi-colored cards, perhaps to match the color of your camera or phone. It also appeared that some cards now incorporate an LED to show when it is being accessed. Since most cards are buried in devices, this feature does not look to be practical.

Batteries - Sort Of

The last category that sticks in my mind is chemical power for electronic devices: As a chemist I have followed the offerings of fuel-cell-powered units for portable devices quite keenly.

The first of these I read about was the alcohol-powered unit. This year we saw such a unit demonstrated. It uses purified methanol and a palladium/platinum catalytic converter to extract electricity from a unit about the size of two regular notebook batteries. The advantage is that one can refill the reservoir and continue working when the unit starts to run down. This is not nearly as easy with a battery which can take hours to recharge and virtually all require that the unit be powered down to replace the battery. Methanol is a good choice in that it has a high energy storage capability and it is unlikely to short out the notebook if it is spilled as it is a poor electricity conductor.

The other fuel cell we saw was a bit more exotic and was probably only appropriate for emergency workers or the military. It consisted of a sealed black unit that could be activated by pulling a safety tab. After activation it would deliver recharging electricity for a limited number of hours over a period of a week or two. The fuel for this device is sodium borohydride (NaBH₄). I know that this is a powerful compound useful in chemistry labs generating active hydrogen in reactions. It also has a tendency (if mishandled) to spontaneously release energy and start fires. I asked about the safety of refilling the unit and then learned that it was for one-time use and could not be refilled by the user. This is probably a safety feature, but it then leads to the question of disposal of potentially hazardous materials.

Oh well, one more neat item pops to mind: a cellphone recharging kiosk. The folks who dreamed this one up had some imagination and are looking for franchise customers. The display looks like a 6' tall cellphone except where the keypad would be are cup holders and cables. Each cable is labeled for the type of phone it will fit into for recharge. The unit has a coin slot and claims to safely do a rapid charge of two minutes for an hour's use of the phone. I believe the suggested price was a dollar for each two minutes of use. It is smart enough to be able to charge numerous devices simultaneously; it recognizes when a unit is plugged in and the fee is paid by changing a light from red to green. The phone can rest in the cup holder while recharging. I inquired about security as the unit looks like someone could rip the cables off in



CMUG Finances

Statement for Calendar Year 2005

from John Weske

Below are the user group's financial numbers for the last 12 months. Let me briefly call your attention to a couple of items.

First, note that we haven't had to pay for our meeting space this year; we haven't received a bill from Howard County since late in 2004. The fee for a year's meetings is about \$600, so that would obviously

wipe out the small (\$66.04) surplus we saw in the General Fund.

The other event of note was the new projector we bought. Thanks to those of you who regularly donate money for the CD of the Month (and to Art for putting the CD together), the Equipment Fund is still in good shape. The projector cost was equal to about two years of donations; with any luck the new projector will last much longer than two years.

If you have any questions, please talk to me at the meeting, or email me at jweske@juno.com.



CMUG Totals:

Beginning Balances, 1/1/05	
General Fund:	\$ 2,675.11
Equipment Fund:	1,691.74
Total Beginning Balance:	4,366.85
Change in Balances for 2005	
General Fund:	66.04
Equipment Fund:	(726.96)
Total Change in Balances:	(660.92)
Ending Balances, 12/31/05	
General Fund:	2,741.15
Equipment Fund:	964.78
Total Ending Balance:	\$ 3,705.93


General Fund:

Beginning Balance:		\$ 2,675.11
General Income:		
Membership dues - renewals:	1,150.00	
Membership dues - new:	75.00	
Misc income (room rental refund):	25.00	
Total General Income in 2005:		1,250.00
General Expenses:		
Newsletter:		
Printing:	440.60	
Postage:	284.86	
Total Newsletter expense:		725.46
Room rental:		
General Meeting:	0.00	
Windows SIG:	120.00	
Total Room rental:		120.00
Other expenses:		
Gift certificate awards:	100.00	
APCUG dues:	50.00	
PO Box rental (24 months):	152.00	
Misc expenses:	36.50	
Total Other expenses:		308.50
Total General Expenses in 2005:		1,183.96
Total General Fund increase/(decrease):		66.04
Ending Balance:		\$ 2,741.15

Equipment Fund:

Beginning Balance:		\$ 1,691.74
Equipment Income:		
Donations for CDs of the Month:		690.00
Equipment Expenses:		
New projector purchase:	1,199.99	
Extended Warranty for projector:	179.99	
Office supplies (CD labels):	36.98	
Total Equipment Expenses in 2005:		1,416.96
Total Equipment Fund increase/(decrease):		(726.96)
Ending Balance:		\$ 964.78



 vandalizing the unit. The cables are reasonably strong and have unusual plugs at the inside end which would limit their use elsewhere.

