



# OMUG

<http://www.oly mug.org>

## NEWS



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Olympia Microcomputer Users Group

January 2004

## New year good time to tune up computer

By Dave Wilson  
OMUG President

Well, the holidays are over and I'm sure that a lot of you got a new computer or software. Now is the time to take advantage of the great members of OMUG. There is a member out there who can help you with any computer problems you may have. If you're not on the OMUG reflector, it may behoove you to enroll. There are lots of interesting e-mails that come through.

On a different note, I want to let you know about Fred Langa. He has a newsletter called the "Langalist." I believe it's a very valuable tool to any computer owner. This week he wrote about maintaining and updating your computer.

In his article "Three Important End-Of-Year Tasks," he wrote "The end of a year is a natural time for wrapping up loose ends from the year past and positioning yourself — and your PC — for a smooth entry" to the new year. In fact, taking a few minutes now to focus on some "basic, at-least-annual upkeep for your desktop hardware and software can pay off, big time, for months to come.

"For example, it's a great time to perform a complete system tune up. All



it takes is a little pointing and clicking — with no deep skill or knowledge required — to ensure that your hard drive is error-free ("http://langa.com/u/2a.htm"), clear of viruses (http://langa.com/u/2b.htm) and other threats (http://langa.com/u/2c.htm), cleaned of junk files (http://langa.com/cleanup\_bat.htm), and defragged (http://langa.com/u/2d.htm).

Once that's done, visit the "update" sites for your OS (e.g. "http://www.windowsupdate.com") and for your major applications and utilities; and the support pages on your PC vendor's web site.

Make sure you have all current security patches, important updates, and any new drivers appropriate for your system. Then, make a special "keep" forever" backup or disk image (http://langa.com/backups/backups.htm) of the newly updated system, so you can rapidly restore your PC to this known-good, fully updated state should you ever need to in the future."

But getting your system up to snuff is just one of the three important year-end tasks I recommend. For the full scoop on all the recommended steps, please click on over to <http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=16700516>. There, in a full-length article, we'll run through the complete end-of-year process for \*any\* PC.

We'll also present a special section just for those who are still running Win98, letting you find exactly what will happen on Jan. 16, and showing you the steps you can take now — while full support is still available — to get your system running right.

We'll also show you how to preserve your Win98 setup so you can repair and restore it, even after Microsoft pulls the plug. But no matter what OS you're running, the information at <http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=16700516> can help your system end the year running right — and set up for smooth sailing into the new year."

Nothing is more frustrating than having your computer crash. Hopefully, with a little diligence, you can prevent this inconvenience. Fred Langa can be found at [www.langa.com](http://www.langa.com). I highly recommend it. May your worst days be behind you and your best days ahead!

~Happy New Year~



## EXECUTIVE BOARD

**President:** Dave Wilson

**Vice President:** Dan Colard

**Treasurer:** Max Whipps

**Librarian:** Christie McCormick

**Newsletter Editor:** Sandy Pishner

**Secretary:** Vivian Forrester

**Webmaster:** Clint Steele

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**Director at Large:** Bill Gortz

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**SIG Coordinator:** Shirley Bellinghausen

**Visitors Coordinator:** Elizabeth Ross

# New Year resolution:

## Take better care of my computer

By Sandy Pishner  
OMUG Newsletter Editor

A new year, a new resolution. Since my old standard resolution has yet to be realized, I decided to make a new one.

I resolve to take much better care of my computer. That means dusting it regularly, backing up my files, updating my anti-virus program, and cleaning off all the old files.

I'm already a head of the game because I went and bought one of those compressed air thingy-me-bobs.

My anti-virus should be easy since I have it set up to check for updates.



Cleaning off all the old files will be real easy since I don't have any to speak of after my recent computer crash. The hard part will be sticking to the backing up my files. Wish me luck!

