



# OMUG

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

## NEWS



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Olympia Microcomputer Users Group

December 2004

# My, how technology affects our lives

By **Bill Gortz**  
OMUG President

If you are like me things keep happening or changing and you observe and learn, but really don't think too much about it.

Recently I have experienced or observed several things that really brought to my mind just how much computers, the Internet and television have changed the way we receive information and the way we sometimes do things.

On Thanksgiving day the news showed families in the local area communicating instantly with relatives on duty in Iraq via the Internet, and doing this quite frequently. This is something that was unheard of in previous wars. When I was in Vietnam I was able to go to a "secure area" and talk to my wife on the phone once, and then only for three minutes. I also remember that during World War II it was usually months in between letters from my father, grandfather and uncles and then they were so heavily censored you did not know where they were or what they were doing. With live television or with



a computer and the Internet you now quite often know just what the troops overseas are doing almost at the time they are doing it. What a change!

I also watched a TV program on Tom Brokaw, who is retiring as the anchor for the NBC evening news, and his career as a newsman. Although just superficially covered in the program, you could see how improvements in the television and computer industries have changed the way news is covered. I am also finding that I am getting more news from the Internet than I am from radio or television. Again, what a change!

As a personal example, the following illustrates how getting information has changed. The day after Thanksgiving we received a phone call from one of my wife's relatives stating that she found out she has a very serious illness. It is a disease we have heard of, but

really didn't know much about, so my wife went to the medical book we have at the house and I went to the Internet to get more information. I think we both found the appropriate section of the sources we were looking into at about the same time. Our medical book gave some, but not much, information. The web site I was at went into great detail and gave us all the information we needed, and a lot more. This is a big change in how we can get some information.

The above example shows just how much some things have changed in a relatively short time. With constant improvements in the technologies involved with computers, the Internet and television, I am wondering just how we will be getting our information in 10 to 20 years from now. What a change that will be! I just hope I get to see it.

On to a different subject – just a reminder about the general meeting this month, which will be the annual pot luck and silent auction on Dec. 9. And in case I don't see you before then, I hope everyone has a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

*Silent Auction  
and Potluck*



*Dec. 9, 7 p.m.*

*Meet & greet  
at 6:30 p.m.*



## EXECUTIVE BOARD

**President:** Bill Gortz  
president@olymug.org

**Vice President:** Shirley Bellinghausen,  
vicepresident@olymug.org

**Secretary:** Vivian Forrester  
secretary@olymug.org

**Treasurer:** Max Whipps  
treasurer@olymug.org

**Newsletter Editor:** Sandy Pishner  
editor@olymug.org

**Webmaster:** Pat Sonnenstuhl,  
webmaster@olymug.org

**Librarian:** Christie McCormick  
librarian@olymug.org

**Director at Large:** James Gunnells,  
director1@olymug.org

**Director at Large:** John Marshall,  
director2@olymug.org

### KEY MEMBERS

**APCUG Representative:** Linda Mae

**Budget Committee Chair:** Bill Gortz

**Database Manager:** Max Whipps

**Elections Chair:** Vacant

**Historian:** David Belles

**Membership Chair:** James Gunnells

**Membership Renewal Coordinator:**  
Max Whipps

**Newsletter Distribution Coordinator:**  
Loren Freeman

**Nominating Committee Chair:**  
Wes Kirkpatrick

**Scholarship Committee Chair:**  
Bob Wing

**SIG Coordinator:** Shirley Bellinghausen

**Special Activities Committee Chair:**  
Gary Bigger

**Visitors Coordinator:** Elizabeth Ross

**SIG Leader names are listed with their SIG descriptions**

The Olympia Microcomputer Users Group is a not for profit organization dedicated to helping computer users improve their skills with computers.

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# Unused programs may find new life at silent auction, potluck

By Sandy Pishner  
OMUG Newsletter Editor

**H**ere it is the holidays again and I start the annual wracking of my brain to find my husband Christmas gifts.

Sure I could go the easy route and buy anything related to the Pittsburgh Steelers or a box of baseball cars (he's such a kid at heart). But every year I try to think of something a bit more sophisticated than sports collectibles.

Being somewhat oriented to computers, I find myself falling into the same trap year after year of buying a computer program I think he'll love and use. I usually get the first part right; he loves it. I always get the second part wrong; he never uses it.

Along with his extensive baseball and football card collections, and sports figurines, he's also an avid music and movie collector.

One year I bought him a computer program designed specifically for baseball card collectors to help him organize and track his collection and allow him to



assess its value without thumbing through pages and pages of small print in card catalogs. Never used it.

Another time, I bought him a program to help him make his own music collections. Back when we were dating, he was always making his own cassette tapes of favorite songs; some to woo me with, others to listen to while he worked out in the gym. Never used it. (Doesn't work out or woo anymore either).

I'm sure there are few more computer programs lying about the house bought specifically for him and never used. So, if you're interested in any of these programs, come to the December general meeting, aka, silent auction and potluck.

I, for one, will vow to never again buy my husband a computer program, for which I'm sure he will be forever grateful.

