Computer Connection

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PC Users Group
June 2000

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The fiscal year is nearing the end and so is my presidency. As of June 13th, (my lucky day), I will no longer have to worry about the future of the RPCUG ...NOT! The fact is that I will take on the new title and role of Immediate Past President. This means I will still be on the board of directors and still have some responsibilities... the main one being to help the new president and administration deal with their duties. The president has the final say in most areas; it can be difficult to give up that privilege, but I'm ready.

MEETING SCHEDULE

GENERAL MEETINGS

The Palisades Center Community Room, 7:15 PM
Palisades Center Mall, West Nyack, NY

Tuesday, June 13, 2000
Annual election night for officers; all members in good standing may vote.

Tuesday, July 11, 2000
Topic: Voyetra/Turtle Beach

Tuesday, August 8, 2000
Topic: Swap Meet & Surprise Entertainment

The **Windows 95/98 SIG** meets the third Tuesday of the month at the Pearl River Library at 7:00 PM.

The **RPCUG Investment SIG** meets Wednesday evenings (June 14, July 19, August 16) in the Third Floor Fielding Room, Finkelstein Memorial Library, Spring Valley

For further information check the RCPUG web site:
www.rpcug.org

Rockland PC Users Group is located 35 miles northwest of New York City. Our tax-exempt organization is dedicated to community service and public education with demonstrations, special interest groups (SIGs) and individual help with all facets of IBM-compatible personal computing.

I want to say that despite some adversity and disappointments, I have enjoyed being the president and believe I have helped improve the way things get accomplished in the RPCUG. Duties and responsibilities have been divided among many more volunteers since I first started. Its true that we have been existing without a newsletter for nearly a year, but if you are reading this on line or off line, the problem is solved for the time being.

State of the PC Users Group

Our membership has declined due in part to not having a newsletter; but the good news is that our bank account has more than doubled since I took office. That means we are better prepared financially than ever before. The financial growth is due to a number of factors. Some may think it's from the savings of not having a newsletter, but I know that the cost of postcard mailings, reduced membership and lost advertising revenue has canceled that out. Participation in the 50/50 drawings has been a small, steady source of income, but the main factor is the incredible fiscal responsibility of the board members and other volunteers. Many times I urge volunteers to turn in receipts for expense reimbursement, but often they do not. We have a very generous group of volunteers who not only give their time, but often their materials and money too.

Volunteers

When we had a monthly newsletter, I always took time to mention various volunteers. All our volunteers are very important and an integral part of our group, and I sincerely hope nobody feels slighted by the following statements as I am grateful for all of them. I would like to take this opportunity to mention a few volunteers who have done

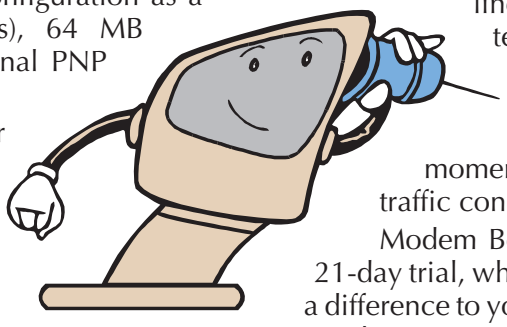
MODEM BOOSTER V 2.0

a software product of inKline Global, Inc.

Reviewed by Sandy Coulter

When I received an e-mail frominKline Global, Inc., inviting me to review their Modem Booster software product, I thought I would be reaching for a pie in the sky. The e-mail claimed that this product was a web accelerator that would speed up the online experience significantly, and it would work with AOL. Knowing that the phone lines in my area are notorious for slow connections, and the top throughput speed I have ever attained was 44 Kbps during non-peak hours and 32 Kbps during peak times, you bet I was skeptical. I have tried many MTU tweakers and web accelerators along with doing my own tweaks manually with little or no improvement. Part of the reason is that very few of these utilities are designed to work with AOL, which is my primary on-line provider.

