

# Philadelphia Bits & Bytes

Official Newsletter of the Computer Education Society of Philadelphia

November 1998

Volume 17 Issue 9

\$1.50 US

## Meeting Location

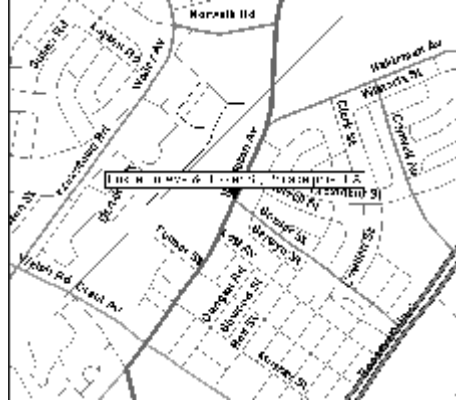
Until further notice, all meetings will be held at the 7th Police District's Community Room located at Bustleton & Bowler.

The entrance to the Community Room is on Bowler St. the side of the building). You can not gain access to the room through the police station entrance.

## DIRECTIONS:

*From Roosevelt Blvd. Northbound...* Use the center lanes and turn left at Lott St. (this is the first light after Grant Ave.). Follow Lott St. to the end, which is Bustleton Ave. Turn right on Bustleton Ave. and go one block to Bowler St. (next light). Turn right on Bowler St. and the building and entrance is on your left.

*From Roosevelt Blvd. southbound...* Use the outside lanes and turn right at Conwell St. (this is the first light after Red Lion Rd.). Turn left at President St. which will be at the first STOP sign. Follow President St. to the end and turn left on Wisteria St.. Go to the STOP sign and turn left on Bowler St.. The building and entrance is on your right.



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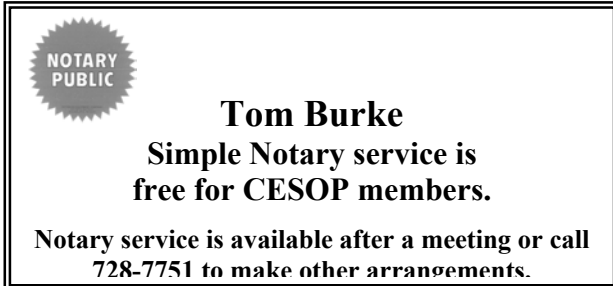
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The Computer Education Society of Philadelphia, Inc. holds its monthly business meetings on the second Thursday of each month in the Community Room of the 7th Police District in Philadelphia, Pa. The meeting is called to order at 7:30 p.m. The 7th Police District is located at the corner of Bustleton Avenue & Bowler St.. The entrance to the Community Room is located on Bowler St..

CESOP is formed exclusively for charitable, educational and scientific purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (the "Code") (or corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), and particularly to: engage in the exchange of ideas, techniques and information for the broader and more effective use of computer hardware and software; promote the general pursuit of knowledge and education in computer hardware and software generally; sponsor meetings, seminars, lectures, and workshops to share knowledge, experiences, and discussion of computer topics of interest to members and the general public; publish and distribute a periodic newsletter containing computer information and news...

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## Submitting Articles to Philadelphia Bits & Bytes

Articles may be submitted in any of the following ways:

1. Internet e-mail sent to [cry\\_for\\_dawn@hotmail.com](mailto:cry_for_dawn@hotmail.com)
2. On 3.5" diskette mailed to Philadelphia Bits & Bytes Editor 1312 Brighton Street Philadelphia, PA 19111

The required format is electronic, IBM compatible in either plain ASCII text or MS Word 6.0 or better. Do not use any justification or margins. Single space between lines and double space between paragraphs. Paragraphs should not be indented. Lists or table entries should be separated by indenting or tabs... do not use spaces. Drawings or artwork not in digital form should be in black ink suitable for scanning.

Please include the article name, your name and phone number, (with area code).

### Deadlines

All articles submitted for publication in Philadelphia Bits & Bytes must be in our hands by the third Wednesday of the month preceding the issue month you request. Example: articles for the June issue must be submitted by the third Wednesday in May.

### Advertising in Philadelphia Bits & Bytes

Commercial Advertising is available at the following rates:

Full Page	6" x 9"	\$40.00	
Half page	3" x 9"	\$25.00	6" x 4.5"

Quarter page	3"x 2.25"	\$15.00	1.5" x 9"
Column inch	1.5: x 1"	\$2.00	

All ads must be camera ready and be in black in on white paper.

Payment must be received in advance for all commercial advertising. Make checks payable to the *Computer Education Society of Philadelphia*.

