



PRODUCT REVIEW

Exploring Linux—Part 25 *by Alan German*

In the Windows world I have been a huge fan of PC Magazine's (previously free) *NoteWhen* utility. This little TSR program stores message text and displays a reminder in accordance with a user-specified schedule. I tried various similar applications in Linux but wasn't satisfied until I found KAlarm.

Since I use the classic Gnome desktop in Ubuntu 12.04 LTS (Precise Pangolin), and KAlarm is actually a KDE utility, the use of this program may be somewhat surprising. However, in the past, I have successfully run other KDE programs from the Gnome desktop, so I had no problem in trying out KAlarm. However, this isn't to say that this particular KDE program worked inside Gnome straight "out of the box" – it needed a little tweak.

First though, let me say that KAlarm has considerable flexibility and power, yet is very easy to use. At its simplest, one selects New – New Display Alarm, enters a text message, sets the date and time for the reminder, and presses OK. Then, when the appointed time comes around, the text message is displayed on the screen together with a musical accompaniment.



For those of us who can readily live without all the "bells and whistles", KAlarm is highly configurable and so it is a simple matter to go into Settings – Configure KAlarm – Edit – Alarm Types – Sound – None in order to turn off the music. And, under the settings menu, you will find a whole host of other options – everything from the range of working hours, to the font and colour to be used for message display.



One thing that I found puzzling was that, although I had checked Run Mode – Start at Login, and View Settings – General – Show in system tray, KAlarm wasn't actually starting when I booted into Ubuntu.

This appears to be a problem due to using a KDE program under Gnome. A bug report (Bugs which appear to be KAlarm bugs but which are actually due to other software—<http://www.astrojar.org.uk/kalarm/bugs.htm>) indicates that, under Gnome, a command such as the following must be used to start KAlarm:

```
kalarmautostart kalarm --tray
```

When this command is included as an optional startup program (System – Preferences – Startup Applications – Startup Programs) KAlarm does indeed spring into action as soon as the machine boots up.

So, with KAlarm running, my whole life is organized with a series of reminders set to be displayed at the appropriate times. Now, did I remember to set an alarm for my wife's birthday...?

Bottom Line:
KAlarm (Open source)
Version 2.9.0
David Jarvie
<http://www.astrojar.org.uk/kalarm/index.html>

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May Raffle

Courtesy of the McAfee Canada, we have a copy of **McAfee Total Protection 2013**.

Guard your PC, social network, identity, family, and home network with McAfee's ultimate protection against hackers, malware, thieves, phishing, and other online threats.

This prize is valued at \$70

Tickets are, as always, a good deal at \$1 for one, a great deal at \$2 for three or the unbelievable bargain of \$5 for ten!

Coming Up...

► Wednesday, May 8th, 2013

Speaker: Bert Schopf

Topic: Digital Imaging on the Run

Everyone these days has a digital camera, but let's take "grip n' grin" photography to the next level! We will take a live look at some conventional and digital hardware/software that can be used on-location for photo shoots as well as some photo editing tips, tricks and automated processing of multiple images.

Bert Schopf
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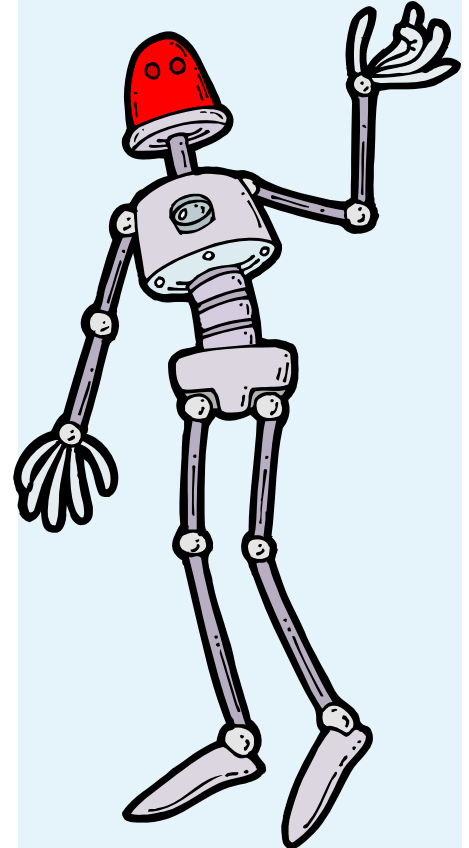
Wednesday, June 12th, 2013

Annual Pizza Night
Speaker: Pierre Roman, Microsoft
Topic: Office 2013

April Prize Winners

Michael Gibson is now the proud owner of a 3D Printed Robot figure (Robot 2.0 don't ya know) as a result of winning the raffle at our April meeting.