I should also disclose my system configuration as a Winchip 200/MMX (Pentium class), 64 MB RAM, Windows 98, USR 56K External PNP Voice/Data/Fax modem.



Installing and using Modem Booster was a no-brainer. First you run the configuration wizard which tells the program who your primary Internet provider is, then you start the Auto Tune-Up. The instructions claimed it would take one to two hours to do the Tune-Up but the length of time it took for me was nearly three hours. During the Tune-Up process AOL was restarted and connected about forty times!

In order to gauge it properly, I tested my modem speed on line before and after the Tune Up at: http://www.computingcentral.com/topics/bandwidth/speedtest50.asp. In the early afternoon (non-peak) it rated 44Kbps, which is about as good as it ever gets. By the time I was finished installing and tuning up, the Internet was at a high peak time. The results generated by **Modem Booster** indicated I should have gained significant speed.

Modem Booster resides in the taskbar tray and you are supposed to use its dialer to get on line in order for it to work. I was sorely disappointed that my throughput speed had dropped to 27 Kbps after I rebooted the computer. I didn't expect much from a pie in the sky product like Modem Booster, but I didn't expect it to get worse either. I shot off an e-mail to the company hoping to get some help to undo the apparent damage from using Modem Booster.

The next day I started my system and went online through the Modem Booster dialer to see what speed I would get during non-peak hours. Lo and behold, a miracle happened! I was getting an unprecedented 53 Kbps! Later on that day during peak time, I was still getting over 50 Kbps. I cannot explain why there was such a disparity from the day before, except that I have been told by some colleagues that Windows 98 often requires several reboots or a cold boot before changes take full effect. I also noticed the same with Windows 95 on some occasions.

Something else that I cannot explain is that as long as Modem Booster is running in the tray, it doesn't seem to matter much if I use the Modem Booster dialer or the AOL dialer. I get good results either way.

According to inKline Global, Inc., Modem Booster is a robust utility addresses the main cause of slow Internet browsing- data fragmentation during transmission. It tests modem performance and tweaks the TCP/IP settings accordingly via a systematic fine-tuning process to match with your ISP.

I can't speak for how it will work with your ISP, but it has really made a difference for me on AOL dialup.

Due to the nature of the Internet and local phone lines, your mileage will vary. If you are testing your modem speed online like I did, be sure to test it several times at different hours of the day. Modem throughput can change from moment to moment, depending on Internet traffic conditions.

Modem Booster is shareware and offers a free 21-day trial, which is ample time to decide if it makes a difference to your online modem speed. It's certainly worth a try!

Application Name:
Modem Booster, version 2.0

Application Type:
Web Accelerator / Internet Connectivity Utility

Application Status:
Shareware, Price: $19.95

Publisher: inKline Global, Inc.,
http://www.inklineglobal.net

E-mail: info@inklineglobal.com

Filename: mb.zip.

Filesize: 1,527,077 bytes/ 1,492 KB / 1.45 MB

Download links:
ftp://oak.oakland.edu/pub/ad-pro/mb.zip
http://oak.oakland.edu/pub/ad-pro/mb.zip
ftp://inklineglobal.net/win32/mb20.zip

Minimum system requirements: Microsoft Windows 95, Windows 98 or Windows NT 4.0 and above; 386DX-25 and above; 8 MB RAM; at least 2 MB of free hard disk space; any form of dial-up networking capability and Internet connectivity via your local Internet Service Provider.

A LETTER FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE EVERYTHING THEY READ...

I think this just about covers it...

I WAS ON MY WAY TO THE POST OFFICE to pick up my case of free M&M's (sent to me because I forwarded an e-mail to five other people, celebrating the fact that the year 2000 is "MM" in Roman numerals), when I ran into a friend whose neighbor, a young man, was home recovering from having been served a rat in his bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken (which is predictable, since as everyone knows, there's no actual chicken in Kentucky Fried Chicken, which is why the government made them change their name to KFC).