### Non-commercial & Personal Advertisements

CESOP members may submit a non-commercial or personal ad to be published in Philadelphia Bits & Bytes *free of charge*.

All non-commercial or personal ads must follow the same format and submitted as outlined previously for submitting articles. Feel free to contact the editor for further information.

### Deadlines

All advertisements submitted for publication in Philadelphia Bits & Bytes must be in our hands by the second Wednesday of the month preceding the issue month you request. Example: articles for the June issue must be submitted by the second Wednesday in May.

### About Philadelphia Bits & Bytes

Philadelphia Bits & Bytes is the official newsletter of the Computer Education Society of Philadelphia, users' group open to users of all types of personal computers. This current issue was prepared using Microsoft Word 7.0.

The Computer Education Society of Philadelphia is a non-profit corporation under the guidelines of 501-C-3 of the IRS code.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

November 1998

A lot was discussed at our last meeting. I appointed the Election Committee with the approval of all members in attendance. It consists of John Lavelle (chairman), Fran Billings, Mark Glickman and Heinz Wendt. Some nominations were entered from the floor and they were:

President - Tom Burke

Vice President - Steve Short, Eric Hafler

Secretary - Kathy LaVelle

Treasurer - Roy Kalbs

I stated in the past that I did not have a desire to seek another term. However, after some discussion, I decided to reconsider that position. I told the attending members that my lack of interest in another term came from the lack of support and assistance in running the club. In short, I cannot do it all myself; I need YOUR help. There seemed to be an understanding that I can expect more involvement from the members and for that reason I decided to reevaluate my position on accepting another term as president. If you, the member, only come to the meetings and voice your opinions and desires on the direction this club should take, that would make my job a lot easier and much more pleasant. Your ideas are important, your assistance is treasured.

Normally the business meetings are held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of the month at 7:30 PM. A motion was passed to hold the next business meeting on Saturday, November 14 at 10 AM. This will be on the same day as the next workshop and will be prior to the workshop. We thought that this might entice more members to become involved in the operation of the club. Please note that this is strictly a trial change and we will decide at the meeting whether to continue with this schedule or revert to the regular schedules.

Other scheduling matters that were discussed informally were whether to discontinue the Computer Solutions Workshop, alternate the Computer Solutions Workshop with the Seminar Workshop or keep both as they are. If you have an interest in either of these workshops, I strongly urge you to attend and voice your opinion.

The next Seminar Workshop will be on November 14 starting at 11:00 AM. The topic will be "How To Buy A Computer". The workshop in December will be on Saturday December 12 starting at 11:00 AM and the topic will be "How To Buy A Holiday Gift for the Computer Person on Your List".

Lee Le'Mon has decided to step down as treasurer of CESOP. This decision by her was not reached easily. Since the Le'Mon family moved away from the Philadelphia area and after much soul searching she thought it would be in the club's best interest to step aside and allow someone else complete the remainder of her term. Lee wishes to remain a member of CESOP and will take an active roll whenever she is able. I received her letter of resignation from the office of Treasurer on October 16, 1998. Lee has been a great asset for this club for many years. Her direct and vigilant involvement will be missed by many, especially me. I wish the entire Le'Mon family well in their new home and hope to see them often. Roy Kalbs has been appointed to complete the remainder of Lee Le'Mon's term as treasurer of CESOP.

A brief word on the future of TCF. Ken Gordon will be managing future TCF festivals. They will no longer be held at Mercer County Community College. Just what CESOP's future involvement will have not been completely established. Steve Short is CESOP's representative to TCF and he told me that he would prepare a report for this newsletter when he has all the particulars.

I hope to see you at the November 14 meeting until then, take care.

Tom Burke

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Article taken from GameCenter.Com

<http://www.gamecenter.com/Xperts/?st.gc.fd.t.xp>

### **High-Speed Shoot-out on the PCI Bus**

By Bill O'Brien

(10/15/98)

#### **The Hype**

Examine any of the reviews that compare computers having various processor speeds and you'll notice one glaring fact: Increases in CPU speed and capability have less of an impact on overall system performance now than they ever did in the past. A major part of the problem is that the path traveled by data as it passes between a peripheral (such as a hard disk or a graphics card) and the processor and memory--and then back again--is more like a scenic side route than a high-speed expressway.

Yes, we've gone from a 33-MHz PCI bus to a 66-MHz PCI bus. But Intel declined to implement a 100-MHz PCI bus when even Apple thought it was a good idea. It's a question of reliability and backward-compatibility. We need to be safe and sane on the data highway.

Well, it might be time to wild things up a bit--whether Intel wants to or not.

