Bits of Blue

November in Tampa

Meeting

John Locke from Gateway

November 8, 2000
6:00 PM
Museum of Science and Industry
4801 E Fowler Ave.

Meeting Preview: At the November meeting we will have a rescheduled presentation by John Locke from our local Gateway store. Mary Sheridan, as usual, will conduct a 30-minute Windows discussion at the beginning of the meeting.

President's Message

By Mary Sheridan, President, Tampa PC Users Group
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I thought Marty Fries gave a great presentation at the October meeting. We heard before the meeting that an announcement was airing on the radio that Napster would be discussed at our meeting. Not knowing what kind of crowd to expect, I went to MOSI early and tried to get a better-bigger room, wasn't able to, panicked, then found out it wasn't necessary. We had our usual attendance at the meeting. So all was well.

I attended the Computer and Technology Showcase last month at the Convention Center. I was there representing the user group and handing out our tri-folds. I also had a hand out from the Greater Tampa Bay PC User Group. I was asking people where they lived and would give them a brochure from whichever group was closest to their home or office. It seemed more of a business-to-business kind of convention, and, to date, I haven't gotten any feedback about the success of the event. I haven't received any phone calls.

Windows ME isn't installed on my PC yet. I just haven't had the time. If anyone has experience with it, please send William an article.

The FACUG fall conference was a big success. There were 54 paid attendees. The most interesting people were the Macintosh group. They came in a huge

December 13: **Christmas party**

Bits of Blue is published by the Tampa PC Users Group, Inc., a State of Florida registered non-profit corporation, to provide educational information about personal computer systems to its members. Our mailing address is P. O. Box 3492, Tampa, FL 33601-3492.

However, for business concerning this newsletter, Bits of Blue, please contact the Editor, William LaMartin, at 821 S. Boulevard, Tampa, FL 33606-2904; 813-251-3817; lamartin@tampabay.rr.com.

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Minutes of the October Meeting

By Mike Hodges, Vice-President, Tampa PC Users Group
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Mary Sheridan, our stalwart president and ace presenter, kept us entertained as usual by responding to "how to" questions relating to MS Windows for the first 30 minutes of the evening's meeting.

Next, the standard announcements and official organizational business were addressed for five minutes including the announcement of the slate of TPCUG officers for 2001 to be elected at the November meeting. See the President's message in this newsletter for the list.

Then Mary introduced the author of *The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook*, Marty Fries, who co-authored the book with his brother Bruce Fries.

Marty entertained the group with his excellent presentation on the ins and outs of the audio compression technology known as MP3 that has recently opened up the music delivery marketplace and provided a new medium of personal listening opportunities. Marty was definitely in command of his topic and came across as a cool devotee of his passion for music in general and the enhancements provided by MP3 technology in particular. The presentation was like "easy listening" but contained an enormous wealth of technical information relating to MP3. What now follows is my attempt to capture a number of technical nuggets of information recorded as best I could from Marty's excellent presentation. For those anxious for more technical definition, Marty's book has just gone through a reprint and should again be readily available at all the major booksellers.

Marty, a long time band musician by his own admission, also confessed that his interest in things digital commenced with the Commodore 64 and Apple PC's. Marty started out by passing around the group a small compact electronic device known as an MP3 Player. Portable MP3 players range up to 64 MB's of memory. The MP3 compression technology is perfectly legal, notwithstanding the raging Napster legal controversy pitting the recording industry against independent musicians. Typical compression factors achieved by MP3 approach 1 to 10 and can be compared loosely to zip compression that eliminates space and zeros.

The technical discussion started with the factoid that a standard audio CD contains 760MB of data and provides 74 minutes of audio. The laser CD path covers 1.6 kilometers of recording. This equates to 1.1 MB per minute. The Nyquist

Kyocera-Qualcomm Phone

By Mary Sheridan, President,
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I recently wanted to get new cell phone service—one of the new plans that include both local and long distance calls for one price per month. I called around and found out that I would need to get a new phone to qualify for the plan. Since the Internet is so much fun, I figured I might as well get a phone that also accesses the Internet.

I stopped at the Verizon kiosk in the mall and got talked into a Qualcomm QCP 2035a. Kyocera has recently bought the cell phone division of Qualcomm. So, I guess it's really a Kyocera QCP 2035. The phone was selling for $99.00, and the guy sold it to me for $49.99. He said that it was a one-day only thing. I half expected him to open his jacket and reveal a bunch of wristwatches, but he didn't. It came with a regular charger. I bought a car charger ($29.99) and a belt chip ($24.99). The salesman threw in a hands-free headset and my total with tax for the phone was $112.06

Next I had to contract a year for the service. It's $40.00 a month and includes 400 anytime minutes and 500 night and weekend minutes. I have no more roaming charges or long distance charges. Features that come with the phone are call forwarding, 3-way calling, voice mail, caller ID, call waiting, check billing, #Pay.