But of course, that doesn't preclude me from buying computer items at the auction I'll never use. See you there!

## Thanks For Renewing

David & Cris Campbell

Dorothy Kelly

Robert & Lois Powell

Sheila & James Snoozy

Don Rogers

Russ & Donna Ogden

## Welcome to our New Members

HOSSEIN & CARINA

MOHAMMADI

GERALD DEMOSS

# Board plans survey to glean members' needs

By Vivian Forrester  
OMUG Secretary



**P**resident Bill Gortz opened the meeting Nov. 17 at 7:05 p.m., in the Computer Room of the Senior Center in the Olympia Center. Other board members present were Shirley Bellinghausen, vice president; Vivian Forrester, secretary; Max Whipps, treasurer; Christie McCormick, librarian; John Marshall, and James Gunnells, directors as large; and Sandy Pishner, newsletter editor.

Minutes of the Oct. 21 meeting were accepted as presented in the November OMUG Newsletter.

Max will host the next newsletter processing party at his house. He will send an e-mail announcement of details. Loren will be away for the next few months attending a workshop for the visually impaired. The OMUG Lunch Bunch will continue as regularly scheduled.

James has learned the online forms he was investigating aren't workable because of security issues. He will check for other possibilities.

On another note, James suggested it may be helpful for OMUG to provide members a list of good, safe shareware available for downloading. He will present his proposal at the December Board Meeting.

Shirley reminded all of the December – Silent Auction and Pot Luck for the general membership meeting and in January, the program will be a presentation from a professional computer game programmer.

Shirley will submit a SIG survey form in the newsletter

as a way to learn what SIGS would be helpful to members. We will start reactivating the Membership Profile in January.

The December Silent Auction and Pot Luck was discussed some more. John has put a good computer together to be auctioned off. He also has three to four tables worth of left over hardware to donate to the auction. Shirley will have the auction bidding form available to members so they can fill it in before they bring their items in on Dec. 9. Max will prepare the forms. Food for the party will be assigned on an alphabetical basis as in the past and listed in the newsletter.

The Nominating Committee of Wes Kirkpatrick, Don Hertzog, and Tonney Yamane are meeting. The Budget Committee of Bill Gortz, John Marshall, and Max Whipps will meet right after the 1st of December.

After several months discussion, it was decided providing an OMUG Library had outlived its usefulness. To eliminate the position requires a change in the by-laws. Bill Gortz, James Gunnells and Max Whipps were appointed to the by-law committee.

The next Board Meeting will be Dec. 16  
Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Below is a list of some who have given back to the community by assisting OMUG in its mission.

Adobe: <http://www.adobe.com/main.html>

Cartridge Care, Inc

IPMA

Jasc Software: <http://www.jasc.com/>

Microsoft: <http://www.microsoft.com/>

Olympia Computer Central

<http://www.olympiacomputer.com/>

PowerQuest

<http://www.powerquest.com/>

Senior Services for South Sound

<http://www.southsoundseniors.org/>

Smart Computing

<http://www.smartcomputing.com/>

Thunderbird Computer Services

<http://www.tcscomputers.net/>

## OMUG Income & Expenses October 2004



**Income: \$423**

[Mbr Dues-\$420, Interest-\$3]

**Expenses: \$150**

[Newsletter Copying-\$125, SSSS Donation-\$25.]

**Net Income: \$273**

**Account Balance: \$4148**

11/25/04

**To Be Deposited: \$232**

**Current Treasury: \$4380 (Incl. Scholarship Fund)**

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# Can you e-mail your doctor? Should you?

By Gabe Goldberg  
APCUG Advisor, Region 2,

**W**e rarely think about how the Internet and e-mail have changed society and our lives in just ten years. For finding information, conducting personal and professional affairs, and simply doing business, it's hard to remember or imagine doing without them. No other technology achieved such wide use so fast.

But e-mail acceptance and use isn't universal, and some areas are slower to adopt it. While I routinely exchange e-mail with my stock broker, accountant, car dealer, veterinarian, realtor, and nearly all my service providers, my healthcare professionals are much less uniformly available electronically. In fact, there's no uniformity of opinion among patients, doctors, ethicists, insurance companies, the medical establishment, and government about how this newfangled technology should be handled and regulated.

My primary care doc, an internist emphasizing cardiac health, gave me the idea for this article by being available via e-mail starting about two years ago. He finds it — as I do! — great for direct, simple communications, and reports that e-mail decreases phone calls and phone tag, achieving office efficiency and economy. I've asked simple questions such as how often it's advisable to give blood and what kind of blood pressure monitor to purchase. He makes e-mail contact available to all his patients with the understanding that if specific therapies are required after e-mail contact, an office visit is needed. Before any e-mailing, he ensures that a patient is using a private home computer, rather than a workplace system. And he considers e-mail conversations to be informal, not necessarily entering patient records, with any recommendations

requiring specific therapeutic intervention warranting a carefully documented office visit.