Compaq, IBM, and Hewlett-Packard are an unlikely triumvirate, but they're stirring the pot with a new PCI specification called PCI-X. This new spec calls for PCI speeds of up to 133 MHz--that's twice the current speed--while maintaining backward-compatibility with existing PCI-based products.

Why the rush? These three companies have major business clients, and the new specification is aimed primarily at server-class systems. By increasing the PCI bus speed, network and SCSI controllers, which are big-time items in the server world, can be designed to perform faster and deliver the level of I/O performance needed by a computer with clusters of workstations attached to it.

Best of all, according to the trio, it won't take years to develop the new specification. They predict that PCI-X products should be available by the second half of 1999.

## The Gripe

No one in his or her right mind should even try to argue against keeping Intel (and Microsoft) from molding the PC industry in its own image. If the industry is to remain vital, there must always be someone bent on pushing the envelope and not just keeping things safe and sane. But let's take a short step back and look at the players here: IBM, Compaq, and Hewlett-Packard.

Wasn't IBM the company that was bound and determined to recover the dominant share of the personal computer market by driving PC clone makers out of business with the creation of a new and wonderful bus architecture called MCA (MicroChannel Architecture)? The attempt fizzled, and somewhere in the process IBM lost the ability to look like a liberal corporate entity with everyone's best interest at heart.

Compaq, for years and years, had shunned mail-order and third-party sales of its PCs. Traditionally, its prices were well above the industry average for hardware with similar content--the argument being that its PCs were a cut above the rest. Anyone else remember the Torx screws that Compaq used to hold its cases together, so the average screwdriver-wielding gearhead couldn't get inside?

And HP: Well, aside from manufacturing really expensive calculators (when the competition was next to nonexistent) and making a less than successful attempt at building personal computers, just what has HP done lately?

Don't misunderstand. The concept behind a new and faster PCI bus is good. But we shouldn't get incredibly excited over this just yet. It's simply another example of the First Fundamental Truth of Computing: Change is not necessarily for your benefit; it's a way of regaining, retaining, or acquiring market position (meaning sales) on the part of the companies involved--and anyone else who jumps on their coattails.

## The Bottom Line

The fact is that despite escalating processor speeds, overall system performance is not keeping pace. One look at the throughput rates for the new Ultra33 hard disk technology should make that clear. And if it doesn't, ask any graphics card vendor why its next-generation AGP card is being designed

with oodles of onboard memory. I'll save you the trouble: the reason is that they want to avoid existing bus delays by having as much as possible done on the graphics card itself.

However, it's doubtful that Compaq, Hewlett-Packard, and IBM will pull it off. None of them--although both Compaq and IBM come close--really has the kind of track record needed to score such a coup. What they will do is add an element of coercion to Intel's corporate paranoia, and that can work in our favor.

Look at what happened when the specification for the second-generation VESA local bus (remember VLB?) was being ironed out. Intel saw things moving out of its sphere of influence and countered with its PCI proposal. The first implementation of PCI was terrible; it wasn't really faster than VLB, despite the extremely vocal hype that it would be. But it was refined and did become faster. It just hasn't progressed much beyond that because there hasn't been any challenge to it since. Now there is.

It wouldn't be surprising if Intel adopted the proposed new PCI specification and perhaps even bumped it up to 150 MHz instead of the current 133-MHz limit. That would give Intel some breathing room for the next generation of even faster processors it's developing. And that's important. Intel must be able to show substantial improvements in overall system performance to validate the need for those new CPUs.

And I wouldn't worry about that "for use in servers only" concept. One of the quotes I remember best from the introduction of the 80486 was from some forgotten computer media wag who volunteered, "The 80486 is so powerful that it's doubtful it will ever see service in a desktop PC." The Second Fundamental Truth of Computing is, If you buy it, you can use it for anything you like.

So, what do you think of PCI-X? Is it the next big thing, or the next big yawn? Jump over to Gamecenter's message boards and dive into the discussion.

(Intel is an investor in CNET: The Computer Network.)

In the 17 years since his introduction to microcomputers, Bill O'Brien has sold, installed, repaired, blown up, and written about the beasts. His writing credits include 6 books and more than 1,000 articles. Comments? Let us know.