So far I'm having a great time with the phone. Verizon's Mobile Web provides you with your own personalized web site that you can access from your handset. An email account is provided, or you can access other POP3 email accounts. Also available is a personal organizer for scheduling, addresses, important events, etc. I was able to sync my Outlook with the web site, and I now have all of my information available from my cell phone.

The web sites that are available are separate from regular web sites, but there is a world of interesting data. You can make stock trades, shop, and check sporting events, weather, and lots more.

When I cancelled my Alltel (GTE) service, the girl was very nice but told me that I was probably making a mistake because Alltel's signals were stronger than Verizon's. I'll keep everyone posted if I have any signal problems.

If anyone is interested, I have a LGC-300W ($126.87) phone for sale. I have a leather case ($21.34), charger and car charger. I'll take $25.00 for everything.

Ebooks and File-Sharing on the Internet

By Tim Condon, Tampa PC Users Group
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When you say "file-sharing on the Internet," everyone thinks "Napster" or "Gnutella" or "Freeinet." Viz. swapping music files, usually in the MP3 format. But there's a potentially more important form of file-swapping "piracy" (which you call it if you're on a certain side of the debate) that's so far received little attention. And that form of swapping really, reeeeellly needs wider discussion...and **your** attention....

But first, a late report from the Napster legal battlefield. When last we checked in, it looked like the Napsterites were going to go down for the count. In August both the RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America) and a bunch of pile-on musicians went before the Federal District Court in California asking for an injunction to shut the Napster Internet site down for copyright infringement (uh, music piracy to the rest of us).

At a hearing, held on July 26, 2000, the Napster lawyers were stunned (and the RIAA suits elated) by the open hostility shown by Federal Judge Marilyn Hall Patel toward the Napsterites. That first hearing was only an opening barrage by the music industry plaintiffs, asking for a preliminary injunction to shut down the Napster web site while the litigation proceeded. Well.

To the surprise of everyone—not least of all the music industry lawyers—the judge proceeded to enter an immediate injunction ordering the Napster web site to shut down within 48 hours (thus causing a stampede from the 60 million or so users who wanted to stock up before the party was over).

But wait! The Napster lawyers instantly filed an emergency appeal to the Federal 9th Circuit Court of Appeals (which is the level directly below the U.S. Supreme Court), and **that** court overturned the injunction and ruled that the Napster site could remain open and operating until the court case was finally decided. Whew!

Which is where things stand today as scores of millions of music lovers merrily share and download free copies of just about any music you can imagine...ahem...royalty-free. Observers of the legal dust-up predict it won't be surprising if the matter ends up before the Supreme Court. And for those of us who can't see how the Napsterites can survive, take a look at the arguments of their renowned lawyer, David Boies, interviewed in the October 2000 issue of Wired magazine at http://www.wirednews.com/wired/archive/8.10/boies.html. His arguments, even in the face of what "appears" to be music piracy by many millions of people, actually appear quite powerful.

From eOne to Dialpad.com through DSL

By James Kalshoven, Tampa PC Users Group
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Having a high speed link to the Internet at work made using my neat little eOne computer at home for surfing more and more tiring with its dial-up connection, especially with time limited by the attention needs of two little girls clamoring to play. The eOne from eMachines is the iMac lookalike with a PC soul that is great because it is an integrated unit (15" monitor with a 466 MHz Celeron) which makes up for its lack of normal expansion slots by including two Type II PC Card inputs, three USB ports, high resolution video capture, modem and Ethernet all built in. And all for only $799 from Circuit City last year. I got a three year warranty for $89 considering the unique nature of the machine. But a lawsuit from Apple has crimped the distribution of faster models and it is no longer listed at the http://www.e4me.com web site.

This machine is cute and beckons you to use it. Josie, my three year old, already can change CD's and start up the games she wants, thanks to its kid friendly feel with the CD player directly under the monitor. It was kind of weird when I first heard the music of a game I had not loaded for her coming from the living room where we keep the computer.

All this was fine, but the Internet at home beckoned. The ads for DSL were tempting. We were using two phone lines since, when we did get on the computer to check email and such and wait for the slow downloads, it made sense to have the extra phone line. Dropping that line and using that cost savings as more justification for a DSL line made sense. The result, with the local DSL competition here in the Washington, D.C. area, was only a bit over $20 a month more for a line ten times faster than a 56K modem! And this was SDSL, not ADSL. Which means up and down links are the same speed. By the way, a great site to check your Internet speed is at http://www.computingcentral.com/topics/bandwidth/speedtest.asp.

Given the always on nature of DSL, and I did keep the computer always on, I installed the free ZoneAlarm software from http://www.zonelabs.com/ and checked my security and web presence using the http://www.grc.com site. I was well hidden.