## Thanks For Renewing

Norman Gallacci

Sheila Snoozy

Wim Verhoef

Linda Mae

Russ Ogden

Russell Nation

Carol Barker

## Welcome to our New Member

ELIZABETH HOKE

## COUPON

FOR PRIMARY MEMBERS ONLY  
GOOD FOR ONE DOOR PRIZE TICKET



See you at the Jan. 8 meeting

## OMUG Income & Expenses November 2003



**Income: \$241.00**

[Mbr Dues-\$238.00, Snack Fund Donations-\$3.00]

**Expenses: \$579.97**

[Newsletter Copying, Postage, & Supplies-\$400.52, Bulk Mail Permit-\$150.00, SSSS Donation,\$25.00, Treasurer Supplies-\$4.45]

**Net Deficit: (\$343.56)**

**Account Balance: \$4650.58**

12/25/03

**To Be Deposited: \$0.00**

**Current Treasury: \$4650.58 (Incl. Scholarship Fund)**

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# Board approves budget for 2004

By Vivian Forrester  
OMUG Secretary

President Dave Wilson opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m. in the computer lab of the Senior Center in the Olympia Center.

Eight Board members, including the president, were in attendance: Vivian Forrester, secretary; Max Whipps, treasurer; John Marshall, past president; Sandra Pishner, newsletter editor; Christie McCormick, librarian; and directors at large, Shirley Bellinghausen and Bill Gortz.

To date, \$737 has been received from the silent auction held at the December General Meeting. Thanks to Shirley Bellinghausen for chairing the event and to everyone contributing to its success.

John Marshall reported the Frankenstein Project has given away one complete computer system since last month and another system is in the process of setting up for another recipient. Operating systems software and licenses and ink cartridges are needed for completing more systems.



John Claeys will conduct the first Hardware SIG Tuesday, Jan. 13, 2004. John reported interest shown from OMUG membership for production of audio CDs from various sources, including Internet streaming for January's Hot Topics SIG.

The treasurer reported income of \$241 and expenses of \$579.97 for the month of November. Expenses included the one-time Bulk Mailing Fee of \$150.

Bill Gortz presented the 2004 proposed budget. Max Whipps moved that the proposed budget be approved, and Christie McCormick seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

## Shopping online a good experience

By Jerry Wonderly  
Dayton Microcomputer Association, Inc.

Many Americans now do much of their shopping online and the savvy shopper uses comparison-shopping websites. After some research, I think I've come up with some sites that will be helpful as you shop online too. I'm admittedly no expert so please consider the following as my own personal opinions.

In preparing for this article, a list was compiled of six possible gifts from six different categories because some comparison shopping sites are more comprehensive than others.

The six theoretical gifts include: a highly-rated Canon Powershot A70 3.2 megapixel digital camera; a best-selling book called "Founding Brothers – The Revolutionary Generation" by Joseph J. Ellis; a top 10 PC game called "Rise Of Nations" by Microsoft; a bottle of Estee Lauder perfume called "Pleasures" in a 1.7 ounce size; a board game called "Harry Potter: Heir Of Slytherin;" and a popular golfing putter called the "Titleist Scotty Cameron Studio Design 1.5."

Next, a list of comparison-shopping websites was put together. The following comparison shopping sites were used: Lycos [shop.lycos.com/](http://shop.lycos.com/), BizRate [www.bizrate.com](http://www.bizrate.com),

Price Grabber [www.pricegrabber.com](http://www.pricegrabber.com), Shopping.com [www.shopping.com](http://www.shopping.com), Epinions [www.epinions.com](http://www.epinions.com), My Simon [www.mysimon.com](http://www.mysimon.com), Yahoo <http://shopping.yahoo.com>, Value Find [www.valuefind.com](http://www.valuefind.com), Shop Best [www.shopbest.com](http://www.shopbest.com), NexTag [www.nextag.com](http://www.nextag.com), and Price Scan [www.pricescan.com](http://www.pricescan.com).

An improvement over last year is that most of the comparison-shopping sites now have merchant reviews, and automatically compute tax and shipping to get an accurate display of true pricing.

These include Lycos, BizRate, Price Grabber, Shopping.com, Epinions, Yahoo, and NexTag. My Simon and Price Scan don't compute tax, but do for shipping and also have merchant reviews. Shop Best and Value Find have unusual sites in that the results usually took me to only one vendor to choose from. Shop Best had a very slow search engine and Value Page's frames are cumbersome and wouldn't react properly when clicking links. However, overall, most of the sites worked extremely fast, were laid out well, and offered several categories and stores to choose from.

