

BYTES & PIECES

ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER OF THE HOBART COMPUTER USERS GROUP INC.

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DATA STORAGE ON THE MOON

According to the American PC Magazine, a plan is being hatched to store backup data on the moon. While this does seem like a belated April Fool joke, here's the report:

However strange the idea may sound, [TransOrbital](#) of La Jolla, California is taking it and other proposals for marrying high-tech and the Earth's only natural satellite seriously. The company is getting ready to send a commercial mission to the moon and intends to send servers, data, handheld computers, and digital cameras along for the ride.

"We're the only company licensed to send a commercial mission right now," says Dennis Laurie, TransOrbital president and CEO. "We're shooting for the first quarter of 2004." On December 20 of 2002, the company launched a rocket to test telemetry, positioning, and other concerns in preparation for the upcoming mission. TransOrbital had to obtain approval from the US State Department and the military to gain its license, and has also been consulting with officials at NASA. The licensing process took two and a half years, according to Laurie, and involved getting a specific license to take pictures from space.

So is there any point in storing data on a server on the moon? TransOrbital has had companies that want to back up critical data somewhere other than on earth express interest, and is working on ways to make the idea attractive. "We're trying to develop some wider bandwidth laser communications going beyond the communication protocols developed by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory that exist for use in space," Laurie says. "It is feasible to have electronic data on the moon, and to receive it from earth, although delays are implied."

Laurie is ... excited about servers storing data on the moon ... "The moon is a pretty safe place to store your

data," he says. "September 11 caused people to think about what data backup really means, and there is also always the threat of a natural disaster here on earth, such as a small asteroid hitting the planet."

Laurie says his company is looking at self-healing server technology from various providers for use on the moon. Talk about remote backup.

<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,4149,1200791,00.asp>

FUTURE CONNECTIONS

Thanks to Keypoint (formerly Southern Internet Services) I had my attention drawn to a new Internet standard and what might happen in the near future:

Connecting to the Internet in coming years could see telephony, video and data services all delivered to your home or office in a single, super fast, Internet package. ...

[A] single optical fibre can technically carry up to 3.2 terabits (trillion bits) of data a second ... [However,] enabling it may cost anywhere from \$450 million to \$750 million. A significant concern is the growing shortage of IP addresses. IPv4 is currently used to link all machines on the Internet, but the number of available addresses is quickly diminishing. More addresses are needed and a new protocol, IPv6, may provide the means for the Internet to grow. ... See ...:

<http://www.gateway10.com/articles/000009.htm>

In addition to fibre optics, Keypoint go on to discuss other technologies. Perhaps the most interesting is ADSL2. This allows greater speeds, greater throughput and greater distances from the exchange, while remaining backwardly compatible with current ADSL.

<http://www.isp-planet.com/technology/2002/adsl2plus.html>

Another development that could have a huge impact on the future of the Internet is the Giganet or Internet2. Currently, cost are around \$3000 per month, but this is no ordinary congested, slow, infuriating Internet:

*WASHINGTON, DC – An international team set new Internet2 Land Speed Records using next generation Internet Protocols (IPv6) by achieving 983 megabits-per-second with a single IPv6 stream for more than an hour across a distance of 7,067 kilometers (more than 4,000 miles) from Geneva, Switzerland to Chicago, Ill. The record is comparative to transferring the equivalent of approximately **one feature-length DVD-quality movie every 36 seconds**, or more than 3,500 times faster than the typical home broadband connection. (Emphasis mine).*

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

Now that could make video streaming and movies on demand possible, but they might just have to do something about the price, don't you think?

GROUP FINANCES

As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, the Group finds itself temporarily strapped for cash and has had to cancel the latest issue of *Keyboard & Mouse*. "What can I do to help?" I hope I hear you cry. Well, first up, if you haven't paid your subscription fee for 2003-4, please do so without delay. This will give us sufficient cash to keep things operating until other measures can be implemented.

Other measures being contemplated included increasing the membership fee. It hasn't changed since I joined and appears to have remained the same for at least ten years. That can't be said of our costs, so we do need to look at it.

We are also organising an internal raffle at \$2 per ticket (or 3 for \$5). We already have five prizes, including a copy of Microsoft Office Standard, a "coffee table" book from Microsoft Press, two sets of Bohemian crystal and a USB battery charger. If you can donate something worth, say, \$20 or more, we could have ten or a dozen prizes, making this a very attractive raffle. Even if you don't have anything to donate, buying \$10 worth of tickets would help us reach our target.

Of course, the Committee isn't just trying to raise money. It is also looking for ways to save money and some changes to the services provided can be expected. We'll keep you informed.