January Meeting Location Change

On to business: I trust that all attendees at the annual December meeting had a good time and maybe left with something extra.

This month we will be at the Howard Community College for our meeting. More info, including maps and directions, can be found on our website (www.milkern.com/cmug). We moved the meeting in part because our speaker, John Lafferty, teaches at HCC. But, coincidentally, the Florence Bain Center will be renovating the space we usually occupy; they're going to fix the partitions that divide the large room we're usually in.

Our speaker will be providing information on Internet security. In this era of considerable fraud and identity theft, this is very timely.

Digitally,

AWeske



Deals from the DealsGuy

by Bob Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

Want some trivia? We worked a trade show called Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation and Education Conference (www.iitsec.org) which is mostly a military show. Attendees include many high-ranking military officers and even congressmen. There were some army vehicles including a training tank on display in the show. I saw a booth with all kinds of concave and warped-type mirrors in it, but didn't hear their uses. This was a place to see cutting edge technology, but I don't have enough room here for the most interesting booths and there is probably limited interest in my trade show experiences. Primarily, the widest technology covered was simulation machines of all kinds all over the show floor. Unfortunately, I was unable to find time to try any of them. You name it, there was a simulator.

A reporter for the Orlando Sentinel wrote about talking to the CEO of a simulation company (VirTra Systems: www.virtrasystems.com) with offices in Denver and Phoenix who mentioned that he intended to move his operation to Central Florida in sixty days. He stated "you've got to be here if you're in the simulation industry." Here is the trivia; the reporter said that central Florida is home to more than 140 simulation companies and they employ, directly or indirectly, over 17,000 people. Who would have thought that, since



everyone knows this is only an amusement park paradise. Another reporter for the Money section wrote about the competition for skilled employees all over central Florida.

I knew there were lots of companies oriented toward all kinds of electronics engineering here, including a dozen laser light companies, many companies that provide engineering and manufacturing for the computer industry and many other high tech industries, but not about the simulation industry.

It's All About The Squeaky Wheel

I was in line at Staples early Friday morning after Thanksgiving for some specials, but too far back to get all but one, a 512 mb USB Flash Drive for \$19.95 before a ten dollar mail-in rebate. That night, I plugged it into the hub I always use and it gave me an error, but after a couple of minutes, it worked OK. However, soon another message told me there was not enough power from the hub and to plug it into the computer directly. I did that and still got an error message, but it worked after a couple minutes and I could write to it. I have several USB flash drives and have never had that problem using that hub so I wanted to return it to Staples for an exchange. The manager told me he would not exchange it at that price and that I would have to take the problem up with PNY who made it. When I insisted it was not right since that was the only one I had the problem with, he said I would have to pay the difference between the sale price and the posted price if I wanted another one, so I gave up.

When I got home, I called PNY whose tech support took an indifferent attitude about it and said there was nothing wrong with it if it would eventually work. However, he did finally admit that some might work better than others, not that there would be anything wrong. I then called Staples Corporate office, and was transferred to the President's office of customer relations who was sorry to hear what had happened at the Staples store, and apologized saying "that is not the way we do business" and kept me on the line while calling the store. When he returned, he said the manager was "apologetic" and assured me they would exchange my unit for a new one, which that manager had stated they did not have when I was in the store earlier for an exchange.

Returning to the Staples store for the exchange, nobody seemed to know about it, but after my insistence, a lady went looking for the one they would hold for me. When she finally returned several minutes later, she did indeed have one and the exchange was short and sweet, but cool ("here"). The squeaky wheel syndrome worked. The new flash drive worked just fine, even in the hub, as I thought it would. I have since read that it is not recommended to use Flash drives in a hub, but I have even used two at one time in my hub, even with the power for it unplugged, with no problem; it is much easier than plugging them into the computer.

Windows SIG January 24 Meeting on Google - How To Do More

The Windows Special Interest Group (SIG) meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month. The SIG focuses on using and maintaining Windows, all platforms. We take questions, present tips and techniques, demonstrate freeware/shareware and even feature some web topics using a little trickery.

This month we will talk about how to do more with our favorite website, Google.

If you have a suggestion or a topic for the SIG, please email me at mikes_line@hotmail.com.

