The Computer Link

March 2001

The Newsletter of the Northern Neck Computer Users' Group

November 2000 marked the debut of award winning PentaZip 4.1 file compression software at Comdex. At a recent meeting of the Northern Neck Computer Users, copies of PentaZip 4.1 in shareware form were distributed to those attending along with a lovely desk calendar, all courtesy of PentaWare, Inc. Perhaps some have not explored the potentials of this software yet and are not aware of its features. Here they are.

PentaZip features include:

VIEWER—Lets users see file contents without waiting for the files to decompress or their applications to open (also eliminates risk of viruses being launched through e-mail attachments). Additionally, files can be viewed even when the parent application is not on the user's system.

SCRIPTING feature—Users can create self-running file backups and manage repetitive tasks.

WINDOWS EXPLORER Interface—Instantly familiar interface for users accessing, modifying and resaving files from almost any program without unzipping.

- PentaZip 4.1 also offers macro virus protection by enabling users to view files, and cut and paste the contents, without opening the file and triggering the virus. The program also features one-click access to an existing virus protection program, making it easier for users to scan incoming files for viruses.

Remember, this is shareware and will require purchase if you decide it is as useful to you as the sales pitch purports it to be.

Betty Lehman

My frustrations with Microsoft and its software goes beyond description. I never will understand why we Stop the computer by first clicking the START button. Then, insult is added to injury by requiring us to click two further buttons before the computer finally closed down its operations. So unnecessary!

Of course, you always can start the shutdown by pressing ALT and F4 at the same time, then going to the following needed buttons displayed. However, letting the computer do chores such as key pressing makes good sense. Create your own icon labeled SHUT DOWN for your desktop. To do this, select New and Shortcut. Next, type c;\windows\rundll.exe user.exe, exitwindows in the command line of RUN. Name the shortcut SHUT DOWN and click FINISH.

Now double-click your new SHUT DOWN icon to close your computer's operation the quick and easy way.

Chuck Brown, NNCUG
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Remember the talking paperclip? You know, that animated helper that keeps popping up when you are trying to find instructions on "how to _____" in Word? Well, I have it on good authority that the paperclip has been relegated to the hidden recesses of the software in favor of a new informational service in the Office XP Group (associated with Windows XP). Clippit, (known as "Clippy"), Rocky the Dog, Links the Cat, The Dot are the pseudonyms of these not very helpful critters.

Replacing Clippit is a collection of new features designed to help improve the Office "experience"--including a new "task pane" designed to bring to your attention things you might want or need to do in a particular circumstance. The task pane can be opened and closed like any other sub-window.

It remains to be seen whether the "improvement" will actually live up to the title or just be another dialog box you could do without.

Betty Lehman

UCITA *reviewed by Red tolbert*

Delegate Albert Pollard addressed the NNCUG at it's January General Meeting providing an overview of **the Uniform Computer Information Transaction Act** (UCITA) and invited members desiring more information to visit his office in Richmond and he would arrange a meeting with persons more familiar with UCITA details. Accepting Delegate Pollard's invitation I went to the General Assembly Building Monday January 29th. Two other NNCUG members planning to attend could not attend on any of the proposed meeting dates.

The principal spokesman on UCITA was Josh Levi, Public Policy Manager of the Northern Virginia Technology Council. He was accompanied by Mitchell Goldstein, Director of the Joint Commission on Technology and Science for The Virginia General Assembly. Both gentlemen are lawyers exhibiting a depth of knowledge with UCITA and personal involvement with Virginia efforts since 1992.

In preparation for the meeting I had accessed the UCITA web site (www.ucitaonline.com). This turned out to be some 495 pages containing the act as written along with much legal opinion of what the act was saying and relating it to other laws concerning transactions. The act itself as now in review by the General Assembly is contained within 13 pages.

A surprise to me was there is a National Conference of Commissioners On State Laws that has been in existence for about 110 years. Its membership is from academia and various organizations and entities with interests in law. About 10 years ago they were reviewing laws regarding commercial transactions with the specific purpose of assessing their applicability within the new world of the computer information and on-line transactions.

Originally drafted in 1932 these laws have been amended several times but the need for more definitive rules governing electronic commercial ventures was evident.

Virginia was the first state to enact a UCITA - - January 2000 - - which becomes effective July 1st of this year. The delay is to provide time for review. It is noted several revisions are being considered during this session of the General Assembly. It is also noteworthy that Maryland enacted a similar UCITA last year and it is already effective. Some 23 other states have theirs in review and 17 more are in draft stage.

