



OMUG

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

NEWS



Vol. 13, No. 1

Olympia Microcomputer Users Group

January 2005

Get ready to help with events in 2005

By Bill Gortz
OMUG President

When! The holidays are over and, at least in my family, everything turned out better than I had expected. I hope the rest of you can say the same. The only thing that didn't survive very well was my checkbook and someday I will learn to begin the holiday buying early and not go through this each year. But if I did that I would miss all the good Christmas Eve sales; what a dilemma!

As we start the new year, it is time to look ahead and begin some preparations for upcoming OMUG events. The first and probably the most important is the annual election of officers in April. The nominating committee, chaired by Wes Kirkpatrick with members Don Hertzog and Tonney Yamane, have or will be calling on many of you to run for an OMUG office. Please give careful consideration to this request and if you feel you can contribute to the leadership of OMUG, please allow your name to be submitted for nomination to which ever office you



feel you would qualify for. Remember that most organizations are only as good as their elected officers.

Along with the elections, we try to have a raffle each year. Most raffle items are donated from software and hardware vendors and these vendors range from the biggest names in the computer industry down to and including local vendors just trying to get started. One of our problems is there has not been an up-to-date comprehensive listing of vendors and vendor contacts we can use to solicit donations. I am in the process of attempting to compile such a list and if anyone has any suggestions, or know of any vendor contacts, please let me know. I can be reached by e-mail at president@oly mug.org. At a minimum, I need the company name, e-mail address, if possible a contact person

or office, and what type of product or service offered. We will very shortly be forming a committee to contact vendors for donations and I would like to have your suggestions or contacts as soon as possible; also indicate to me if you would like to serve on this committee.

The next big event will be the Rest Area Coffee Stop. This year we will be at Scatter Creek during the first weekend in August, so if you are planning to participate please mark your calendars now. This has always been a very enjoyable event for almost everyone participating. More details and schedules will be published as the time grows closer.

The last event I will mention here is the OMUG picnic, which has been scheduled for Aug. 20 at Priest Point Park, Shelter #2 (the same place we were two years ago). Again more details will be published later.

Of course there will be other events throughout the year and information about them will be published as it becomes available.

Last, but not least, I wish you all a Happy New Year

Can't figure out how to open that file?

By Brian K. Lewis
Sarasota PC Users Group

There are times in every computer user's life when the computer seems to be deliberately trying to increase your level of

frustration. One of these little moments is when you receive a file from an associate and no matter what you do, you can't open it. The file can be a document, a picture, a spreadsheet or any number of other types. So why does this

happen? And what does it have to do with these things called extensions or suffixes?

Believe it or not, every file name on your computer has a three digit suffix. I know if you have never used any OS other than Windows you may

never have seen this suffix or file extension. But they really do exist. If you open "My Computer" or Windows Explorer, select "Tools" from the menu. Then click on

See LOST FILES, Page 4



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: Vacant

Budget Committee Chair: Bill Gortz

Database Manager: Max Whipps

Elections Chair:

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

Visitors Coordinator: Elizabeth Ross

Special Activities Committee Chair:

Gary Bigger

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

OMUG News
Vol. 13, No. 1
January 2005
Published
monthly

PMB 225
3430 Pacific Ave
SE Ste. A6
Olympia, WA
98501-2177

Computer chips reach their physical limits; we think

By Pim Borman
SW Indiana PC Users Group

For the last 40 years or so computer chips have closely followed Moore's Law, which states that the number of transistors doubles every 18 months. The corresponding increase in computing performance has been enormous, but chip manufacturers are beginning to reach the physical limit of miniaturization.

Intel's latest chip, "Prescott," with 125 million transistors an improved version of the 55-million transistor Pentium 4, was delayed by production difficulties and proved to be only marginally faster.

Cramming more transistors in a certain area by reducing their size leads to increasing electrical leakage problems and crosstalk; it also increases heat generation.

Some recent microprocessors consume over 100 watts, generating more heat per square centimeter than a laundry iron on the cotton setting (W. Wayt Gibbs, writing in Scientific American, November 2004, pp.96-101).

Increased computation speeds have to a large extent also been the result of clever changes in computer architecture that allow the chip to execute multiple instructions for each clock tick. We are finally reaching the inevitable end of Moore's Law.

Intel has already announced that it will no longer distinguish its microprocessors by clock speed, which is after all only part of the system's performance characteristic. In addition, starting next year, all Intel chips will have not one but two "cores" that allow higher computation speeds through parallel processing. AMD already has such

chips. There is nothing new about fast computing with parallel processing computers; the fastest computers in the world are now built using thousands of processors that operate in parallel to perform specific operations, such as playing world champion chess. But all current software for home and office use will have to be rewritten.