**SEE SHOPPING, ON PAGE 5**

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# Computers — From the Very Beginning

By Charlie Paschal

Editor/Publisher, Palmetto Personal Computer Club, Columbia, SC  
Columnist, The (Columbia) State newspaper, SC

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**A**fter watching my 76-year-old sister struggle with her first computer, I decided to start a beginner's series on de-mystifying a computer. We're going to start from the very beginning and if I move too fast or use terms you don't understand, please send me e-mail about it.

I hope this can make your computer more "user friendly" for you.

Even if you're not a beginner, you might know someone who is and point out this series to them. Over a period of several issues, I hope to decipher the language, destroy the myths and, perhaps, entice beginners to overcome their fears of computers and begin to use them more effectively.

First, and foremost, why would you buy a computer in the first place?

Most of us use them for little more than the ability to dial up the Internet, send a few e-mail messages and do some simple searches. Despite these small expectations, it's still a struggle for my sister to learn how to use the computer.

In watching her, here are some things I've noticed that she struggles with:

- \* Clicking and double clicking.

- \* The individual parts of a window, such as the scroll bars, thinking other information on a page or document is "hidden" from her or not on the page. (Remember when a small baby played hide and seek? Small children thought you actually "disappeared" until they got older. This is almost the same thing — if you don't know where to look for the remainder of the page.)

- \* The difference between two separate Web sites.

- \* Why certain searches don't turn up a Web site ("That's what so and so told me to search for," she says when the search turns up empty, rather than considering that she might have "bad" information.)

A computer doesn't think in the way humans do — it works in ones and zeros and that's the only way it processes data. It uses binary and hexadecimal numbers rather than our decimal system.

You might think that a computer can't reach high numbers using this system, but it can. By using just ones and zeros, a computer can count to incredibly high numbers and just loves to do so. A computer uses these numbers to "hand out" addresses to each part (such as a printer port) or program, so

everything knows what street they're on when the operating system (or hardware) needs to reach them.

Ever had a program to "perform an illegal operation" or crash on you? This usually happens because one program tries to use an address already occupied by another program or piece of hardware. It's just like a bill that's delivered to the wrong address.

The operating system is the part of the computer that handles the hard work behind the scenes: Handling communication between an application, such as Microsoft Word, and a printer. When a user clicks on "print" in a Word document, it's the operating system that intercepts and tells the printer (at its address) to print the document. A "device driver," usually from the printer manufacturer, does the chore but it's the operating system that handles the communication between Word and the printer. It uses memory addresses to keep order.

Microsoft Windows is an operating system. It comes in several versions. Although there are prior versions to

Windows 95, most of us only know about Windows 98, Windows 2000 and XP. Windows NT is a heavy-duty operating system and is mostly used as a "Web" server — a server (a beefier computer, with more high end parts than a desktop) that handles duties on the Internet.

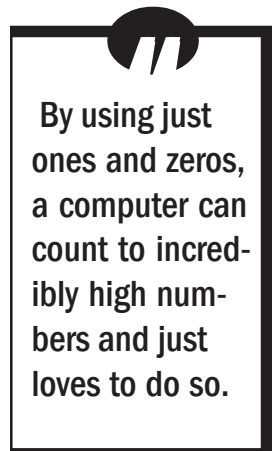
Other operating systems include Macintosh (Apple), Unix and Linux, which is a version of Unix that runs on the same type of hardware that Windows uses. Unix runs on different hardware, as do Apple computers. Programs that run on Apple's hardware won't run

on Windows computers and vice versa. Some special programs allow some programs that run on Windows to run on Linux.

The "hardware" part of a computer is the computer, monitor, keyboard, mouse, printer and other devices. The "software" consists of the programs and the operating system. Examples of software include Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Word, a virus checker or Outlook Express, an e-mail client.