Now I paid attention to all those neat things I was reading about new web sites – and began to check them out. The payoff came soon: Such a site is http://www.dialpad.com which offers free PC-to-phone calls anywhere in the U.S. I do not know what business model can pay for a company offering this service using just a few banner ads and a shop for PC phone accessories, but more power to them because the site works almost perfectly! Setup is easy, and the information I filled out several months ago has resulted in no unsolicited email or snail mail. My favorite use for the site was when I was on vacation to visit the Expo 2000 World's Fair in Hanover, Germany. I kept in

touch with the States using dialpad.com on friends' systems using only modems! The biggest thing to be aware of is that the ringing you hear simulates the real ringing of the party you are calling. There is about 3 seconds of delay from the time they actually answer until you hear the ringing stop and you can hear them. But they can hear you, so now I hum or mumble something nonsensical when calling someone who does not know I am using it until I hear them so they do not hang up. My mom now knows and is very patient with the initial silence!

For the last couple of months, our phone bills have been at least $20 less due to the use of dialpad.com for long distance, so now the DSL is "free"—and that was with a long distance service that gave five cents a minute all the time with no fee!

But with over ten million users, dialpad.com is sometimes down and sometimes choppy. Try again right away for the times it is busy and wait awhile if you can for the less clear times. I found that my computer was introducing most of the noise at first -- it took a lot of testing using Windows' sound recorder. But now I have had calls where the other party does not even know I am using it! The best comparison is a digital cell phone. If you can live with those, you'll have no problem with dialpad.com! ◆

theorem, sometimes known as the Shannon theorem, states that the sampling rate must be at least two times the highest natural frequency, which for human audio perception equates to 1.4 MB per second, or 44.1 kilohertz. A typical five-minute song, therefore, requires 50 MB. Also, typically 5 MB is about the maximum practicable amount of data that can be downloaded over a 56 KB per second modem.

MP3 technology mostly overcomes this problem by virtue of the compression achieved. The human frequency range of hearing is from 20 Hz to 20 kHz. The compression algorithm divides this range into 30 bands and eliminates the definition of those bands with a volume level lower in dynamic range than the brain's detection level. Sixteen bit encoding provides a dynamic range up to 90 dB. This equates to 6 dB per bit or voltages ranging from one milli-volt to one volt. Other types of compression have been developed and are also known by their acronyms, such as WMA, AAC and AZT3. However, MP3 has now permeated the marketplace. With a 128 KB per second bit rate, MP3 is found to have a most acceptable audio quality. A full orchestral recording is by far the most musically complex collection of sounds and, even so, a compression ratio of 7 to 8 is readily achievable.

A standard MP3 player with 64 MB of memory can play back over one hour's worth of high quality music. Memory itself has

(Minutes..........Continued from page 4)

taken on a number of highly compact forms such as flash memory, the Sony stick, or the smart media chip. With any of these memory forms the MP3 players tend to be extremely light and, therefore, very portable.

Marty then conducted a live test for our captive audience, who were asked to distinguish between uncompressed audio, as from a CD, and the MP3 recordings. MP3 recordings were demonstrated at a number of recorded bit rates, and we were asked to determine from the audio quality rendered if they were compressed or not. These tests were conducted using a Ricky Lee Jones song that contained a significant level of musical complexity. This demonstration was conducted using the Win Amp MP3 player software. The test was repeated for a number of variable bit sampling rates that automatically varied according to the musical complexity. Bit rates of 80 to 200 kilohertz were witnessed. The streaming Internet "Real Audio" uses a 32-kilohertz bit rate, by way of comparison. At the lower bit rates a loss of sharpness or muddiness of sounds was detectable when compared to the audio CD rendition of the same song. The use of a variable bit rate further improves the compression ratio by 2:1 compared to the fixed bit rate sampling rates.

The presentation now proceeded into a less technical realm of MP3 recorded music. "Music Match Juke Box" was touted as the equivalent of a 300 CD disc changer! The software not only catalogs and allows the user to pre-select a large number of songs to be downloaded to a MP3 player but also stores information for readout on the player display, such as the song title and artist and any other information so desired.

Internet picture of the month

Alba, the fluorescent bunny

This photo of Alba is from the site http://www.ekac.org/gfpbunny.html. "She was created with EGFP, an enhanced version (i.e., a synthetic mutation) of the original wild-type green fluorescent gene found in the jellyfish Aequorea Victoria." The site has all the details, both scientific and philosophical.