SECRETARY RESIGNS

Our Secretary, Neil Hutton, and our Caterer, Kathy Hutton, have both tendered their resignations from the Committee, although they will remain as members. Neil's father needs constant care and Neil has taken on this responsibility, making it difficult for him to attend meetings. As Kathy doesn't drive, she is also unable to attend. We wish them well, but will find it hard to replace them on the Committee.

OUTLOOK 2003 DEMONSTRATION

Unfortunately, Mandi Wilson had to cancel her Outlook 2003 demonstration due to a death in the family. As she is executor of the will and the funeral was the day after her demonstration had been scheduled, she had no alternative. She has offered to do the demonstration at a later date and it will be left to the incoming Committee to schedule it, if members are still interested.

PROBLEMS NIGHT AND BRING 'N' BUY

August 12 and we are reviving an old favourite. Bring along your surplus hardware and software and turn it into cash, or swap it for something more useful to you. And bring your computer-related problems along so that we can try to solve them for you.

There will also be a short demo on how to find solutions on the Internet. This will include recognised sources and how to use search engines to find the drivers etc. that you need.

In addition, we will reveal a source that many of you don't appear to be aware of, or are afraid to use, but one which can be extremely helpful. Hint: It's all about **not** re-inventing the wheel.

KEYBOARD & MOUSE

As mentioned last issue, *K & M* will not be produced this month owing to a shortage of cash in the Group coffers. The Management Committee reviewed the situation at the meeting on Tuesday night and will consider reducing the frequency of the newsletter, only producing copies for collection at meetings, imposing a surcharge for posted copies, increasing the membership fee, and/or going to a purely electronic newsletter. A final proposal will be drawn up by the Committee next month and put to the AGM for approval. If you wish to vote on the proposal, you must be at the AGM, as our Rules do not permit proxies.

Meantime, you may care to suggest which direction to take by emailing the Committee prior to 12 August 2003.

OFFICE BEARERS NEEDED

Nominations for the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary and Committee Member are urgently

needed as the Campbells and the Huttons are stepping down, (or already have stepped down), from the Committee. Nomination forms were distributed with the July newsletter and need to reach the Acting Secretary no later than 16 August 2003. However, if the proposed revised Rules of the Association are adopted it will not be necessary to fill the Committee Member position.

In the event that there are insufficient nominations to fill the vacant office bearer positions, nominations will be taken from the floor at the AGM. If there are still insufficient nominations, the meeting will be adjourned to a date to be fixed, while further nominations are sought.

If it not possible to fill these positions, two possibilities exist, neither of which are particularly desirable. The first is to try to amalgamate with the Launceston Computer Group and become a branch of that much more vigorous organisation. The second is to close down. The choice, as always, rests with you, the members. It is your Group and it is your right and responsibility to choose a Management Committee and provide that Committee with feedback and direction.

RULES OF THE ASSOCIATION

The draft revision of the Rules of the Association has been placed on the website as a PDF file. Please download it and read it through. Your feedback is important as we want to get this right and present the draft for approval at the Annual General Meeting. Suggested changes should reach the Committee before 12 August 2003 so that they can be included in the draft to be presented at the AGM.

Among the revisions are:

- Dating of the revisions for future reference;
- A tidying of the definitions of terminology used, including the interpretation of words that might otherwise be considered gender specific;
- Changed provisions relating to the size and appointment of the Committee;
- Insertion of all known amendments, such as that relating to the size of the Treasurer's and/or Secretary's petty cash float; and
- Clear provision for pro-rata charging of the membership fee where appropriate;

WILDERNESS TOURISM

These are allegedly actual comments left on US Forest Service registration sheets and comment cards by backpackers completing wilderness camping trips:

"Escalators would help on steep uphill sections."

"Instead of a permit system or regulations, the Forest Service needs to reduce worldwide population growth to limit the number of visitors to wilderness."

"Trails need to be wider so people can walk while holding hands."

"Ban walking sticks in wilderness. Hikers that use walking sticks are more likely to chase animals."

"Found a smouldering cigarette left by a horse."

"Trails need to be reconstructed. Please avoid building trails that go uphill."

"Please pave the trails so they can be plowed of snow in the winter."

"Chairlifts need to be in some places so that we can get to wonderful views without having to hike to them."

"The coyotes made too much noise last night and kept me awake. Please eradicate these annoying animals."

"Reflectors need to be placed on trees every 50 feet so people can hike at night with flashlights."

"Need more signs to keep area pristine."

"The places where trails do not exist are not well marked."

Does eco-tourism really have a future, if these are typical tourists?