It's clear that there aren't yet standards for high-tech medical communications, and healthcare providers are individually exploring and defining opportunities. Some doctors use e-mail for administrative matters only, such as booking appointments and handling prescription refills. Some respond to e-mail with telephone calls. Still others won't accept or send any patient e-mail, citing concerns about privacy and security, or e-mail's cold ("low touch") nature as inappropriate for something as important and personal as healthcare.

There are valid technical concerns: e-mail is not private or secure, or even completely reliable: e-mail can be forged, sender and receiver are usually not authenticated, e-mail containing a warning or diagnosis can be delayed in transit, etc. And risks such as incomplete record keeping, misunderstandings and miscommunications — even a patient denying that a note was received — add to the already sadly high risk of litigation.

An ethics expert draws a sharp line, commenting that he's "been around this issue in several professional settings." He continued, "The legal profession has OKed e-mail for confidential communications IF the client requests/approves it and if the system is secure. Work computers are often monitored, so it is not reasonable to regard them as secure. I'd say the same standards apply to doctors." And he identifies an additional risk; "Unlike with lawyers, simply communicating with an oncologist (for example) gives information with confidential overtones."

He suggests doctors avoid e-mail communications with patients, patients avoid communication with doctors from work, and patients avoid research from

work on medical Web sites.

The American Medical Association (AMA) offers resources describing advantages and risks of healthcare-related e-mail. Guidelines for Physician-Patient Electronic Communications <<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/2386.html>> notes that "E-mail has taken on increased significance as a mode of communication that is readily available to patients and health care professionals" and strongly recommends that e-mail must never replace crucial interpersonal contacts. And it provides a number of clear/specific and mutual guidelines for patient/doctor e-mail.

Ethical Guidelines for Use of Electronic Mail Between Patients and Physicians

<<http://www.bioethics.net/journal/infocus.php?vol=3&issue=3&articleID=120>>

includes a longer discussion of e-mail issues, including a brief history of doctor/patient communications from the 17th century. Perhaps its most crucial recommendation is that e-mail "should not be used to establish a patient-physician relationship, but rather to supplement personal encounters."

The government endorses use of e-mail; William Pierce, Deputy Assistant Secretary of HHS, said that the HHS Secretary encourages use of information technology for efficiency and to improve health. He notes that under HIPAA's new healthcare privacy rules, use of e-mail is permitted, with informed patient consent and control, and responsible patient usage.

Another issue may be more challenging than deciding whether and how to e-mail: working out a way for doctors to be paid for added value services such as access-by-e-mail. In the era of managed care, my doc notes, many patients feel entitled to administrative services — FAXing

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# DOCTORS


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referrals and prescription refills, copying records, filling out forms for handicapped parking and travel insurance, etc. — because they have health insurance.

Since insurers don't presently reimburse those services, some medical practices have tried to establish fee structures to cover their costs. Of course, new fees aren't popular with patients or insurance companies. So a new administrative services package may emerge, including e-mailing, faxing, form completion, etc. for a modest annual fee. And the AMA has defined temporary codes "for identifying emerging technology, services and procedures," such as online medical evaluations.

A middle ground is outlined by Jim Harper, editor of *Privacilla.org*, a Web-based project that seeks to capture "privacy" as a public policy issue: "A physician should strike the balance carefully between the security risks involved in e-mailing and the importance of quick, effective communication. E-mail is fine for ordinary treatment information about conditions that carry no stigma. More sensitive conditions, or diagnoses and so on, probably deserve better than e-mail." He notes that the relatively new HIPAA law may have lawyers advising doctors to avoid using e-mail with patients. If this happens, he feels that this "probably needlessly degrades communication with patients who would benefit from getting written information quickly."

And a bit of practical reality comes from my doc, who notes that "This is the 21st century. If patients want my time (which unfortunately is finite) they have to get it any way that works for me". So taking appropriate cautions and precautions, requiring informed patient consent regarding e-mail's trade-offs and limitations, and recognizing the potential need to pay for the enhanced



## Silent Auction Bidding Form

Description of item: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated Fair Market Value: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Minimum Bid: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

System Requirements for software:

**All PROCEEDS BENEFIT OMUG. Thank you very much!!**

**Bidders - Please PRINT IN BLOCK LETTERS your name, and Bid amount:**

|    | NAME OF BIDDER | AMOUNT Bid |
|----|----------------|------------|
| 1  |                | \$         |
| 2  |                | \$         |
| 3  |                | \$         |
| 4  |                | \$         |
| 5  |                | \$         |
| 6  |                | \$         |
| 7  |                | \$         |
| 8  |                | \$         |
| 9  |                | \$         |
| 10 |                | \$         |
| 11 |                | \$         |
| 12 |                | \$         |
| 13 |                | \$         |
| 14 |                | \$         |
| 15 |                | \$         |
| 16 |                | \$         |

**Join us at the December potluck supper and silent auction. If you're bringing an item for the auction, print out and fill in the top part of this bidding form to be placed with your item.**

service, e-mail complements other technologies — telegraph, telephone, and FAX. These, after all, were new in their time and not accepted without reservations by both patients and physicians, but are now routine rather than threatening.

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