Anyway, one day this guy went to sleep and when he awoke he was in his bathtub and it was full of ice and he was sore all over and when he got out of the tub he realized that HIS KIDNEY HAD BEEN STOLEN. He saw a note on his mirror that said "Call 911!" but he was afraid to use his phone because it was connected to his computer, and there was a virus on his computer that would destroy his hard drive if he opened an e-mail entitled "Join the crew!"

He knew it wasn't a hoax because he himself was a computer programmer who was working on software to prevent a global disaster in which all of the computers get together and distribute the $250.00 Neiman-Marcus cookie recipe under the leadership of Bill Gates. (It's true - I read it all last week in a mass e-mail from BILL GATES HIMSELF, who was also promising me a free Disney World vacation and $5,000 if I would forward the e-mail to everyone I know.)

The poor man then tried to call 911 from a pay phone to report his missing kidneys, but a voice on the line first asked him to press #90, which unwittingly gave the bandit full access to the phone line at the guy's expense. Then reaching into the coin-return slot he got jabbed with an HIV-infected needle around which was wrapped a note that said, "Welcome to the world of AIDS." Luckily he was only a few blocks from the hospital - the one where that little boy who is dying of cancer is, the one whose last wish is for everyone in the world to send him an e-mail and the American Cancer Society has agreed to pay him a nickel for every e-mail he receives.

I sent him two e-mails and one of them was a bunch of x's and o's in the shape of an angel (if you get it and forward it to more than 10 people, you will have good luck but for 10 people only you will only have OK luck and if you send it to fewer than 10 people you will have BAD LUCK FOR SEVEN YEARS).

So anyway the poor guy tried to drive himself to the hospital, but on the way he noticed another car driving without its lights on. To be helpful, he flashed his lights at him and was promptly shot as part of a gang initiation.

Send this to ALL the friends who send you their junk mail and you will receive 4 green M&Ms - if you don't, the owner of Proctor and Gamble will report you to his Satanist friends and you will have more bad luck. You will get sick from the Sodium Laureth Sulfate in your shampoo, your spouse/mate will develop a skin rash from using the antiperspirant which clogs the pores under your arms, and the U.S. government will put a tax on your e-mails forever.

I KNOW this is all true-
'CAUSE I READ IT ON THE INTERNET!

The Rambling Rookie

By Hugh A. Burns

Adjust Icon Spacing: Want to squeeze a few more icons into each row on your desktop? The default spacing between any two icons (assuming you haven't hand-placed them) is determined by the Horizontal and Vertical Spacing settings, which you can easily change. Right-click the desktop, select Properties, and in the resulting dialog box, click the Appearance tab. Under Items, select Icon Spacing (Horizontal) or Icon Spacing (Vertical), and then adjust the number next to Size. (Note: The default for the Windows Standard scheme is 43.) To test the change, minimize all other windows, click Apply, then click and drag the window over a bit to see the effect on your desktop. (Tip: If your desktop icons don't seem to be moving with each change, right-click the desktop and select Arrange Icons, Auto Arrange.) When you find a setting you like, click OK to make it stick.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN MAKING $$$$ FAST?

Here's an incredibly simple way to do it, and there is nothing to buy, no investment to make, no money to lose! Try it now!

Follow this simple procedure:

1) Hold down the shift key.

2) Hit the 4 key four times fast.

INTRUDER ALARM:

Ray Isenson,
Central Coast Computer Club

When Windows 95 or 98 was first installed, or reinstalled, on your hard drive your computer was given a name as was any network with which it was associated. The chances are that you have no recall of the incident. Would you be surprised to learn that a third party, without your permission, may be able to get into your computer and learn these names; and much more? Later in this article a means will be described by which you can test your computer's vulnerability and, perhaps, have your mind refreshed about those names.