November's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)	http://www.tpcug.org/
First Monday – articles about the Internet	http://www.firstmonday.dk/
Florida Online Traffic School	http://www.floridaonlinetrafficschool.com/
GFP Bunny	http://www.ekac.org/gfpbunny.html
Help Drivers – for your computer hardware	http://www.helpdrivers.com/
Octavo Digital Rare Books	http://www.octavo.com/
OPE Campus Security Statistics	http://www.ope.ed.gov/security/
SparkNotes.com!	http://www.sparknotes.com/
The MP3 and Internet Audio Handbook	http://www.mp3handbook.com/
MVPS.ORG – Microsoft Valuable Professional	http://www.mvps.org/
Tourstates.com – tourist information for any state	http://www.tourstates.com/
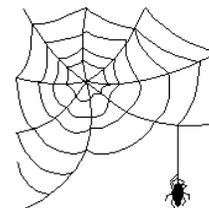
Some of these links will join the many already on the Links page at our web site, where you need only click on the name.

Drive Image 4

By Don Patzsch, Tampa PC Users Group
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When I receive a copy of a new computer program, I read the manual through three times. It took several years for me to recognize the importance of doing that. Drive Image 4 tells you to disable your anti-virus program and close any programs you may have running before you attempt to use Drive Image 4.

With this program you may
1. Set scheduled backups.
2. Drive Image will create image files on floppies, hard disks, CDR drives, and other removable drives.
3. Interestingly enough, you may image more than one hard drive at once, if you have several hard disks in your computer.
4. You may save an image to a hidden partition.
5. In advanced options, you may split an image file to cover more than one removable drive, such as floppy disks.
6. You may make an image copy of one or all the partitions on your disk. This means you may have an exact copy of your partition or partitions transferred to a CD - R or a CD-RW drive. Now if you need to replace a file or two, you may do so from the CD ROM or another partition on your hard disk.
7. Datakeeper 4.1 is included with the Drive Image 4 program. It continuously monitors your system for changes. You specify which files or folders to monitor and then selectively they can be restored.
8. Drive Image 4 will create images on hidden FAT, FAT32, and NTFS partitions. You can check the integrity of the Image files. It works with Windows ME.

PowerQuest Corporation P.O. Box 1911 Orem, Utah 84059-1911. Phone 801-226-8941. http://www.powerquest.com.

When I buy a new computer, I add a second hard drive right away. I also split up my main disk into partitions. Splitting your main disk allows you to set up your programs so that your spreadsheets, letters and databases are all "saved" to one partition. This allows for easy backups, not for the main programs but just for your work. Other people prefer to have one large C drive.

After I set up the new computer and load all my programs, I image copy to the second hard drive. This means that if I make a mistake or if a file is corrupted, I can simply switch over to the second hard drive and go right on with my work. Then, at my leisure, I can image copy from my stored hard disk back to my original disk and be right back where we were when we set up the new computer: with my regular work on my original disk, and with the image backup copy to go to any time trouble develops. This is neat for another reason.

Sometimes, we use a lot of programs and erase them, we think. However, Windows keeps some of the snippets and so the whole computer slows down after a time. Formatting the c:\ drive and image copying it back will close out all those snippets, and I believe my computer runs faster.

I have used PartitionMagic for a long time and Drive Image since Version 1. I am impressed with the people at PowerQuest because the programs work as advertised, and they are not user unfriendly as some programs are. Using DriveImage you can restore your hard disk programs if you accidentally erase some or all. Using Lost and Found, another PowerQuest program, I have gone into hard disks we thought were beyond further use and I have taken off programs and whole sections of data and then deep fixed the bad hard disk.

If you get the latest copy of PartitionMagic, and also DriveImage, you have the manuals that you need to easily understand how hard drives work, and how you can best use them. ◆

(Minutes…………Continued from page 5)
A number of MP3 player models were presented and included the Genica, the Nomad and the JB Works. Prices range from $150 to $900. Excellent 64 MB MP3 players were obtainable by means of Internet sales for $250.

For further details on all of the above and for technical validation, the reader is directed to the web site, http://www.MP3handbook.com. Overall this session was one of the best and most enjoyable presentations ever made at our monthly TPCUG meetings. Thanks again to our presenter, Bruce Fries, who signed copies for us of his book, available for $20. Two copies were donated for our door prize that netted $46 for our general fund. ◆
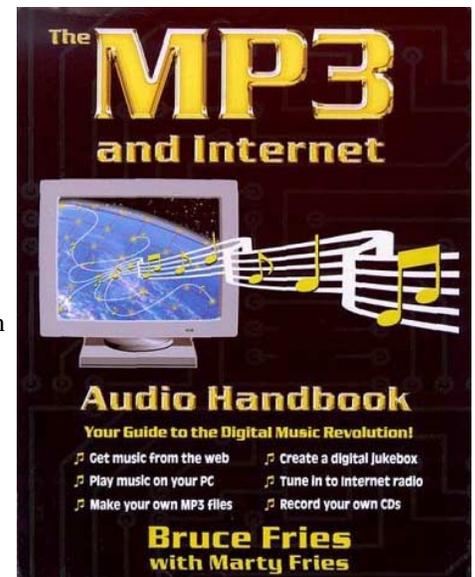
Do you know what your invisible ink says?