Remember that the meetings are now at the Florence Bain Senior Center, and begin at 7 pm. See the CMUG website at www.millkern.com/cmug for maps and directions.

- Mike Hayes





Time To Do Your Taxes

Remember that you can find out where the AARP volunteers are working on income taxes and get yours done there absolutely free, except under certain circumstances. It is admirable that those folks work for free on your behalf when they are actually mostly professional people who are taking time off from their normal job to help us. On the other hand, you can go to www.taxact.com and download Second Story Software's free version of Tax Act for doing your own tax return. It will pester you to upgrade to the paid version while you are inputting data, but it will still do yours free and will now also do the e-file for you free. Personally, I use the Deluxe version because I like the price at \$12.95, and it includes other very helpful features, one of which saves time on data input if you used it last year (important to me).

Judy Taylour from APCUG notified most member user groups that Second Story Software will offer user group members a discount for purchasing Tax Act products. I can't include the procedure here because they don't want it posted on the Web, but I believe the Deluxe version would be just \$9.95. Simply contact your group's APCUG rep for the procedure for downloading Tax Act to the discounted shopping cart. Double check the prices including the Ultimate Bundle, depending on whether you need the state version or not.

Build Your Own Web Site For Free!

A friend referred me to this Web Site freebie for me to try, though he said he had not tried it himself, just that it was well recommended. I have not downloaded it yet, but hope to check it out one of these days. I was a bit skeptical when I was told that one professional Webmaster chose it over the high end product he was already using, but what's to lose when it's free? Check out www.nvu.com and see if it is anything you might like. They have versions for Windows, Mac and Linux, making it pretty versatile. They say they are supported by Linspire and encourage you to support Linspire products.

Worth a Look

This URL has been sent to me more than once in the last few months, but I didn't feel it fit the criteria of my DealsGuy column. However, since I had room this month, I thought I would include it because of the referrals. Check out [www.infopackets.com/windows+ newsletter.htm](http://www.infopackets.com/windows+newsletter.htm). You'll find all kind of things there and even a deal every so often, I'm told. I saw one last time I looked although not this time, but I didn't spend a lot of time there. There are all kinds of articles about many things so I hope you get something out of it. Editors might be able to use some of the reviews posted there.

That's It for This Month

Meet me here again next month if your editor permits. Be sure to check the announcement pages on my website (www.dealsguy.com). This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound.

- Bob (The Cheapskate) Click
bobclick@mindspring.com



Care and Feeding of CDs

by Lynn L. Kauer, via APCUG

I read an interesting article in the September 2005 issue of Popular Photography written by David D. Busch, titled, "The Truth About Disc Rot." It paralleled some other magazine and news articles I have read on the same subject. The following is what we should know and understand about CD (and DVD) disks as storage devices. For the purposes of this article, CDs and DVDs are considered the same as far as backup media is concerned. The only difference, of course, is that DVDs can hold more data.

We save things that are important to us. Those of us who take digital photos know that simply storing them on the hard drive of our computer is not a wise or safe thing to do as the disk may crash and we will lose everything. Thus, we copy the photos to a CD or DVD disk so that they will be always available for a long period of twenty or more years. However, will they really be there when we look for them?

The media of choice for backup and storage purposes less than ten years ago was tape backup. Some commercial enterprises continue to use digital tape for backup purposes. Tape is rarely used at home anymore. Actually, the backup media of choice for commercial use is moving toward external hard drives. Where does the CD fall into all of this?

There are hosts of backup utilities that utilize the CD for backup purposes. Most CD manufacturers advertise that CD media is good for 20 to 100 years depending on the depth of marketing they are trying to offer. The National Institute of Standards Technology (NIST) tests products for longevity. The catch is that longevity is available if the user adheres to very strict rules and standards. Let us look at some interesting facts.

Handling

When a CD is burned, a laser shoots through the bottom of the disc into the dye layer located under the top protective plastic covering on at the top of the CD. This is the layer where the laser burns pits into the dye layer to allow the computer to interpret what is being written by the





computer. When the bottom side of the disk becomes scratched or soiled, the laser is diffused and the data is not clearly written.

Secondly, if the top layer becomes damaged, moisture can penetrate the surface and cause the reflective layer to slowly disintegrate; this is the beginning of what is called "Disc Rot."

How often have you watched someone open a CD case and directly pull on the edges of a CD until it is released from the case? Notice how the CD is bent while it is being removed? This bending is causing tiny cracks to develop in the reflective (protective) layer of the CD. To properly remove a CD from the case, press down on the inside of the retaining plastic that holds the CD in place. This causes the retaining ring to become slightly smaller so that the CD slides off easily with out bending forces.