The act is chiefly a business to business document but provisions for individuals are included. I cite the following as of particular interest:

Reading the "Definitions" section identified many things I felt were significant. An example is that agreements/licenses you sign for use of a product must be understandable and conspicuous as to terms. "Conspicuous" doesn't mean everything in red capitals. That hides things almost as much as small print. It is the key provisions that must be easily recognized. Another item of note is that you can have an "electronic agent" that accepts or agrees to transactions. Be sure your electronic agent is doing what you want.

Under "Exclusions" it should be noted that this act does not apply to financial services transactions or to insurance services transactions. They are covered by other laws. And of course Federal Law takes precedence.

"Manifesting Assent (or Acceptance)" and "Opportunity to Review" has provisions for something like software. Generally when you break the sweat wrap or signify acceptance of the license for use agreement you have accepted the product. This is not entirely true. The product might be faulty or not perform as it should. You can return the product, within reasonable limitations.

"Electronic Regulation of Performance" is addressed. Some programs have cut-off dates programmed within their software, others, if you use the licensee's web site, may be modified or updated if it is consistent with your agreement. Generally, electronic self-help is not permitted without prior notification.

Finally, under the "Choice of Law" the court decides what laws (UCITA, financial services, insurance services, goods, etc) are applicable related to cases before the court.

In summary, while there is concern that UCITA is written for the computer goods, software, and services companies it still affects individuals. Nonetheless, keep in mind that we as individuals still have an avenue of protection under Consumer Protection Laws. Concomitantly, be sure you that the licensing agreement on products you purchase are read closely to determine if terms are acceptable. Al Brittle and I have single copies the latest version of UCITA. If anyone desires to make a copy for personal files or review, contact one of us.

Did you get the AnnaK worm yet?

*Here's a quick and easy way
to trick the worm*
Rod Ream, Pasadena IBM Users Group

Visual Basic Scripts (VBS) are popular with virus writers. That's because they're easy to create and will launch if sent as an e-mail attachment. And the recipient double-clicks on them.

But there's an easy, free way for you to defeat Visual Basic Script viruses.

Every file type has a default action that takes place when we double click on a file. The default action for double clicking on a VBS (Visual Basic Script) file type is to open and execute the script file. That means double clicking on the attachment runs or launches the script. This default action is the mechanism that can result in system infection if a user unknowingly launches an infected attachment received in an email message.

You can easily change this action and stop the accidental launch and execution of a VBS file by making it do something else when double-clicked on. Some users have disabled or removed the capability of the system to run a VBS file out of fear of potential viral exposure. However, there's a relatively easy fix for this that will still permit a web page or other application to run a VB script when such function is actually needed, but will block the double click action. The fix is to change the default action to Edit, which causes the file to open in Notepad rather than execute.

Here's the Step-by-Step
In Windows Explorer (*not* Internet Explorer), open Folder Options under the View pull-down menu (moved to Tools in Windows Me). Select the "File Types" tab and scroll to VBScript Encoded File. Click on the "Edit" button ("Advanced" in Windows Me).

What happens is another window will open showing the possible file actions, with the default action indicated in boldface type. The default action is likely "Open." Highlight instead the word "Edit" and click on the "Set Default" button. "Edit" should now appear in bold face.

In some older systems the Edit function may not be listed. In such instances, click the NEW button and enter "Edit" in the action field and "NOTEPAD.EXE" in the application field. When "Edit" has been added make it the default action as shown above.

While in the file type screen, also make sure the boxes for "always show extension" and enable quick view" are also checked. Click "OK" to close the open windows.

Windows usually has several example VBS files on the system, in a folder named "sample." Find one of them and double click on it. If the action caused Notepad to open and display the content of the file, you've done it correctly and are now safe from an accidental VBS infection.

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RICH EMERY presents POWERPOINT   March 10th

In the late 1970's, computers began to play a role in my professional and personal life; I worked on them at the office and played with them at home. As both software and hardware became more and more sophisticated, my fascination with computers grew. With the advent of the Internet, I saw so much potential for the technology to transform lives that I served on the Board of Directors for a local ISP and provided technical support for local providers. I have also volunteered as a tutor in the computer labs in Michigan and Virginia. I now serve the Northern Neck Adult Education Program in the capacity of Technology Specialist in addition to other teaching duties. While working with youth programs I have had the opportunity to use and implement the **PowerPoint** software to enhance presentations. The visual and audio impact of **PowerPoint** brings vitality and interest to presentations. I utilizes self teaching CD-ROMs, samples of presentations, and active participation of building a presentation by the audience. The presentation will include a question and answer period.