Thanks to Andrew Plumb for creating and donating this prize.



(Not actual prize!)

2013 CALENDAR

| Meetings | Date | Time and Venue |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| OPCUG General Meeting | Wednesday, May 8 th | 7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the Canada Science and Technology Museum , 1867 St. Laurent Blvd. http://www.sciencetech.technomuses.ca/english/index.cfm |
| Beginners' SIG | Wednesday, May 8 th | Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting. |
| Linux SIG | Wednesday, May 8 th | Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting. |
| Beer BOF (Wing SIG East) | Wednesday, May 8 th | 10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Liam Maguire's, St. Laurent Blvd. at Innes Rd. |

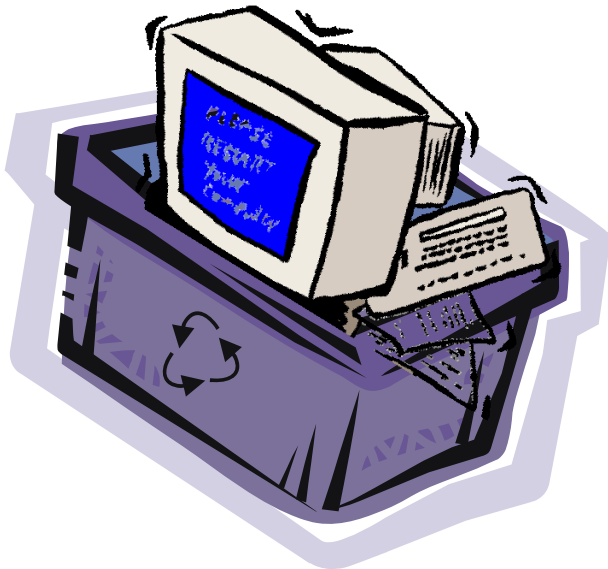
Please note that unless otherwise noted, SIGs meet at 9:00 p.m. (immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting).

OPCUG eWaste Event

On June 12th, 2013, at the [Canada Science and Technology Museum](#), the OPCUG will be partnering with the [KRC](#) (knights refurbishing computers) INC in an eWaste collection, under the auspices of the [Ontario Electronic Stewardship Council](#), and their agent, [Evolu-tic](#) of Gatineau. Items that can be reused for the KRC program will be retained and refurbished, while all other older or not-useful electronic items will be taken to the processing plant and properly disposed of, according to the very strict [OES guidelines](#). Everyone is invited to rid their homes of items no longer required.

For both KRC and OPCUG, there will be some revenue generated, as well. KRC is provided with the princely sum of \$150 per metric tonne of items accepted for disposal - so the big old heavy TVs and such are happily taken away; the revenue earned will be split with the OPCUG.

The OPCUG thanks the museum for the permission to hold the event and to Doug Drouillard of the KRC for providing all the technical support.



Review of 2012 Financial Records

by Richard Aylesworth

I reviewed the Treasurer's financial records for the year 2012, and found them in very good shape. The dollar amounts agree exactly with those in the Treasurer's financial report submitted to the board in February.

There were only minor problems with some of the documentation, These were explained and rectified to my satisfaction by the Treasurer. Thanks to Alan German for a job well done.

Richard Aylesworth, April 2013

The Board of Directors would like to thank Richard for his thorough review of the club's accounts.

SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR 2012/2013

Board Members

The Board of Directors was announced on February 1, 2011 at the Annual General Meeting. The Board selected positions resulting in the following slate of officers:

Chris Taylor, President and Systems Administrator

Gail Eagen, Secretary

Alan German, Treasurer

Bob Gowan, Special Events Coordinator

Wayne Houston, Privacy

Brigitte Lord, Webmaster and Newsletter

Morris Turpin, Publicity

Bob Walker, Facilities

Jocelyn Doire, Meeting Co-ordinator

Board Meetings

The Board met 12 times on

(2012) Feb 6, Mar 19, Apr 16, May 14, Jun 18, Aug 13, Sep 17, Oct 15, Nov 19, Dec 17 and (2013) Jan 14, Feb 18

Most of the discussion at meetings related to creating the program, ensuring raffle and door prizes for the meetings, ensuring articles for the Newsletter, and planning the June Pizza-Q.

