



September in Tampa
Hurricane??

A Monthly Publication of the Tampa PC Users Group, Inc.

Vol. 20 No. 9 September 2007

Meeting

Microsoft Publisher 2007

Wednesday, September 12, 2007
6:30 PM
Art Pepin Hospitality Room
Pepin Distributing Co.
4121 N 50th St
Tampa, Florida

Meeting Preview: John Witmer will do a presentation on Microsoft Publisher 2007. William LaMartin will assist by showing how he uses Publisher to put the newsletter together. As usual, the meeting will begin with our Windows SIG led by Bob LaFave.



Editor's Comments

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

Office 2007 Article In my Microsoft Office 2007 article in last month's newsletter, I inadvertently omitted a recommendation as to whether or not you should rush out and buy it. If you use your current version of Office rarely and it does everything you want, then you probably shouldn't. If you use its programs every day and have some money burning a hole in your pocket, then you should. It does offer more functionality and a slicker interface

iPhone Unlocking As you knew would happen, a month or so after the introduction of Apple's iPhone that uses the AT&T network exclusively, various individuals have found

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October Meeting: Media Concepts Inc. - digital duplicating services

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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.

Technical information found in this publication is not necessarily compatible with your hardware and software, plus other errors or misprints could occur from time to time. Therefore, the use of programs, commands, functions or anything of a technical nature appearing in this publication will be at your own risk.

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Minutes of the August Meeting

By Doug Mullis, Secretary, Tampa PC Users Group
dmullis@tampabay.rr.com

We first watched the flawless launching of Orbiter Endeavour (STS 118) from Cape Kennedy. At 6:47 pm, Bob LaFave began our Windows SIG session by asking if any members were having computer problems they wished to discuss.

Ed Cohen said he recently installed Norton Internet Securities on his three PCs and is unhappy with the four minutes each takes to boot up and then everything seems to run in slow motion. Bob said to see what effect removing unused programs from the startup routine has.

Ed then asked how to remove programs from the startup routine. Bob reflected back on his earlier recommendation for us to download Mike Lin's Startup Control Panel. It is free, although a donation is suggested. It will show what programs are loading at startup, and you simply check off those not needed. It is much easier to use than Microsoft's MSConfig. Merle said his policy, using MSConfig, is to remove from Startup: Adobe Update Manager, QuickTime, and anything starting with HP.

Nancy Cottrell asked about installing a wireless router. She uses Bright House Roadrunner as her Internet provider. Bob told her to call Bright House, as they will install and program a wireless router at a nominal charge. Might as well let them make it work.

Another member wanted to know if he could install a second router. Bob said to try it. He thought it should work.

After some general discussion, the SIG meeting con-

(Minutes.....Continued on page 5)



Member of
The Association of
Personal Computer User Groups

Surge Suppressors

By Ron Weinberg, Tampa PC Users Group
rswjbr@verizon.net

It was evident at the August group meeting that there was significant interest in this issue, so I am writing this to contribute a little knowledge of the subject gleaned from my professional experience, although I am not an electrical engineer and do not claim to be an expert on this subject.

Tampa Bay is known as the lightning capital of the nation. Computers and other electronic equipment are sensitive to electrical variations. Nothing can guarantee protection against a direct lightning strike, but lesser spikes and power surges can be severely damaging. Therefore, we locals should have a means of protecting our equipment.

Electric utilities may offer full home protection (TECO offers Zap Cap). This may be an ideal solution. For most of us, protecting individual equipment may be an acceptable compromise.

The saying “You Get What You Pay for” applies to the purchase of a surge protector. Those cheap strips claiming protection offer minimal protection at best, and are almost nothing more than extension cords.

Most good protectors use MOV (metal oxide varistor) as part of their circuitry. MOV based designs are subject to gradual deterioration, i.e., the MOV wears out a little with each surge it suppresses. This means that old units may have lost some or all of their ability to protect.

You can judge a Surge Protector by its UL rating, Joule Rating, and of course you should select one offering enough wattage for all your connected devices. UL Rating must be 1449 for Surge Protection and 1778 for UPS. Joule ratings vary, generally higher is better, but unscrupulous companies may quote unrealistic or fake ratings. It is best to buy from a reliable maker.

You can Google “Joule rating” for more detailed information.

Many reliable brands are available. Two prominent ones are APC (American Power Conversion), <http://www.APC.com>, and Tripp-Lite, <http://www.tripplite.com>. These companies include insurance for your devices against loss of the type they are designed to protect, such as a power surge.