Are you using REALJUKEBOX Player software, the free software available from RealNetworks to download from the Internet or play CD music? If so, you're one of more than 12 million users who've registered that software. And, every time you run the program to listen to music you send a message to RealNetworks identifying your computer and describing the music you're listening to. Or, are you running RealPlayer to hear sounds over the Internet? It will try to send a status report of some kind each time you access the Internet.

Rumors circulated to the effect that a popular system for creating advertiser-supported software, a system used by 400 or more advertisers, was, in fact, functioning as an Internet "Trojan horse". The rumors stated that the unwitting user's computer was being "inventoried", the system registry was being scanned, and all manner of personal, private, and confidential information was being sent out across the Internet for collection by Aureate Media Corporation. Although a complete technical analysis is still pending, a preliminary examination by an independent research organization of Aureate's web site and their privacy policy statements, while confirming that the software does create an open port through which your personal information can be gleaned, tends to dispel most, but not all, concerns about that company's immediate threat.

The Aureate procedure typically works by presenting to the user a "demographic profiling questionnaire." As an option, the system can defer the presentation of the demographic profiling questionnaire. There have been credible reports describing several cases of first-time hosting application installation where the Aureate system appeared to be missing; in fact it was running with full stealth, collecting data and communicating with its remote servers without ever first presenting its demographic questionnaire. Since each user is "branded" with a unique user ID, they can collect and associate demographics at any later time.

Information collected by this "Spyware" program is, presumably, limited to your computer activities associated with one or more of the sponsoring advertisers; how long did you examine it, what links did you select, did you order anything and the like. Nevertheless, it is certainly the case that you should be made aware of the potential privacy and security implications associated with the use of Aureate-hosted advertisement supported software. In several cases of installations using this system: NO indication was provided that the Aureate system was being installed, the Aureate system communicates in complete secrecy, the Aureate system is running even when its hosting program is not, the Aureate system survives the removal of its hosting program and even then it continues to operate secretly in the background. Further, ports created by the Aureate software could be exploited by individuals with other motives.

Computers connected to the Internet via cable or ADSL links and allowed to remain connected for extended periods of time are more vulnerable to penetration than those connected via telephone modems. You might be thinking "Hey, the Internet's a huge place, right? No one's ever

going to notice me." Sure. But technically savvy intruders are using high-speed "Internet Scanners" that can probe every computer in a small country within a short time! Nothing would make them happier than lifting your personal information, credit card numbers, bank account balances, and so forth through your computer's insecure connection to the Internet. No Internet user can afford to be complacent.

Fortunately, you can protect yourself with little effort and at practically no cost. With respect to the Aureate system and it's subscribers, the direct protection is by

Continued →

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN!

PC Expo is coming to town! The 'Official' PC-EXPO
Free Registration Code is:
"G2ZZ" without the quotes
(code is subject to change).
This code is for User Group members only, please do not share it Indiscriminately.

You may register at:
http://www.pcexpo.com

REMEMBER TO REGISTER EARLY!
EXPO runs June 27-28-29 [T-W-Th]

way of a small, free, program made available for the purpose by the Gibson Research Center (www.grc.com). The program, "OptOut" spyware removal tool can be downloaded from their WEB page in a matter of seconds. While on their page you can take advantage of two additional features offered by the Center.

Press the "Test My Shields" button and, after a short wait you'll see a report; perhaps:

"Preliminary Internet connection established! Your computer has accepted an anonymous connection from another machine it knows nothing about! (That's not good.) This ShieldsUP! Web server has been permitted to connect to your computer's highly insecure NetBIOS File and Printer Sharing port (139). Subsequent tests conducted on this page, and elsewhere on this web site, will probe more deeply to determine the extent of this system's vulnerability. But regardless of what more is determined, the presence and availability of some form of Internet Server HAS BEEN CONFIRMED within this machine . . . and it is accepting anonymous connections!"