Relief in Sight from Barrage Of Irksome TV Commercials?

by Ken Fermoyle, Tug-Net

   Are you fed up with the seemingly endless barrage of commercials crammed into   your favorites TV shows and sports events? If so, join the club! But relief may be in sight, according to Electronic Digest (Sept. 5, 2000 issue).
   The magazine reports that sophisticated new integrated circuit controllers will improve performance of Set-Top Boxes and Personal Video Recorders (STBs/PVRs). The new ICs will make the devices less expensive and more versatile. This

should eventually change their status from novelties with appeal to a limited market of "early adopters" to appliances that gradually will take the place of today's VCRs.

Electronic Design also notes that the new controllers "can be used to manage arriving and departing data streams, into and out of set-top boxes, storage devices, digital TVs. PVRs," from a variety of sources, including broadband cable, satellites, terrestrial and IP (Internet Protocol) networks.

What does this have to do with computers? PVR technology is digital, like computers, not analog like VCRs, and data is stored on a hard drive, like computers, not on magnetic tape. A PVR will do everything that a VCR can, but with significant improvements.

For example, I have about given up on watching a lot of TV when it is aired, especially movies. Instead, I record them on a VCR and play them back later, fast-forwarding through commercial breaks. This scenario works even better with a PVR. You can record a program in real time but pause it at any point, at a commercial break, for example.

The PVR keeps recording the program while you get fresh coffee, go to the bathroom or whatever. When you return and hit the Pause button again, the recorder picks up where it left off, playing the program back from the hard drive. Now you can fast forward quickly through the commercials and enjoy what you really wanted to see.

You will also be able to do your own instant replays; just rewind, then replay segments you want to view again. You can also preprogram a PVR to record favorite program automatically, just as with a VCR.

(Ed. Note: If you currently use a PVR and service like TiVo, Ken Fermoyle would love to hear about your experiences with these technologies for possible use in a future article. E-mail him at kfermoyle@earthlink.net.)

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"In the beginning was the Word.." And don't you forget it! There is no restriction against anyone using the article as long as it is kept in context, with proper credit given to the author. This article is brought to you by the Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG), an International organization to which this user group belongs.

Subject: Who Dat Who Said Winmail?

Byline: by Steve Bass, Pasadena IBM Users Group

Has this ever happened to you? You receive an e-mail and there's a winmail.dat attached to it. The attachment can't be viewed, decoded, or converted. Any idea what's going on? Well, it's not a rare event and there's not much you can do about it.

This file contains formatting code that was sent by someone using Microsoft Exchange or Outlook. It usually doesn't contain any useful information other than Rich Text Format (RTF) formatting code that permits two MS Exchange users to send e-mail messages with formatting such as bold and italics.(Oddly enough, there's no relationship between RTF files and RTFM instructions.)

When a user sends an e-mail with this formatting option to someone not on Microsoft Exchange, a winmail.dat file appears as an attachment, but it is useless to the recipient.

When a separate attachment, such as a Word 97 document is also sent from the user on Microsoft Exchange, the attachment and winmail.dat file may be combined into a single winmail.dat file our program cannot do anything with.

Here's the deal: Have the sender turn off the option to send Rich Text Formatted e-mail messages to you. This can be specified on an individual recipient basis but they may have to consult the product documentation for detailed information.

Current versions of the Microsoft programs by default send plain text e-mail to new recipients instead of the RTF text. For a very rich FAQ, check the Microsoft Exchange Frequently Asked Questions page. It contains answers to questions about Exchange, mostly from folks wrestling with it as their mail client on Win 9.x, where it is also known by the euphonious name of Windows Messaging. Check here: www.angrygraycat.com/goetter/exclifaq.htm#suppressrtf

Steve Bass is a Contributing Editor with PC World Magazine, frequently writes for Forbes ASAP, and is the president of the Pasadena IBM Users Group. He often writes with his tongue in his cheek. Write to him at stevebass@earthlink.net §

NORTHERN NECK COMPUTER USERS GROUP
General Meeting Minutes
February 10, 2001

Al Brittle called the February General Meeting to order at 10:00 am with a welcome to the 48 attendees, introduction of our 6 visitors, and a reminder to all to use the rear parking lot during meetings. Al also invited everyone to check out the abundance of donated items at the Free Table.

The minutes of the January meeting were approved as published in *The Link.* John Parr reported total membership of 189, and a solvent Treasury. A copy of the financial statement is available in the Minute Book.