By Larry Anders, Librarian, Tampa PC Users Group
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As usual, when our newsletter editor started asking for articles for this month's newsletter, I went blank. I usually do better under pressure so… I waited. While I was waiting… and waiting…I came across an article about invisible ink at work in the Wall Street Journal that caught my attention. I remember being the sly one when I was much younger using a mixture of white grapefruit and lemon juice to write secret messages to my friends, but this article was talking about a much more serious situation. So, after reading the article, which I will refer to from time to time (***The Wall Street Journal – Friday, October 20, 2000***), I decided to do a little more research on this matter.

Another name for today's high-tech invisible ink is "*Metadata*." It seems that software makers such as Microsoft created programs like Word (among others in the Office product line) that just happen to leave behind a lot of information that doesn't appear on your screen, such as the author's name and/or initials, company name, computer name, the name of the network server or hard drive where the file was saved, non-visible portions of embedded OLE objects, other file properties and information, the name of each subsequent person who has worked on the file and sometimes, if the correct options are not selected, deleted text and various other revisions and versions. And, you know the old saying, "out of sight – out of mind." Well, maybe you should mind this!

Microsoft says Metadata is used for a variety of purposes to enhance the editing, viewing, filing, and retrieval of Office documents. But, this just may be something you don't want to share. Because Metadata is created in a variety of ways within Word documents, there is currently no single method that you can use to eliminate all such content from your documents. Microsoft says it hasn't had many complaints about this problem in the past but… in late spring of next year, when the next version of Office is due to hit the shelves, there will be a "privacy option" that will allow a Word document author to "remove all personal information with the click of one button and also be warned if you're saving tracked changes and comments." (…and they haven't had many complaints.)

Some Metadata is readily accessible through the Microsoft Word user interface; other Metadata is only accessible through extraordinary means, such as opening a document in a low-level binary file editor. But sometimes even a simple text editor like Notepad can be very revealing. Personally, I can't wait till someone sends me an email with a Word document attached. I'm nosy by nature!

The Wall Street Journal article talked about someone on the Democratic campaign trail continually receiving slamming emails with Word documents attached and signed by someone that evidentially didn't exist. After three months of this finally some techy aide decided to do a little mouse-clicking investigating and uncovered hidden text that seemed to link the email to the campaign of the Republican incumbent. Fancy that! High-tech politics as usual? (And I'm not hitting on the Republicans. The roles could have just as easily been reversed.)

So, what can you do in the meantime, before Office 10 hits the stores, to make sure your invisible ink stays invisible? First of all, check your setting under Tools | Options and see what you allowed to go out in your last Word document. Then go to Microsoft's web site and search for the word *Metadata*. You should find article Q223790 in Microsoft's Product Support Services database entitled "How to Minimize Metadata in Microsoft Word Documents." I won't try to go into the fixes here. The document is quite lengthy so I'll leave that part to you. Also, notice that this problem isn't new to the latest version of Office. This document was published back in the Word 97 days.

There is also something else you can do. The kind people at Payne Consulting Group, after discovering some hidden text in some of their legal documents, devised security procedures for removing hidden text from its files. They developed a program called Metadata Assistant to purge any unseen or unwanted information from documents. The program can be downloaded free of charge at http://www.payneconsulting. com/MetaDataAssistant/. It's free because they can't guarantee that everything will be stripped out. But hey, it's a lot better than the alternatives… and it's free!

Oh, by the way, the Democrat lost the election anyway, but the investigation into the email continues. He just may win after all. Don't forget to vote November 7th so we can get rid of these ads on television! ◆

Easy CD Creator Version 4.0

By Tom Goff, Tampa PC Users Group
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How would you like one CD software package that could reliably duplicate both audio and data CDs or rearrange and record to CD the content from a number of sources including MP3? Any analog audio source like tapes and albums can be "cleaned up" and equalized. Your CD RW can be used as an additional drive letter using the DirectCD part of the package. Also included is a simple backup program that I've used but not needed to restore from. And last is a very complex audio and video editing program that works with WAV and MPEG files respectively or other files you can manage to convert to these formats. The package also comes with a really helpful 120 page instruction book and four bonus programs. List cost $100 (what I paid); street cost $69, and occasionally $59 with a rebate at CompUSA. This software package meshes nicely with the subject of our last meeting on MP3 files and other forms of audio.

First a little history.   Back in 1998 I became acquainted with Adaptec by buying a 2940 host adapter and a Ricoh 6200s 2x2x6 CD writer. Adaptec's Easy Creator 3.0 was bundled. It only copied CD's in total or let you rearrange the cuts to make a custom CD. CD-R's were very difficult to find and RW disks were 3 for $25 dollars. No analog audio could be transferred unless you bought their Deluxe Version with Spin Doctor. All these programs survive in the new 4.0 version. All of my comments pertain to version 4.0 purchased software only. I don't know what's being bundled with CD writers at present. They do support patches for bundled software.