Many users, as well as software companies, may decide it is not worth the hassle. If you have an up-to-date computer it probably responds faster to your inputs than you can provide them, unless you are a game freak or use industrial-strength graphics or database programs. Customers will be better served by improved security and simplified operations.

Not by coincidence, W.Wayt Gibbs also wrote an article in the same issue of Scientific American (Nov. 2004, pp. 80-87) about future computers using photons (light) instead of electrons (electricity) to perform computations and connections between the cpu and memory storage.

There are many technical problems to be solved as yet, including the challenge to bring the cost down, but it seems likely to be the computer technology of the future. Photons move many times faster than electrons and do not significantly generate heat. All the rest is engineering detail!

Pim Borman is Web Editor and APCUG representative for the SW Indiana PC Users Group, Inc (<http://swipcug.apcug.org>). Comments may be sent to Pim at swipcug@sigeconet.

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups, an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.

Board approves 2005 operating budget

By Vivian Forrester
OMUG Secretary

President Bill Gortz opened the meeting at 7:03 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; and Pat Sonnenstuhl, webmaster.

Minutes of the Nov. 17 meeting were accepted as presented.

Pat reported Max had written a letter to ATG confirming she is the OMUG Webmaster.

Shirley reported on a successful Christmas party with the auction netting \$611.80. Unsold items from the discontinued Frankenstein Project were donated to another organization that does similar work.

Upcoming programs: January – Computer Games, February – TBD, March – How computers are used in the Hearing Aid industry.

A proposed 2005 budget was reviewed. The following



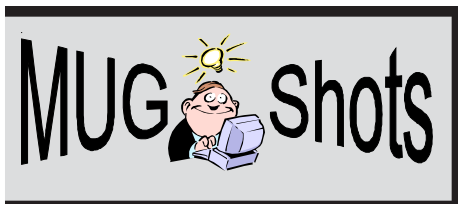
items were eliminated: \$50 for librarian and \$135 for domain name fee. Pat moved we accept the proposed budget as amended. Motion seconded by Max. Passage was unanimous.

Upcoming events: Sites for the annual summer picnic were considered and preliminary plans for the Rest Stop project on the first weekend in August were discussed.

Nominating Committee Don Hertzog and Tonney Yamane with Chairperson Wes Kirkpatrick are working on a slate of officers for the April 2005 election.

Fundraising ideas were discussed and considered.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.



New Year resolutions for all OMUG members

By Sandy Plshner
Newsletter Editor

Happy New Year! It's that time of year when we make resolutions (most of them will go unfulfilled). I have few suggestions for resolutions OMUG members can take on; hopefully these won't go unfulfilled.

Resolution #1: Make time in your busy schedule to attend the monthly general membership meetings. This is a great time to meet other casual computer users (and a few diehards), learn about different programs, and generally learn tips and tricks. If you're having a pesky problem with one of your programs or your computer in general, you're sure to find a few folks here who can help you out.

Resolution #2: Volunteer to run for a board position or simply to take on one of the many positions that contribute to

OMUG Income & Expenses November 2004



Income: \$155

[Mbr Dues-\$152, Interest-\$3]

Expenses: \$321

[APCUG Dues-\$50, Bulk Mail Permit -\$150, SSSS Donation-\$25, Newsletter Copying-\$96,]

Net Deficit: (\$166)

Account Balance: \$4411

12/25/04

To Be Deposited: \$367

Current Treasury: \$4778 (Incl. Scholarship Fund)

the health and well-fare of the organization. You could chair a committee or be a committee member. Most positions take just a small amount of your time each month, and some positions only require your time once a year. Keep in mind that board elections are coming up in May.

Resolution #3: Resolve to take time to write an article for your favorite newsletter. You can write about how you solved a computer problem, or about a program you really like and believe others would enjoy as well. Okay, so this last resolution benefits me in the short-term, but in the long-term all members of OMUG would benefit from local articles.

LOST FILES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“Folder Options” and in that window click on “View”. In this list some items are checked and some are not. If there is a check mark in the item “hide extensions for known file types”, remove it. Then click on “apply to all folders”. You will get a message telling you that the change will occur the next time you open a folder. Now open up any folder and look at the array of file extensions. Go from folder to folder and see how many different extensions you can find.

So now you see that the number of different extensions seems to be limitless. Or at least enough to bring on some confusion. Why is there such a proliferation of these three figure suffixes? Let’s look again at the “Tools” menu and “Folder Options”. This time click on the tab for “File Types”. The upper window lists “Registered file types”. Now scroll through the list until you find “Adobe Acrobat Plug-in file”. This has an extension of API and in the lower window you find a short explanation as to which program can open this file. In this case, Adobe Acrobat. Keep scrolling down through the list. You will probably find the BMP suffix. This is a picture file and usually opens with Microsoft Paint. However, on my computer it has been associated with IrfanView, a graphics viewer. Keep scrolling to get an idea of all the different file types and their extensions.