To complete the test of your computer's vulnerability, Select the other button, "Probe My Ports". After a short wait you'll get a report indicating the status of a number of checks. There are more ports than can be seen on one screen so you'll have to cursor down in the report box to see all of the results. If any of the tested ports are open to invasion, you'll see a red box. Click on the title just to the left of the red box to get more information.

Digressing for a moment: California building construction laws require that a barrier be placed between an automobile garage or car stall and the main dwelling. This barrier intended to delay the movement of a fire from the auto storage area to the living area is called a "firewall." That name has been adopted by the computer world to describe any program that serves to block intrusion from the Internet into the protected computer. If you're going to expose your computer to the Internet even for very brief periods of time, you are well advised to install a firewall.

Returning, then to the grc WEB page and the probe test, Following the report is a short treatise on Stealth. Read it for a better understanding of what the probe test was all about and how to protect yourself more completely. Continue reading until you're directed to a free firewall offered by ZoneLab. Click on the link to the ZoneLab WEB page and browse through it for an even better understanding of the problem and solutions. I suggest that you download and install ZoneAlarm 2.1. This, free to non-business users, 1.8 MByte program will provide the protection against unwanted intrusions.

Tech Support Corner

Why we should feel sorry for tech support people:

Tech Support: "OK Bob, let's press the control and escape keys at the same time. That brings up a task list in the middle of the screen. Now type the letter 'P' to bring up the Program Manager."
Customer: "I don't have a 'P'."
Tech Support: "On your keyboard, Bob."
Customer: "What do you mean?"
Tech Support: "'P' on your keyboard, Bob."
Customer: "I'm not going to do that!"

Tech Support: "All right...now double-click on the File Manager icon."
Customer: "That's why I hate this Windows -- because of the icons -- I'm a Protestant, and I don't believe in icons."
Tech Support: "Well, that's just an industry term sir. I don't believe it was meant to --"
Customer: "I don't care about any 'Industry Terms'. I don't believe in icons."
Tech Support: "Well...why don't you click on the 'little picture' of a file cabinet...is 'little picture' OK?"
Customer: [click]

Things You Don't Want to Hear From Tech Support:

- "Do you have a sledgehammer or a brick handy?"
- "...that's right, not even McGyver could fix it."
- "Duuuuuude! Bummer!"
- "Looks like you're gonna need some new dilythium crystals, Cap'n."
- "Press 1 for Support. Press 2 if you're with 60 Minutes. Press 3 if you're with the FTC."
- "We can fix this, but you're gonna need a butter knife, a roll of duct tape, and a car battery."
- "I'm sorry, Dave. I'm afraid I can't do that."

REDBOX version 3.1

copyright 2000, Dimitri Djuric

Reviewed by Marian Baade

At first look, the **RedBox Organizer** is very pretty. The graphics are appealing, and everything loads very quickly. However, I found the type a bit small, and discovered within the first few minutes that there are absolutely NO options for changing either typeface style or font size. I entered several addresses before attempting an entry for someone with a cellphone - there was no field for such a number, so I tried to add one. Problem: You can only add a field to an address book that's empty. That means I had to delete all the previously enterted information, go back and create a new field in the address book, and enter everything again. A pain in the neck! All during this, the built-in sounds became annoying... No way to change them either.

The program contains the address books (three, and you can add more). It's loaded with features: reminder, clock with alarm, calendar, to-do book, expense records and lots of other goodies, with many ways for them to talk to each other. In addition, there is a phone dialer and ways to send messages back and forth to as many users as you indicate. Truth is, I didn't get far experimenting with this stuff since I found it all so difficult to see. The yearly calendar entries are unreadable even when the screen is maxmized. In short, if you're past forty you probnably won't be able to work comfortably with this program.

It is a very ambitious software at a bargain price, but the interface needs work.

REDBOX can be downloaded free from **www.inklineglobal.com**. Registration is $19.95, and includes a backup copy and a free CD with clipart and fonts and the usual.