You will be able to find protection for all kinds of devices and many multiple purpose units. Protection is offered for computers, printers, LCDs, HDTVs, etc. Some units include protection for telephone (modem), cable, and DSL connections as well. Some units have indicator lights for status and even wire faults. You may select a combination UPS unit offering Surge Protection or a Surge Protector only.

Check out what you want online and you will find most popular models available at leading suppliers. A favorite of mine is the Tripp Lite ISOTEL8ULTRA. It has:



8 outlets / 12-ft. cord
 2850 joule rating
 All metal housing with LEDs
 Isolated filter banks
 Modem/fax surge protection
 \$50,000 Ultimate Lifetime Insurance (USA, Puerto Rico & Canada only)
 Price around \$60.00 ◆

Traveling with a Laptop

By Jim Purcell, Member at Large,
Tampa PC users Group
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I spent a week, along with other family members, visiting my daughter's father-in-law in Madison, a small town in central Maine. When I had gone several days without checking my email, I started looking for a Starbucks or a Panera Bread Store and found that there was a Starbucks about 22 miles away in Waterville, ME. I hadn't used Starbucks in about three years, and at that time it was free so I assumed that there was no change. After getting my computer set up, buying a cup of coffee and spending a good bit of time trying to log onto the Internet, I finally asked for help. They told me that all Starbucks stores are connected to "T-Mobile Hot Spot" and that I needed either an account or a daily pass. When I declined, they suggested parking close to a

email. All of this ate up about three and a half hours, just to check my email.

When I got back to Florida, I decided to see if I could find a way to make things easier on my next trip. Much to my dismay, I found that had I spent about 20 minutes of research before my trip to Maine, I would have easily found access to the internet throughout my trip. I located "The Wi-Fi-FreeSpot Directory" at: <http://www.wififreespot.com/index.html>. The well-designed index at this site allows you to search by facility or by state and town. I learned from this site that the library in Waterville, ME is one of 57 libraries in Maine that offer a free Wi-Fi connection and one of the 57 libraries is located in Madison, about 4 blocks from where I was staying. I also learned that "First Watch", one of my favorite restaurants, offers free Wi-Fi and now has 78 daytime cafes in 11 states. I emailed First Watch to confirm that all locations offer Wi-Fi and received a prompt reply from their marketing manager advising that all 78 locations offer free Wi-Fi. I took my laptop to breakfast at the First Watch just off of Fowler Avenue this weekend and was able to connect to the internet quickly with no hassle. If you are not familiar with First Watch, you need to be aware that they are a daytime café and are open year-round from 7:00 AM to 2:30 PM, excluding Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. Their web site links to their menu for breakfast, brunch and



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(Wi-Fi.....Continued on page 5)

motel that was next door or going to Downtown Central Waterville, which they said was "wired". I had tried two or three locations downtown with no success when I spotted the Waterville library and decided to ask them for further instructions. The librarian told me to bring my laptop into the library and find a place that was comfortable. I found a spacious desk with an electrical outlet nearby and was able to quickly connect to the internet and check my



(Wi-Fi.....Continued from page 4)

lunch and you can click on the menu items for the nutritional information of each item. <http://www.firstwatch.com/article.cgi?file=2007.02.20.9> . Panera Bread is another of my favorite places to eat or to get a cup of coffee. Their menu also provides nutritional information by clicking on the menu item. If you are a serious pastry, sandwich, salad and soup person they also have a downloadable seven page PDF document that lists the nutritional information on all of the items they sell (down to the individual bagel or scone). They offer free Wi-Fi at more than 1,100 Bakery Cafes in 38 states. <http://www.panerabread.com/cafes/wifi.php> .

If you are a serious traveler, you might be interested in T-Mobile HotSpot. There are 8,288 T-Mobile HotSpot locations in the U.S. T-Mobile HotSpot subscription customers can stay connected in 712 additional U.S. roaming locations and in thousands of locations worldwide. There is a schedule of rates and services at: http://hotspot.t-mobile.com/services_plans.htm . ◆

(Minutes.....Continued from page 2)
cluded at 7:24 pm.

Our president, John Witmer, introduced our guest speakers: Mr. Dana Brooke, Business Manager, and Ms. Mytu Tran, Business Services Sale Rep., from the West Hillsborough Ave. Comp USA store. With Mytu's help, Dana told us about the current state of the computer market from his perspective, changes in his company and what we should do to protect our

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Internet Picture of the Month



Farm Foreclosure Sale in Iowa

With all the attention being directed to home foreclosures at present, most due to subprime loan problems, it is instructive to look back to the 1930's with its many farm foreclosures.