If you click on enough different file types you will notice that each type is generally, but not always, associated with an application. When you click on the change button, the preferred application is listed at the top. You can change this to another application but then double-clicking a file of that type may result in a error and it won’t open. Applications such as Microsoft Word, Word Perfect, Microsoft Works, Excel, etc., can only open files that were



created by them unless they have the appropriate translator for the document. This goes back to the reasons for the file suffixes. The suffix tells Windows what application is needed to open a particular file. Every application capable of creating files uses a different format for the file header and body information. This formatting allows Word, for example, to open a document that has specific margins, type face, printer assignment, etc. The same is true for other applications.

Let’s take a look at some of the definitions associated with the file structure of a Word file.

“FIB (File Information Block): The header of a Word file. Begins at offset 0 in the file. Gives the beginning offset and lengths of the document’s text stream and subsidiary data structures within the file. Also stores other file status information.” “DocFile: A Word docfile consists of a main stream, a summary information stream, a table stream, a data stream, and 0 or more object streams which contain private data for OLE 2.0 objects embedded within the Word document.”

“Document: A named, multi-linked list of data structures, representing an ordered stream of text with properties that was produced by a user of Microsoft Word.”

“Datastream: The stream within a Word docfile containing various data that hang off of characters in the main stream. For example, binary data

See LOST FILES, Page 5

Thanks For Renewing

**Glenda Reed
Max Whipps
Norman Gallacci
Henry Alai
John Acocks
Larry Jensen
Wim Verhoef
Russell Nation
Robert Hallgren
Bill Larson
Chuck Cole
Jim Bevan
Jeannine Gaskell**

We have no new members this month.

Remember — every new member you refer earns you another 3 months of membership!

LOST FILES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

describing in-line pictures and/or form fields.”

From these descriptions you can see that a Word document has a very specific structure that has to be read and interpreted in a specific way. Other applications can't read a Word file unless they have a translator for it. Even then, the translation may not accurately reflect the content and format of the original file.

Another file format is that of database files. In a dBASE file, or a FoxPro file, the first byte identifies the version that created the file. Consequently, older versions can't read files created with newer versions of the program. For a number of years Microsoft created similar problems in Word documents by changing the file format every time a new version of Word was released.

Another application that has its own file formats is Microsoft Works. This application can create text documents, database files and spreadsheets. None of these files can be opened by other programs. The interesting thing is that Works can save files in Word format, WordPerfect format or RTF (rich text file). It can even open most of these formats. But Word and WordPerfect are unable to read files in the native Works format.

Another problem exists with picture (graphic) files. Although your web browser should be able to read the most common formats, they have to be associated with the browser. If they are not, you will get an error when you attempt to open the file. Every graphic format has a different structure and may not always open in your photo software.

The most common formats used on the web are GIF and JPG (jpeg). However, these are two very different formats. GIF is a compressed format

that is referred to as a “lossless” compression. In other words, you don't lose any detail in the process of compression/decompression. However, GIF can not use more than 256 colors. That makes it less usable for color photos than other formats. However, for web page logos and other small graphics, GIF is ideal. The file size is small, so transmission time over the Internet is quite short.

Photographs can be sent by e-mail using the JPG format which is very compressible. Jpegs can be compressed to 10% of their original size which greatly reduces transmission time. However, the greater the compression, the greater the loss of detail. Jpegs are a “lossy” format. The detail that is lost by compression can never be recovered. If the picture is important, you should always keep an uncompressed master in a safe location.

Another “lossless” graphic format is TIF or TIFF (tagged image file format). This is the best format for color pictures and should be used to save the master copy of important photographs. The major problem with TIF files is that they are very large. Much larger than jpegs. For example, a file from a digital camera was 526 KB in its native format. When converted to TIF and compressed, it took up over 6 MB on the hard drive. However, not every graphics program can read TIFF files. If yours can't, then you need something like IrfanView, a free file viewer.

So the answer to the original question is: you either don't have the application



installed on your computer or you don't have the application associated with the file you are trying to open. Now, if you know the application that created the file and if you have it on your computer, you can solve the problem. You only need to associate the file with application. To do this open “My Computer” and select the “Tools” menu and “File Options”. Click on the “File Types” tab and then scroll to the file extension for the file you want to open. Click on “Change” and select the application you want to use to open the file.

All of this discussion assumes that the file has not been corrupted. Even minor damage to the header of file can keep it from being opened. Transmission of files between computers is always subject to possible damage. Now maybe those undamaged files can be opened with a little less frustration.

Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than 30 years. He can be reached via e-mail at bwsail@yahoo.com.

The Editorial Committee of the Association of Personal Computer User Groups, an international organization of which this group is a member, brings this article to you.