The opening sections of CD Copier and CD Creator closely resemble the 3.5 versions. One advantage offered by Adaptec is the vast database they maintain on CD-Rs and CD-RWs that will work with the program, not to mention CD-ROM players from which you might or might not be able to copy data. Many are actually tested. My favorite is the category of CD R/RWs that will **never** ever work with their software. Newer equipment will most likely meet their specs.   If you're buying, check their web site: http://www.adaptec.com. Just because your CD-ROM player plays music through your speakers is no guarantee it will transfer to your recorder. However, the first thing the copy program does is run tests on your equipment. Back in the dark ages I had to buy a new SCSI CD-ROM player. I flunked. I still prefer SCSI for this task, the Plexor 12X unit mentioned in the MP3 group meeting would be fine.

Again, always check their web site before you buy or need firmware updates for older equipment. Creator 4.0 required a firmware way beyond my CD writer's 2.03 and directed me to a site that got me up to 2.40.   I like that kind of support. I was having periodic problems with the 80 minute CD-Rs if the master were nearly full. This upgrade solved it. They also give unbe-

lievable support to Adaptec's own equipment at this web site. Periodic patches accommodate new equipment and software released. Another interesting note: MS ME requires a special patch for Easy CD Creator 4.0 to work with my CD writer, but there is a bold note saying "You don't want to load this driver!" They have sense humor! I wish Office Depot had had a similar message warning me not to load the Windows Me that I purchased from them in the first place.

Also included in the package but not used by the author is "Video CD Creator" which is new to ver. 4.0. I didn't own any video equipment at the time but have just bought an Intel USB camera, so I'll be trying it. Creator 4.0 does not say exactly how much video will fit on a CD, but for tracks the data rate is 1,151,929 bits per second with some overhead and maximum track length restrictions. Again, not tried.

My only real criticism of the program is superficial— the graphics are young and hip and are just plain juvenile, which doesn't fit their market, as I see it. They have an excellent newsletter explaining many of the inner workings in the CD business.

Finally, a warning: order over the Internet at your own risk, Digital River handles Adaptec's shipping, and I was literally 3 months getting a 2 meter SCSI cable instead of the 1 meter one they sent. This was with high level help. It reminded me of the Capital One Credit Card TV ad running now, where you're dropped into a basement after you order! ◆

All of which is a digression. What could be more powerful and more interesting than the Napster vs. Music Industry struggle? Just this: A more important industry than the crooners and rock 'n rollers, even if the absolute dollar-numbers aren't as large. I speak of course of the mother of all information tsunamis, the publishing industry itself.

Consider. Each year anywhere from 40,000 to 50,000 books are published in an industry that generates about $20 billion per year, while the music racket generates approximately double that, weighing in at about $40 billion per year. But when you talk about book publishing, you're not talking about screaming adolescents who occasionally smash up defenseless hotel rooms. You're talking about the successors to Johannes Gutenberg, the foundation upon which civilization itself rests. (I

mean, how do you train architects and astronauts and doctors and lawyers and physicists and scientists and teachers and entrepreneurs and all manner of other Indian chiefs without...books? Compare and contrast those societies today which have plentiful books with those, rare though they may be, that don't.)

So what's going on? Just this: The battle over music file-sharing isn't just a fight over who's going to be able to control and distribute the artistic creations of musicians. It's the opening salvo in a struggle over the "unauthorized" sharing of **all** kinds of information files over the Internet. Including music, books, magazines, graphics and pictures of all types of artwork (including photography, painting, sculpture, poetry, you-name-it), and all other possible forms of "information." After all, this is what the Internet ultimately excels in more than anything else does: The quick, universal, virtually costless distribution of information.

Thus, the desperate attempts by some in the music industry to maintain a monopoly in distribution are mirrored in the publishing industry...but with a twist.

In the publishing industry there's no easy way to get best-selling books into digital, and thus downloadable/tradable, format. I mean, it's not like a music file where you play it one time with a ripper running, and then it's on your hard drive for sharing forevermore. To get a book into digital format on your hard drive, you'd either have to digitize it by scanning or otherwise copying it, or you'd have to do it the old-fashioned way, by bribing someone at the publishing house to give you a copy of the book on a disk, which hasn't seemed to happen...yet.

Nevertheless, the writing is on the digital wall: The days of the tree-killing, codex book are numbered, and those numbers are small. Does it make any sense to keep chopping down trees to fuel the cumbersome process of creating paper, then printing on the paper with ink, then putting all the pages together and then binding and gluing them with cardboard covers in the form of a book? Let's face it, whether hardback or paperback, books are heavy, expensive, and cumbersome. In a word, "wasteful" (with apologies to all you bibliophiles out there).