Questions, comments: [comments@askcharlie.com](mailto:comments@askcharlie.com)

*(Courtesy of The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups.)*



**By using just ones and zeros, a computer can count to incredibly high numbers and just loves to do so.**

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# SHOPPING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Many online merchants are listed on multiple comparison-shopping websites. Their prices often vary from site to site though so it pays to search more than one comparison engine. Many sellers offer free shipping. As with brick-and-mortar stores, use good judgement when deciding which vendor to buy from.

Don't be hesitant about getting seller information from the Better Business Bureau at [www.bbb.org/](http://www.bbb.org/). Also, consider looking for coupons and discount codes from websites like Amazing Bargains [www.amazingbargains.com](http://www.amazingbargains.com), Deal Catcher [www.dealcatcher.com](http://www.dealcatcher.com) and Deal Of Day [www.dealofday.com](http://www.dealofday.com).

Here are the results of my make-believe shopping trip:

On the camera, NexTag had the lowest price from a merchant called Dbargains at \$240 plus tax and shipping. Unfortunately, you don't know what the tax and shipping are until after you've completed all of the online purchase orders. The next lowest price on the camera came from a Yahoo vendor called Rush4Digital. They are selling it for a total price of \$264.80. However, Rush4Digital is an unrated merchant at the time of this writing. My Simon's vendor, Beach Camera, offers the camera for \$269.00 plus tax, if any.

Beach Camera, located at [www.beachcamera.com](http://www.beachcamera.com), appears on many of the comparison search sites.

DataBus Editor's Note: Whenever purchasing electronics over the Internet, be sure to ask the vendor if the item you want to purchase comes with a valid U.S. warranty. Sometimes the very lowest prices found in searches are for "gray market" goods that were intended by the manufacturer to be sold overseas and thus do not carry a U.S. warranty (and, infrequently, may not even have an owners manual written in English).



The lack of a manufacturer's U.S. warranty should only be a problem if you need warranty service, so every buyer must decide for himself whether to assume the lack-of-warranty risk with some gray market merchandise in exchange for a potentially lower price. See what the New York Better Business Bureau has to say about gray market merchandise at <http://www.newyork.bbb.org/library/publications/subrep45.html>.]

For the book, Lycos and Bizrate bested the competition with identical deals of \$9.19 with tax and shipping included from Overstock ([www.overstock.com](http://www.overstock.com)).

As far as the PC game, Yahoo had the lowest price at \$37.95 total from a company called Purplus based in California. They have a high merchant rating on Yahoo.

Shopping for the perfume led me to the lowest price at Price Grabber's LuxNY.com based in New Jersey. They offered it for a total price of \$34.94. The drawback is that LuxNY is an unrated merchant. Shopping in the fragrance category on all of the comparison shopping sites was a bit unusual. None of them formulated tax and shipping for some reason.

Next, I looked for the Harry Potter board game. Most of the search sites came up with nothing. Only Lycos, BizRate and Yahoo had listings. The lowest price was found on Lycos and

BizRate at a merchant called TovBid.com. They sell the board game for \$8.99 with free shipping. There's no mention of sales tax.

Lastly, the Titleist putter was kind of hit or miss. Five of the sites either didn't have a category of Sports or just didn't list this putter. Of those that do have merchants selling this putter, Price Scan has a store called Golfalltheway who lists it for \$219.99 plus tax and shipping. Yahoo's Need2Golf.com sells the putter for a grass blade less at \$219.00 plus tax and shipping.

I was pleased overall with the improvement of the Internet comparison-shopping experience over last year. There are several good competitors out there with many reputable stores in their listings. It is pretty easy to navigate their sites and most of them allow you to sort the results by total price. This year we can be spared some of the aggravation of running from mall to mall and store to store in search of that perfect gift by doing at least some of our shopping online. But, you want to know something? Even if I do find all of my gifts online, I think I'll still venture out into the madness of the store crowds just to get that Christmas feeling. Then again, I might just stay home and watch that "Charlie's Angels" Christmas Special...

*This article was originally published in The DataBus, newsletter of the Dayton Microcomputer Association, Inc., (<http://www.dma.org/>).*

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*Courtesy of The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups.*