

# Philadelphia Bits & Bytes

Official Newsletter of the Computer Education Society of Philadelphia

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## President's Report – February 2001

by Tom Burke

Our next meeting is February 14 ♥, 2001 at 7:30 PM. There will be no special topic of discussion just whatever comes up.

### *Langa List*

I have subscribed to a very informative Internet newsletter called the Langa List. You can check it out for yourself at <http://www.langa.com>

The latest issue has something extremely interesting that I would like to share with all of you:

1) *Juno to Users: TANSTAAFL*

*TANSTAAFL is the acronym for "There Ain't No Such Thing As A Free Lunch;" it was first popularized by author Robert A. Heinlein, many years ago. Of course, it refers to the fact that things that appear free usually have a hidden cost, and we've discussed the TANSTAAFL principle twice before in these pages. (See <http://search.atomz.com/search/?sp-q=TANSTAAFL&sp-a=0008002a-sp00000000>)*

*And it's back now, big time.*

*Reader Theo Tanalski, who is a user of the Juno ISP service, noticed something ominous in a recent change in the terms of service. Although Juno is the first, I can easily believe other ISPs will try the same thing soon. In fact, I'm amazed that AOL hasn't announced something similar yet.*

*Theo sent along this clip extracted from Juno's latest service agreement dated 1/18/2001:*

*2.5. You expressly permit and authorize Juno to (i) download to your computer one or more pieces of software (the "Computational Software") designed to perform computations, which may be unrelated to the operation of the Service, on behalf of Juno (or on behalf of such third parties as may be authorized by Juno, subject to the Privacy Statement), (ii) run the Computational Software on your computer to perform and store the results of such computations, and (iii) upload such results to Juno's central computers during a subsequent connection, whether initiated by you in the course of using the Service or by the Computational Software as further described below. In connection with downloading and running the Computational Software, Juno may require you to leave your computer turned on at all times, and may replace the "screen saver" software that runs on your computer while the computer is turned on but you are not using it.*

*There's lots more, but the above encapsulates the amazing part: In effect, Juno is saying that you must give them the right to use your PC for whatever purposes they choose, when they choose.*

*You see, Juno wants to lash up its subscribers' computers into an ad-hoc distributed computing network and sell the aggregate computing power to others. Someone with a large computational problem will contract with Juno, which will divvy up the large problem into smaller chunks and force-feed it into its subscribers' PCs. Those Juno-laden PCs, which must be left on and running, will execute this external code and send the results of the computations back to Juno. The process then repeats.*

*This kind of distributed computing is a very powerful thing, and has been used for good purposes among businesses (which have the right to run whatever they want on their own PCs) and among volunteer operations, such as SETI@home.*

*But I believe this is the first attempt by an ISP to grab a piece of its subscribers' PCs in such a blatant manner. This isn't just stealing a little bandwidth to cram some ads down the wire--- this is taking over your PC at a fundamental level.*

**(Continued on page 3)**

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The Computer Education Society of Philadelphia, Inc. holds its monthly business meetings on the second Wednesday of each month at the Bayerischer Volksfest Verien in Philadelphia, Pa. The meeting is called to order at 7:30 pm. BVV is located at 9940 Haldeman Ave.

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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# PlantagaNet

*The highest quality completely digital Internet connection  
for Bucks County and Philadelphia*

- Full access to the internet: www, E-mail, Newsgroups, FTP, etc.
- Unlimited usage flat monthly rate\*
- All PlantagaNet incoming lines are connected to K56Flex modems
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- Setup charge is only \$10.
- We offer our own CD-ROM (Windows or Macintosh), which includes Internet Explorer, MS Internet Mail, Several other Internet Applications and Utilities.
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- Static IP addresses are available for an additional \$5.00 per month.
- "Unlimited usage" is not the same as a dedicated account. For details, see our terms of service.

**For further information call (215) 489-2850 or visit  
or web site at <http://www.pil.net>**

(Continued from page 1)

*And that might lead you to wonder, "What happens if Juno's software trashes my system?" That's spelled out in the rest of the amended terms of service: The subscribers must perform these forced services at their own risk and expense: You pay for the power consumed to run Juno's calculations; you pay for the call (if needed) to send in the results; and if Juno's software crashes your PC and eats your data, well, tough luck.*

*Juno calls this the "Virtual Supercomputer Project," and describes it in glowing PR-speak at <http://www.juno.com/corp/news/supercomputer.html>.*

*So: not only TANSTAAFL but TANSTAAFISP--- there ain't no such things as a free ISP. Juno users will have to weigh the cost of the force-fed ads, plus the cost and risks of running unknown software on their*

*PC--- software of unknown quality, by unknown parties for unknown purposes--- against the benefit of saving a few bucks a month. Sometimes "free" lunches turn out to be very expensive.*

I thought this would be of interest to some, if not all, members.

As I said, the newsletter is full of information and tips. It is well worth your time to check it out.

## Games Software

If you read last month's newsletter, you are aware that I am currently reviewing a game package from Microsoft.

The Age of Empires II, The Age of Kings  
The Age of Empires II, The Conquerors Expansion

I moved on to *The Conquerors Expansion* and I have found it more intriguing than the previous. Take note, you **MUST** have *The Age of Kings* installed on your system in order for *The Conquerors Expansion* to work.

This addition has a few more features that make play easier and more interesting. There are several different levels of difficulty and I have found the moderate level to be very challenging. To play any higher may require you to research the "cheat" codes. Even with the codes, it is very challenging.

The one feature I haven't tried (but want to) is the multiplayer game. You can challenge someone via a modem, the Internet or MSN's pool of players.

All in all I would say that the game is very good and well worth the cost as it will provide hours and hours of entertainment.

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## Telocity Update

I related to everyone last month about my experience with Telocity, a national DSL provider. As you know, I cancelled the service three weeks after it was activated. Well, the latest glitch is that they are trying to bill me. When I subscribed, I was told, as a promotion, that the first 30 days were free. Also, their standing service guarantee gives a subscriber 30 days to cancel if not satisfied.

All I can say is if you are considering DSL, think twice before trying Telocity.

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I recently found new (for me) computer distributor. I was very impressed with the operation and I ordered a system from them. They are very willing to help promote CESOP in anyway that they can.

JEM Electronics, 5401 Oxford Ave, Philadelphia PA 19124  
**215.743.3030 - 800.232.3033** fax-215.289.6335  
<http://www.jem.net/>

I will keep everyone posted.

Be sure to listen to **PC TALK with Rich Levin**, Saturday mornings from 10-12 on **The Big Talker WPHT 1210 AM** for Jem's Weekly Specials. Jem is a proud sponsor and contributor to PC Talk and WPHT.

As always, I want to thank our Internet domain sponsor, PlantagaNet for their generosity. For those of you that have asked me about an ISP, give them a call. See their ad on page 3.

Thank you also goes to the Bayerischer Volksfest Verein for allowing us to use their facilities for our meetings. If you have need of a hall for an upcoming affair, give them a call at 215-673-5646. They can cater any type of affair.

Remember this is your club, come out and support it. See you at the meeting

Tom Burke

The Computer Education Society of Philadelphia  
Members helping members

The next CESOP business meeting will be  
Wednesday, February 14, 2001 at 7:30 pm



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