What's the alternative? Why, the "ebook" of course! Everyone's heard about them, few have seen one so far, and almost no one has purchased one. Why? A number of reasons: The first widely available electronic book, the "Rocket Ebook," was guilty of poor execution and high pricing. It had a dull monochrome screen and was priced at several hundred dollars (for the early-adopters). Now the Rocket Ebook has been discontinued when two ebook manufacturers, SoftBook Press (maker of the Softbook Reader) and NuvoMedia (maker of the Rocket eBook), were purchased by a company named Gemstar. As a result, both the Softbook Reader and the Rocket eBook were discontinued, to be replaced by two new offerings by Gemstar, manufactured by Thomson Multimedia and sold in the U.S. under the RCA brand.

The new ebooks, the REB1100 and REB1200, are currently priced $300 and $700 respectively. The 1100 has a monochrome screen and weighs 18 ounces with batteries that last 20 to 40 hours between recharges, while the 1200 is larger, weighing 33 ounces, with a color screen and batteries that last from 5 to 10 hours.

While the pricing is a problem for many of us, that's not the real show-stopper. The problem is that Gemstar is trying the same old trick seen repeatedly in the computer industry: It is attempting to lock REB 1100 and 1200 purchasers into a proprietary, closed merchandising system whereby content can only be purchased through Gemstar or Gemstar-approved content providers. That is, you may generally only purchase your reading matter from RCA or approved publishing houses working with them...and guess what that does to the pricing structure?

Some of the big publishing houses, in their desperate scramble to co-opt the nascent electronic publishing industry, have seen to it that an electronic text downloaded to an ebook reader generally costs either the same or—get this—even MORE than a hardback edition of the same book you can buy in a store. Incredible? The publishers have all **kinds** of arguments as to why ebook texts—with no paper, no ink, no weight, no distribution costs, etc.—should cost the same as tons of books printed the old way.

When it became clear that Gemstar was going to try to pull the closed-system switcheroo on its ebook purchasers, observers immediately raised objections. Ebook crusader and columnist Kelly Ford, upon learning of Gemstar's plans, wrote, "I love eBooks. I love the Rocket eBook. I'm anxious to buy the RCA eBook. But, even I am not willing to spend $300 (or $700 for the REB1200) for a device that locks me into buying content from a single company. This is a recipe for disaster. From the consumer's perspective, it reeks of corporate arrogance and will ensure that their collective wallet remains shut." Amen to that.

So electronic book publishing isn't going to happen any minute now, at least not in a huge way. Let's give it, oh, say two years before open standards are put into place and the entire paper-based publishing industry starts to crumble and reconstitute itself. The ebook industry awaits a light, low-cost, reasonably-priced device with a high-resolution color screen and reasonable battery life. Not to mention the easy availability of books from many origins, priced in a way that reflects the reality of the savings to the publisher (which may in time become the author personally, thus cutting out the middleman publishers and their current distribution monopoly entirely).

Fortunately, the RCA e-readers are only the tip of an emerging iceberg of electronic reading devices. Sony and other Japanese

Special Interest Groups

Microsoft Access SIG

This SIG meets the first Monday of the month at the Gateway 2000 Store on North Dale Mabry (just south of Columbus Drive) at 6:30 PM.
For information contact either William LaMartin at *lamartin@tampabay.rr.com* or Merle Nicholson at *merlenic@tampabay.rr.com.*

Genealogy SIG

To be included on the TPCUG genealogy mailing list, contact Jenny Lind Olin at 960-5723 or jlolin@aol.com

Visual Basic for Applications SIG

This SIG meets the third Tuesday of the month, at the Gateway 2000 Store on North Dale Mabry at 6:30 PM. For information, *contact Merle Nicholson at merlenic@tampabay.rr.com.*

Windows SIG

This SIG occupies the first 30 minutes of our monthly, regular meeting at MOSI and is devoted to a general Windows and computing discussion. Mary Sheridan moderates the discussion.

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companies are said to be looking at producing low-cost e-readers (can you say "Playstation II"?). Xerox is said to be looking at the possibility of producing one. A company named Everybook, Inc. has developed expertise in both ebook software and producing an electronic reader that was to have been called the "Everybook Reader." Shaped and read like a regular book, it was to have had a very high resolution color screen and open-standards software so that content could be obtained from myriad locations. Now Everybook, Inc. has spun off its hardware division, resulting in a new company named N-Vision Technologies (http://www.nvisiontek.com/) which will manufacture and sell the codex-type e-reader.