Annual election of officers occurs at our March General Meeting, March 10. Al referred members to the Nominating Committee's notice in this month's email soliciting volunteers to serve on the Board. As a non-profit organization, NNCUG's survival requires that all Board positions be filled. Carolyn Bridgers volunteered to run for the open position of Member-at-Large. The Vice Presidency is also open. If you can serve, PLEASE contact the Nominating Committee.

It is noted that a new ISP, "kaballero.com" has opened in White Stone under proprietor Graylend Horn, 804-436-9428. Current access is at $14.95/mo. For unlimited hours.

Activities:
Northumberland Computer Lab continues, 10 am to Noon, Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, Northumberland Public Library, Heathsville. Due to closing of the Church Resource Services building, **Lancaster Computer Lab** will meet at Northumberland Library during the same hours until further notice. The Board has written to the United Methodist Church at White Marsh requesting that the lab equipment be donated to NNCUG, to be installed and operated by a new sponsor as soon as one can be found.

Publishing SIG next meets March 8, 2:00 pm, Mary Ball Washington Museum, Lancaster, for a continuing look at Making Labels. Contact <blehman@crosslink.net> for more information.

Genealogy SIG will meet Monday, February 12, at 2:30 pm, Lancaster Community Library, Kilmarnock, for a demonstration of The Master Genealogist software by Barbara Rennie and Richard Ward. At its next meeting, March 5, Jean Christensen will demonstrate Family Tree Maker. Please contact Ann Thompson, <osprey@rivnet.net> for details.

Investing SIG is currently dormant, due to lack of attendance and a down and volatile market. Anyone interested in continuing this SIG should contact Red Tolbert.

Web Site SIG next meets February 15, 10:00 am, Northumberland Public Library. Please contact Alan Trickey, <atrickey@crosslink.net> for details.

There was no raffle this month.

Guest Richard Emery of the Northern Neck Adult Education program invited anyone who can assist new PC users in the role of volunteer teacher's aide to contact him at 804-580-3152. The program has a waiting list of students. The current classes in Heathsville and Lancaster are so large that more hands-on assistance is needed.

Jim Talbot, our featured speaker, entertained one and all with useful tips on how to save money (or resist the temptation to spend it) on your home computing adventures. Jim also prepared a handout listing sources for bargains on various supplies.

Red Tolbert reported he took up Del. Al Pollard's invitation to meet with those working to fine-tune UCITA before it becomes effective in July. Red urged all to visit <www.UCITAonline.com>, stay informed, and let the Governor and our delegates know your concerns.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:15, with an invitation to anyone wanting help with particular PC questions/problems to stay on and get help.

Respectfully submitted,
Camille Bennett, Secretary

Membership Report

NEW MEMBERS: Jeff Newsome, Joe Page, Coley Davis and Marjie Ambrose

RENEW MARCH 2001- Stuart Bray, Carolyn Bridgers, Maurice Dickerson, Garland Dillard, Rick Embrey, Linda Elders-Bailey, John Helms, Madeline Kohler, Gini Nowakoski, Fannie Pumphey, Dick Rounds, Robert Shultz Jr. Frank Smith, Howard Straughan Jr. and Carl Wilson

PAST DUE DECEMBER 2000-John Paige, Mariam Reese, Christer Sandstredt, Richard Schultz **JANUARY** 2001- Joe Forshaw, , Bonnie Shelton and Dick Steelman. **FEBRUARY** 2001- Samuel Bridgeman, Susan Christopher, Robert Davis, Norman Dobyns, Gerald Hawley, David Holt, Betty Lehman, Elvin Miller, Richard Orosz, Bonnie Petty, Douglas Siegel, Travis Williamson and A.Bennett Wilson.

Membership dues are $20 annually. Please send to:

John Parr, Treasurer, NNCUG, P.O. Box 10, Haynesville, Va. 22472

For insertion into our local newspaper advertising, please send to cbennett@crosslink.net no later than 15th of the month.

The Computer Link

**Northern Neck Computer
Users' Group
P.O.Box 1213
Kilmarnock, Va. 22482**

Special Interest Meetings

*NNCUG GENERAL
MEETING
2nd Saturday 10:00 a.m.
Lancaster Community Library*

*WEBSITE DESIGN SIG
info (804) 462-7898*

*INVESTMENT SIG
suspended*

*GENEALOGY SIG
March 5th 2:30 p.m.
Lancaster Comm. Library*

*PUBLISHING SIG
March 8th
MBW museum 2:30 p.m.*

Coming Attractions

March 10................ POWERPOINT with Rich Emery
April   14................ Internet by Satellite? Mark Saunders