Many farm debts were incurred when prices for farm commodities were relatively high, in the late teens or early 1920s. However, by the mid-1920s, it cost more to produce the crops than they brought at market, and the situation only worsened into the 1930s. The result--foreclosure by the banks that had made the loans.

This photo is from the American Historical Society site at <http://www.ameshistoricalsociety.org/exhibits/depression.htm>.

September's Interesting World Wide Web Locations

Tampa PC Users Group (that's us)
Free wi-fi hotspots
Expert Village - free how-to videos
List of anonymous wikipedia edits
Penny Postcards
Footnote - Original documents online

<http://www.tpcug.org/>
<http://www.wififreespot.com/>
<http://www.expertvillage.com/>
<http://wikiscanner.virgil.gr/>
<http://www.rootsweb.com/~usgenweb/special/ppcs/ppcs.html>
<http://www.footnote.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.

(Comments.....Continued from page 1)

ways around using AT&T. The first solution out of the starting blocks was a hardware solution, which, while ingenious, involves work beyond the abilities, I am sure, of 99.9% of iPhone users. More promising to those interested in the iPhone is a software solution that has been announced and demonstrated in a video on the Internet. How anyone can implement the software solution is still a mystery, though, since the developer of the solution is afraid to post the method on the Internet for fear of being sued by either Apple or AT&T.

Burgert Brothers' Tampa Photos I am sure many of you in the group are familiar with the collection of more than 13,000 photos of Tampa from a little before 1900 until in the 1960s taken by the Burgert Brothers' photo shop and now residing in the Tampa/Hillsborough County Library and accessible from their online card catalog, <http://www.hcplc.org/>. You may even recall that I created an index of these photos (when the search abilities of the library's online catalog were much more primitive than at present) at my personal site, <http://www.lamartin.com>. I receive emails occasionally from individuals who thank me for this since they find it easier to either browse the photos or do searches at my site than at the library's.

Although I have an index of them in a database at my site, the photos are at the library's site, and this past month I received an email from a user of my index informing me that my index was of no more use since the library had removed the photos. Now, I knew that the library hadn't removed the photos; they had just most likely changed their location on a server. So I went to the library's site, did a search for Burgert Brothers and found the new base URL for the photos. I just needed to change 13,214 addresses in my database by replacing <http://zerver.thpl.lib.fl.us/> with <http://burgertimages.hcplc.org/>. Computers are good at doing things like that. So go to <http://www.lamartin.com>, click on the Photos button and then the Burgert link.

Automated Slide Show Staying on the subject of photos for the moment gives me a chance to write a few lines about my programming. Over the years, I have come up with various methods of presenting a slideshow of photos on web pages. Most of my slide-

shows at various sites were not automated—that is, you had to press a button to go forward or backward within the show. There is a good reason for this—if you want automation of the display of images on a web page, you need to use JavaScript. You can do a search and find such code on the Internet and include it in the HTML of your page to do the show, and I have done this a couple of times in the past. But most of my slide shows contain many photos and this makes the JavaScript method cumbersome since you have to include all the photo links in the code of the page.

Since I use VB.Net (part of Visual Studio) for my web programming, I have stuck with a manual type slide show until recently, when Microsoft added a new tool for web programming—the AJAX Tool Kit. This allows me to do things with web pages that require Java but have the Java aspect of it hidden from me. Thus, I can now do things like automated slide shows from within BV.Net. To see both types, again go to <http://www.lamartin.com>, click on the Photos button and click on the Hurricane Katrina link. Which do you prefer, the manual show or the automated show? If you prefer flowers to hurricane damage, go to the neighborhood site I maintain at <http://www.oldhydeparkfl.org/>, click on the Hyde Park | Photos buttons. Here you also have a choice of automated or manual shows. Oh, and there is one hurricane show here, too.

As the tools available change, I try to change with them. We have certainly come a long way from when I used Notepad to create the HTML code for the first TPCUG web site.