The N-Vision e-reader looks so good, in fact, that I wrote them a few weeks ago asking when their product would be available. This is what I got back: **"***Thank you for your interest in our product. We are currently trying to raise capital to bring this product to market. Once funded, we are about 10 months away from production. We are about 3 months away from having alpha units to demo to the world, and 5-6 months away from Beta/test units. We appreciate your support of this product..... it's been a tough road, but our team is dedicated to bringing this product to market. I will try to keep you posted on our progress. Cheryl, EVP Operations and Sales, N-Vision Technolo-*

*gies, Inc.***"**

Oh boy. Personally, I can't wait. I think the age of the paper book is about to come to a quick end. Electronic e-book readers will be better, lighter, cheaper, more convenient, more versatile, and perhaps most of all, more fun to read (the advent of devices that can talk to you and play music while you're reading; allow marginal notes, underlining and other marking; automatically bookmark pages; etc. is almost upon us). It'll save a lot of trees, too.

What do the rest of you think? ◆

Editor's Comments

By William LaMartin, Editor, Tampa PC Users Group
lamartin@tampabay.rr.com

Well, I have no room this month for anything other than to thank Ed Snow and Emelie Jurado for many years of help in assembling our newsletter each month. Both have recently decide to retire from that endeavor.   And to remind you to use the Amazon.Com link on our web site's main page if you plan on ordering anything from Amazon. We get 5% at no extra cost to you. The usage has slipped the past six months. ◆

Friends of the User Group

We acknowledge the following firms for their support

Museum of Science and Industry
Gateway 2000
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Marshall & Stevens

And these software and hardware vendors for their demonstrations and review software and contributions of evaluation software to our group

Adobe Systems	Microsoft
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MEMBERS' HELP LINE

Program	Code
Adobe Acrobat	AA
AOL	AOL
Computer general	CG
Delphi	DE
DOS	DOS
Family Tree Maker	FTM
Hardware general	HG
Hardware Modem	HM
Hardware Printer	HP
HTML coding	HTM
Internet general	IG
Micrografx Graphics Suite	MGS
Microsoft Access	MA
Microsoft Excel	ME
Microsoft FrontPage	FP
Microsoft Office Suite	MOS
Microsoft Publisher	MP
Microsoft Visual Basic	VB
Microsoft Word	MW
Networking	N
PAF	PAF
PaintShop PRO	PSP
Quicken	Q
Windows 3.1	W3
Windows 95/98	W95/98
Windows NT	WNT
WordPerfect	WP

Name	Time	Phone	Codes
Cheryl Alexander	10:00am - 9:00pm M - F	914-0008	HTM,PSP,WP
Larry Anders	Mon - Sun 6:00pm - 10:00pm	989-9119	AOL, ME, MW, FP, PSP
Warren Fuss	10am - 9:30pm	949-6844	CG, WNT, N
Bob LaFave	8:00pm-10:00pm	960-0208	W95/W98, MOS
William LaMartin	Mon - Fri 9:00am - 9:00pm	251-3817	AA, FTM, IG, MOS, MP, VB, W95
Merle Nicholson	Mon - Fri 7:30pm - 9:30pm; weekends	879-3602	CG, DE, DOS, HG, HM, HP, VB
Jenny Lind Olin	Mon - Sun 8:00am - 10:00pm	960-5723	ME, MW, PAF, Q, WP
Don Patzsch		689-8662	CG
Mary Sheridan	9:30am - 9:00pm	988-6480	AOL, CG, DOS, HG, IG, MW, Q, W95, W98

We encourage other members to add their names to the list of those willing to assist fellow members with their computer problems. Contact William LaMartin to add your name to the list.

Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.
P. O. Box 3492
Tampa, FL 33601-3492
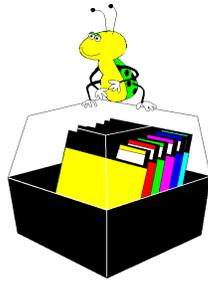
☐ Member: Your membership is up for renewal
☐ Vendor: Your product was reviewed on page ___

(President……….Continued from page 1)

motor home that was decorated with colorful signs and banners. I spend the entire day taking notes, so I'll have to write them up to find out what happened. I'll write an article about the event for the next newsletter.

The list of candidates presented at the last meeting are: Mary Sheridan – President, Mike Hodges – Vice-President, Jenny Olin – Treasurer, James Weber – Secretary, and Kevan Sheridan – Member-at-Large. Anyone can be added and presented at the November meeting, so please let an officer know if you're interested in seeking office. At the November meeting, we'll announce the complete roster.

On a very sad note, another one of our members has passed away. Don Sebrell died at home from the cancer that had plagued him for so long. He was also dealing with a ruptured disk that was so painful that he hadn't been able to attend our meetings. I talked to Don often and will miss him very much. ◆

(Phone……….Continued from page 3)

My new cell phone number is 813-767-3745 and my email address at Verizon is mcpease@VZW.com. ◆

E Fletcher Ave

USF

E Fowler Ave

I - 275

50th St

Parking

Meeting site: MOSI
4801 E Fowler
Main Entrance

To Tampa

N

The map is **not** to scale