When handling, always pick up or carry the CD by the outer edge. Avoid placing your fingers on the read (bottom) side of the disc as this will cause acid penetration of both protective layers to begin.

Reliability

A CD-R is a disc that that can be written to once, while a CD-RW is a disc that can be written to many times, reportedly 1000 times. CD-RWs are the least reliable for archival purposes. These discs include a layer that is altered by the CD burner each time it is rewritten. Experience has shown that when these discs are used with another computer, it is a common for the second computer to be unable to read it.

I burn a new music CD monthly for each show that I do. (I entertain at nursing and retirement homes.) I burned and placed the CD-RW into my karaoke player, it would not recognize it. In addition, my second computer would not recognize it either. Only the computer that originally burned the CD was able to read it! Imagine if I had saved all of my music and photo images on a CD-RW. When the computer would eventually be replaced, the disc would likely be unreadable. It is better to save data on CD-R discs, as they are readable by any computer with a CD player.

CD-Rs aren't permanent, either. The organic dyes layer that the burner works with are similar to dyes in film. When exposed to sunlight, heat, cold, humidity, and UV, the dye layer changes over time. How often have you watched someone place a CD on the dashboard of a car or keep it in a glove box? Proper storage of CDs is critical to their useful longevity.

Dyes

There are many types of dyes used for the production of a CD. To quote the above mentioned author, "Under the NIST's accelerated 'stress test,' which includes exposure to very bright light, high temperature and humidity, recorded CD discs using phthalocyanine dye combined with a gold/silver alloy

reflective layer proved to be considerably more stable than all other types of CD-R media. Discs using azo dye as the data layer had less stability under light, temperature and humidity testing. Media using cyanine dye performed well when exposed to light, but had longevity problems under temperature and humidity stress.

"DVDs, which generally use a modified form of a stabilized cyanine dye for the recording layer, are less predictable in terms of longevity. NIST data suggest that, despite lower data capacity, you might be better off in the long run using premium CD-R's instead of DVD+/-R discs."

The author went on to say that it's not always possible to tell what kind of dye was used for the manufacture of the disc because the dyes can be tinted. Cyanine-based CDs (the most common) have a light green or blue tint on the data side. Phthalocyanine dyes are often light green while the azo dye tends to have a blue color.

While it's possible to tell the dye type by reading the specs from the manufacturer, a better indicator might be the reflective layer. If a gold reflective layer was used then the likelihood of using a good quality dye is increased. Be aware, some cheap discs appearing to have a gold layer may be simply paint. Buyer beware!

Recommended brand discs are Fujifilm, Imation, Kodak, Maxell, TDK, Verbatim and Mitsui/MAM-A.

Protection and Care of CDs

Manufactures recommend storing CDs vertically in a cool, dry area instead of horizontally. The reason is to prevent warping and damage from humidity.

Also, never use solvent-based pens to write on them, such as permanent felt-tipped pens. The solvent can penetrate the protective layer and damage the reflective layer below. The only safe place to write on the top of a CD is in the clear center portion of the hub when you're using a felt-tipped pen.

It is better to apply a label to the top of the disc for identification purposes. Never write on the label with a ballpoint pen when it is applied to the disc. The tip of the pen can cause stress cracks in the protective layer.

When using CD-RW discs, I use removable labels (www.digitalinnovations.com). They can be written on many times and then removed and replaced as necessary.

For discs that I intend to keep for archival purposes, I print the contents on the label with an ink jet printer (see www.fellowes.com).

When cleaning to remove fingerprints or smudges on the read side of the disc, always use a CD or lens cloth wiping radially out from the center. Never clean using small circular



Anti-Spyware Basics

by Dave Gerber, via APCUG

You've just come home with your new computer. How delightful! Now you're ready to surf the web and download some music—legally of course—and send out a few emails to family and friends.

As you're about to plug in the networking cable, you remember something the sales associate mentioned. "Be sure and get some anti-spyware and security stuff".

"Bah," you figure. The guy is just trying to sell you more that you don't want or need, right?

Onward you go, dismissing the comment and salivating as Google pulls up page after page of amazing information about things you never knew existed. Need to know about livestock birthing? No problem! Have a hankering for finding just the right flap settings for your Cessna? Piece of cake!

But wait, what's with these 'extra' windows that keep popping up and obscuring your view? And why is it that your homepage is now set at www.somePornSite.com?