Comparing folders Another programming project this past month was to write a program for Windows Desktop computers that would compare the subfolders and files in one folder with those in another folder and then allow you to copy files and subfolders that are different between the folders. You might think that this ability was already a utility in Windows, but it isn't. Of course, you can purchase programs that will do this. However, I wanted to roll my own. Merle Nicholson was my beta tester on this project, and it surprised me how many bugs he could uncover that I hadn't caught. This is what I will talk about at the

(Comments.....Continued on page 8)

Special Interest Groups

Microsoft Access SIG

This SIG meets the **first Tuesday** of the month at 6:30 PM. The meeting location varies. For information, contact William LaMartin at lamartin@tampabay.rr.com, or Merle Nicholson at merle@merlenicholson.com.

Digital Imaging SIG—Cancelled until further notice

(Minutes.....Continued from page 5)

electronic devices.

Mr. Brooke confirmed that TPCUG members are generally entitled to a discount at the business counter on items not already discounted. Locally, Comp USA has stores in Brandon, Clearwater and two locations in Tampa. They have served the Tampa Bay area for more than twenty years.

One member asked if there was a way for us to check the availability of items online before coming to the store? Dana said there was, and Mytu took us to their business web site for a demonstration.

What are the hottest-selling items at Comp USA? Digital cameras, MP 3 players and iPods with video. People now want a super-compact camera for travel and another with all the features for home use. You might have noticed that electronics prices change very little but that the features increase with each year's models. Dana says most people no longer do major upgrades to their PCs. Now, every three or four years they buy a new computer, usually a laptop for portability. The industry is pricing PC's to encourage this, as obsolescence is assured within four years. Also, Dana recommended not upgrading an older computer to Windows Vista; buy a new one with Vista already installed. You'll save money and avoid headaches.

Here in Florida you should protect all expensive electronic equipment from power surges. Protective devices should be rated to absorb at least 1200 joules of surge energy. Power conditioning and battery backup are also important to prevent crashes of your PC. Soft shutdown preserves your data and is easier on the electronics. Comp USA donated such a protective device

Visual Basic for Applications SIG

This SIG meets the **third Wednesday** of the month at 6:30 PM. The meeting location varies. For information, contact William LaMartin at lamartin@tampabay.rr.com.

Windows SIG

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

at the meeting for the group's benefit. Ed White says TECO will provide something they call Zap Cap for a few dollars a month to protect all your electronics against power surges.

Mr. Brooke said backing up your system is cheap today, so Do It! Thumb drives, external hard drives and DVDs are recommended based upon the capacity needed. Save important data using these backup devices.

Bob LaFave suggested that Comp USA do away with mail-in rebates. Why not instant rebates? Dana said he would pass this along to upper management.

In closing, Mr. Brooke said anyone wanting to log in to the Comp USA business web site should email him at dana_brooke@compusa.com and he will see to it.

John Witmer thanked Dana Brooke and Mytu Tran for the insight into the computer sales world. And for the APC power backup device which will be raffled off as a door prize. Raffle tickets were sold during a short break. Winners of prizes were as follows:

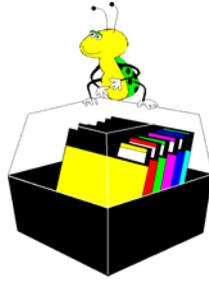
Harry Lochaby	\$40 Comp USA Gift Certificate
Roy Drew	\$20 Comp USA Gift
Bob LaFave	APC 350 Battery Backup Device

Guests this evening were Hardy Tuegel and Roy Drew.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

(Regular Secretary Doug Mullis thanks John Witmer for carrying these duties for the past two months in addition to being our president.) ◆

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Tampa, FL 33601-3492



First Class Mail

- Member: Your membership is up for renewal*
- Vendor: Your product was reviewed on page ____*

(Comments.....Continued from page 6)
next VB SIG.

Newspapers Are you noticing that not only are the printed versions of our local newspapers, *The Tampa Tribune* and *The St. Petersburg Times*, shrinking, but also their online sites seem to have less news than before, or it may just be that in their reorganization of their sites, they have put the news in locations where I am not used to finding it. It appears that they want their main page to be mainly local news and sports. You have to dig to get the state and national news from the sites. The Tribune is also pushing a subscription to some sort of digital version where you can read the entire paper with your browser or an offline reader. There is only one catch—it is about \$90 per year. This is a service from <http://www.newsstand.com/>. For comparison, it appears that to read *The New York Times* in its original format digitally will cost you about \$180 per year.

Perhaps this is the future: It is cheaper than a subscription to the printed version, and it saves the trees (which are grown for the sole purpose of being made into paper). But it is going to be hard to get people to pay for something that they have been getting a scaled-down version of online for free. ◆