Cool Web Sites:

http://www.visto.com

At the Visto site you can store and manage files, maintain email, update addresses and calendars, and synchronize those with your portable or desktop computer. The "email" maintenance means that you can use this one site to focus multiple POP3 accounts in one place. (POP3 is the standard kind of email account that comes with Internet service, not web mail like HotMail). Some look at this as a backup facility. Some simply live with it, counting on web access being more widely available, reliable and portable than a computer or pocket organizer. *-Hugh Burns*

http://www.internettrafficreport.com/

THE INTERNET TRAFFIC REPORT monitors the flow of data around the world. Visit this page and you'll find a map of the world labeled with numbers between zero and 100. Higher values indicate faster and more reliable connections. As I write this, the global index is sitting at 58. The last time I visited, it was 56, so I guess that's an improvement.

If you're having trouble accessing a particular website, check the Internet Traffic Report, so you can determine if your problems are global or local. You'll also find a Global Traffic Index, Global Response Time Index, and a Global Packet Loss chart. Each has 7-day and 30-day graphs so you can check out Internet performance from the recent past.

http://postcards.www.media.mit.edu/Postcards/

There is some nice art here, if you'd like a change from the ShoeBox stuff (although I love that too...)

Http://www.cao.com/hoax/

Hey kids! Create your own hoax!

Http://www.zdnet.com/swlib/hotfiles/AprFools.html

More time-wasters!

GOT A FAVORITE? *Email the editor!*

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR:

AS WE GO TO PRESS (gee, I love saying that) I just received an email from CNET giving me permission to quote from an article from their web site about EASTER EGGS. There won't be time for me to write my own article now, but perhaps this will inspire some of you to submit your own experiences here for a nice writeup in our next newsletter.*

"In cybermythology, Easter eggs aren't brightly colored protochickens. Instead, they're undocumented bits of code that come hidden inside operating systems, applications, Web browsers, and other programs. Click in the proper place, edit the right file, or type in the secret sequence, and you'll be rewarded with anything from a simple scrolling list of the names of the programmers who created the product to a full-blown, multimedia tribute to the developers—or possibly even a game you can play. They're fun to look for, fun to find, and of absolutely no practical use whatsoever.

To help you on your hunt, CNET presents 24 Easter eggs for the most popular software titles around. And we'll also point to you to some fanatical online Easter egg compendiums that uncover the goods inside almost any program you can think of. Happy hunting!"

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For now, you can check out some "Easter Eggs" by going to
`http://coverage.cnet.com/Content/Features/Howto/Eggs/index.html`

*This newsletter is here, finally, with some contributions from our membership. If you would like to see another, please consider this: ***the newsletter is an expression of the personality of RPCUG***. The articles, the reviews, jokes, cartoons whatever - must come from you. A newsletter composed of blurbs from the internet isn't very personal. If we are to survive as a group, the newsletter is an important part of the concept. This publication is a forum for your own ideas and comments. DON'T BE SHY! Have you tried any new software? Did you love it - or hate it? Do you need help with making it work? (There's help here). Did you find an interesting web site, or one that made you laugh? Do you have a funny tech-support story, or one that made you crazy? Did you have a good or bad on-line experience that you would like to tell us about (we don't have to print your name...)

You may email the Editor or any member of the board. **WE CAN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YOU!**

Looking forward to being overwhelmed with mail,

Marian Baade
RPCUG Newsletter Editor

WANT TO JOIN THE GROUP? HERE'S HOW!

Bring your completed application and a check payable to RPCUG to a meeting or mail your application and check to RPCUG at 169 South Main Street, Suite 384, New City, NY 10956-3358. (PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION)

Name _____

Address _____

Day Phone: _____

Evening Phone: _____

E-mail Addreess _____

Spouse's Name (if joint membership) _____

Spouse's E-mail address _____

Children's Names (for Family Membership) _____

INDIVIDUAL: $35	FAMILY: $35	STUDENT: $15	COPORATE SPONSOR: $100	RENEWAL: Member # _____