"Hmmm," you wonder, thinking back to what the sales associate said...

Welcome to the Net! You have just been hijacked and had your first "drive-by" install. No — not the type of drive-by from the gang downtown, guns a' blazing, tires screeching — it appears to have come from that "friendly" website who just happened to be pushing some 'extra' software onto unsuspecting users such as yourself.

The scenario above is an all too common occurrence — well, if you exclude those Google searches. (If you did actually search on livestock birthing and Cessnas, you are indeed unique, to say the least. Just don't write me if you're a farmer transporting a pregnant cow in a Cessna. ;-)

In hopes of saving you from this terrible fate, here is some basic security info. At least, enough to get you down the road to securely surf the Web with confidence.

Here's a list of things you should do before plugging into the Net:

- 1 Be sure you have both a firewall and anti-virus protection. Without either, it could be literally only 10 or 15 minutes before your system is compromised. Typically, free products give you bare bones applications, which is fine if you're not going to do any heavy surfing. Going to be online 3, 4, 5 hours a day? Make the investment and get a few extra perks.
- 2 Now that you have a firewall and anti-virus installed, you can go online. Make sure the operating system that came installed by the reseller has all critical patches (updates) installed. Skipping this step can be the most damaging thing you can do. You see, malware writers know all the exploits and vulnerabilities in the OS, and write accordingly to take advantage of them to deliver their bundles of joy.
- 3 Find a dependable source for anti-spyware. Many of the most respected applications in this category are free, with some very nice paid versions as well.

Now doing those three simple basic things will get you started. You still need to read up about tweaking Internet Explorer, to help tighten its out-of-the-box security (kind of like adding extra stuff to a new car). You'll also need to learn a bit about security settings or spam filtering to use with your email.

I hope you're not overwhelmed just yet. My purpose here is to inform on a basic level for the new user. Once you're up and running on this basic level, you'll be able to delve deeper into the technical areas you're interested in. Good luck!

This article comes to us from APCUG, the Association of Personal Computer User Groups, of which CMUG is a member. Dave Gerber is a director and former president of the Sarasota PC Users Group (www.spcug.org) in Florida. Check out his website at <http://davebytes.com>.



motions on small portions of the disc, as it can cause diffusion of the laser beam. Isopropyl alcohol or clear or soapy water can be used to clean a grimy disc. Never use acetone, anti-static agents or wood-based products such as toilet paper or facial tissue to clean a disc.

When applying labels, be sure to center the label on the disc to avoid "off balance" condition when the disc is being used. When the disc is rotated at high speeds, the "off balance" condition can unbalance the disc and cause problems with high-speed readers. For this reason, I purchased a label applicator that perfectly centers the label each time versus putting the label on the disc "by eye."

The Future

Like the 1.4 MB floppy drive, tape drives, Zip disks and LS 120 disks that are no longer being used, the CD as we know it will likely bite the dust in about ten years. I predict the media of choice for backup and archival purposes will be that of external drive media similar to USB jump drives and flash card burners or other external drive sources. Personally, I use a 160 GB external hard drive to backup my computer data including music and photo files. Because of transportability, I also backup my music and photos on CDs and store them at an offsite location in a safety deposit box.

This article comes to us from APCUG, the Association of Personal Computer User Groups, of which CMUG is a member. Lynn L. Kauer is the editor of the Blue Chip News, the newsletter of the Saginaw Valley Computer Association in Michigan (www.svca.org). He can be reached at lkauer@chartermi.net.



CMUG MEGAPHONE

George Coffin
8652 Open Meadow Way
Columbia, MD 21045

Meeting:
Wednesday, January 18, 7:30 pm
John Lafferty on Phishing Scams
Note that we're meeting at **Howard Community College** for January; see website for details & maps



CENTRAL MARYLAND USER GROUP

Membership and Change of Address

Send renewals and address changes to:
George Coffin
CMUG Membership
8652 Open Meadow Way
Columbia, MD 21045
gcoffin3@comcast.net

Reviews

Send review software, hardware, books, and info to:
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Send articles, letters, ad copy, questions, and comments to:
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General meetings are held the third Wednesday of every month at 7:30 pm at the Florence Bain Senior Center, near the Harpers Choice Village Center in Columbia MD. The number there is 410-313-7213.

Membership in the user group is currently \$25 (cheap!). Membership includes a monthly subscription to the CMUG Megaphone, a membership directory, full access privileges to the Website, and drawings for free and review software at meetings.

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