*The next CESOP business meeting will be*

*Coffee is always available*

*Saturday, November 14th, 1998.*



*The meeting will start at 10:00AM sharp!*

**Reminder: This is the last meeting to be held at 7th Police District.**

# Computer Education Society of Philadelphia

## 1998/99 Membership Application

- New Member    - Membership Renewal    - Information Change

### PLEASE PRINT

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City- \_\_\_\_\_ State- \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code- \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #- \_\_\_\_\_ Fax #- \_\_\_\_\_  
*Please include your Area Code*                      *Please include your Area Code*

Phone #- \_\_\_\_\_ Ext.- \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address- \_\_\_\_\_  
*Please include your Area Code*

Age- \_\_\_\_\_ (*Applicants must be at least 14 years old*)    Date of birth- \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_    - Male - Female

Special Interests- \_\_\_\_\_

Computer & Equipment- \_\_\_\_\_

Operating System- Windows 95     Windows 3.1     MSDOS     OS2     Windows NT     Macintosh OS

Other \_\_\_\_\_

*Please contact me. I am interested in helping with the following*     Workshops     Presentations     Newsletter     Trenton Computer Festival  
 One on one help to other members     Other \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of applicant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of parent or legal guardian for applicants under the age 18 \_\_\_\_\_

Membership dues are \$12.00 per year. New members dues are prorated based on the CESOP membership year, May 1 to April 30. Prorated dues for new members are as follows:

If you apply before the 5 <sup>th</sup> day of	May - \$12	June - \$11	July - \$10	August - \$9
	September - \$8	October - \$7	November - \$6	December - \$5
	January - \$16 *	February - \$15 *	March - \$14 *	April - \$13 *
	* These dues are prorated to include membership through the April 30 of the year following your new application			

Make checks payable to:    **Computer Education Society of Philadelphia**

Mail it to:    **CESOP Membership  
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Berwyn, PA 19312**

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TCF Cash    Accepted by \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Cash

Check # \_\_\_\_\_    Received by Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

### **The iMac Phenomenon**

By Michael Brown  
(9/3/98)

Steve Jobs must be a distant relative to P. T. Barnum of "There's a sucker born every minute" fame. I mean, how else can one explain the amazing phenomenon of the iMac?

Check out this quote from Apple's Web site: "Saying the iMac's shell is made of translucent plastic is like saying the human body is 70 percent water," notes a student, running his hands over the iMac. "It really doesn't convey what this feels like on a sensory level."

Ohhh-kay. Maybe I just don't "think different" enough. Maybe I never properly bonded with my cold, hard PC. Maybe I'm feeling neglected, shut out, left out, and these emotions are feeding some deep-seated neurosis that blinds me to the perfect evolution of the personal computer as embodied in the iMac. Maybe I just no longer "grok" the Macintosh.

I used to. In fact, I bought my first Mac long before I bought my first PC (my first computer was an Amiga 1000 and my second was an Amiga 2000). My first Mac, a IIci, was a powerful machine far superior to the PCs of the day. It had three NuBus slots, a video-capture card, a SCSI hard drive, and a SCSI port on the back, so I could daisy-chain my external 2X CD-ROM and 88MB SyQuest drives.

Now I'm looking over the iMac sitting in the Gamecenter lab and I'm thinking "What happened?" What happened to the ubiquitous SCSI port? What happened to the floppy drive? What happened to the mouse? What happened to the

expansion slots? What happened to the freakin' printer port, for chrissake?

Is USB the serial bus of the future? Definitely. USB is far superior to the PC serial bus and the Apple Desktop Bus. But the future is not today. Today, you can't easily hook a printer up to an iMac. You can't plug a joystick, a gamepad, a Zip drive, or a scanner into one, either. This situation will change, with time, but PCs have had USB ports for years and there are still no widely available USB peripherals on the market.

Many people are saying that the iMac represents the return of Apple's best asset: its innovative spirit. But I think the iMac represents a return of Apple's biggest liability: its arrogance. A personal computer with no floppy drive? A personal computer that can't be easily upgraded beyond its memory? A personal computer that's compatible with an extremely limited selection of printers unless you have access to a network printer or buy an expensive cable adapter? If this is innovation, I'll happily remain a Luddite.

Don't think I'm an Apple hater just because I'm slaggin' the iMac. Competition drives innovation, and Apple is the only company in a position to challenge the Intel/Microsoft duopoly. But Apple is going to have to do better than the iMac to have a snowball's chance in hell of surviving in the consumer PC market.

This isn't Gamecenter's final word on the iMac. We've got one of the machines in the Gamecenter lab, where technical editor Ken Feinstein is poring over the box and applying his suite of game benchmarks. In the meantime, check out CNET Computers.com, which published the very first review of the new Mac.

So, what do you think? Are you giving the iMac the thumbs-up, or the thumbs-down?

The Computer Education Society of Philadelphia  
Members Only

Got a computer problem?  
We can help!



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The official publication of the Computer Education Society of Philadelphia