Major decisions made:

- To accept Richard Aylesworth's comments and recommendations on the review of the financial records for 2011.
- To purchase new speaker gifts (gift cards, USB keys and speakers)
- To acquire MS Access for the Membership Chair to manage the membership database
- To provide complementary memberships for one year to Board members, Mark Cayer for Membership and Newsletter mailings and to Bert Schopf for providing office space for Board meetings.
- To continue offering three months free memberships for Ottawa Public Library attendees as a means of promoting membership
- To ask Richard Aylesworth to review the Treasurer's financial records for 2012.

Election

Bob Herres agreed for a sixth year to be Election Chair. Calls for nominations were done in the Newsletter and at meetings through the fall. Nine nominations were received by the due date of December 31, 2012. Since there were only nine nominations, no election was required. Thanks again to Bob Herres for taking on this role.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held on February 13, 2013. Minutes were taken by Jocelyn Doire in Gail Eagen's absence.

1. **Election Results** - Chris Taylor, President, announced that they were exactly nine nominations and thus the Board was acclaimed. The newly elected Board was announced. Board Members for 2013/14 were:

Jocelyn Doire
Gail Eagen
Alan German
Bob Gowan
Wayne Houston
Brigitte Lord
Chris Taylor
Morris Turpin
Bob Walker

Chris thanked Bob Herres for once again carrying out the duties of Election Chair.

2. Chris said the **President's Report** would be published in the March Newsletter.
3. The **Treasurer's Report** for the calendar year 2012 was presented by Alan German.

Alan stated that the report was published in the February 2012 newsletter.

He reported that the OPCUG is in good financial shape finishing fiscal year 2012 with expenses exceeding revenue by \$294.58.

Other than some memory sticks for the presenters, there was very little merchandise bought this year, compared to last year when we bought and sold many speakers.

There was two new accounts added this year for the silent auction we had in December for the Ottawa Food Bank, which included \$151 of cash donations, \$141 from the raffle's proceeds and \$372 from

the auction. We received a thank you letter from the Ottawa Food Bank, indicating that 48 000 people benefited from their services. Alan gave special thanks to Jeff Dubois for suggesting the event and Jocelyn Doire for coordinating the event.

Mark Cayer reminded the members that this was not the first time that the OPCUG had made a contribution to the community – we had contributed to the Community Foundation of Ottawa and many presentations have been made at the Ottawa Public Library by Chris Taylor, Alan German, Andrea Wells and Jeff Dubois.

The office expenses went up this year because of a large purchase of membership cards this year.

We replaced an old copy of MS Access to keep track of the membership at a significant saving price of only \$13.

Alan thanked Richard Aylesworth for scrutinizing the Treasurer's financial records.

4. Chris said the **Secretary's Report** would be published in the Newsletter.

5. Chris thanked:

Jocelyn Doire for the electronic distribution of the Newsletter and for maintaining the history pages on the web site.

Mark Cayer for his work on membership and mailing the Newsletter.

Bert Schopf for offering his office space for OPCUG Board meetings.

6. Questions and Comments - Chris opened the floor to questions or comments:

A member asked what we were planning to do with the \$22392.66 in assets.

Answer: Currently we have a good deal with the museum to use their auditorium, but if we were to lose that location, we might have to move to another location which could cost significantly more. Also, the computer used for the PUB is several years old, and it will need to be replaced eventually.

7. The Meeting was adjourned at 7:47 PM.

Submitted by

*Gail Eagen,
Secretary, OPCUG*

ARTICLE

Creating a Bootable USB from a Windows Installation DVD by Jeff Dubois

Recently, I was faced with a technical challenge that I had neither encountered nor considered before. The challenge was the consequence of a finicky optical drive on a used laptop I had purchased and my desire to upgrade the OS from the resource-demanding Vista to the more streamlined Windows 7. At the risk of understating my disdain for Vista, suffice it to say that I do have an original copy of Vista on DVD which I use every day as a coaster for my coffee cup.

The first step in my upgrade process was to grab my GParted CD, a bootable Linux based partition manager, and delete all data and partitions from the drive creating, instead, a single NTFS partition. I removed the GParted CD and replaced it with an authentic Windows 7 installation DVD. I was able to boot to the Windows 7 DVD and, although the setup process did commence, it abruptly ended in an error reporting it was unable to read the disk. Two subsequent reboots garnered the same result. Clearly, I'd have to install from a different optical drive or use a different installation media.

In an attempt to solve my problem, I checked the *techie trunk* to see what gadgets it might hold. Since I do not have an external DVD USB drive, perhaps I could make one. There was a USB 2.0 IDE interface but no IDE DVD to plug into it. There was a SATA DVD drive, but no USB interface for that. I surmised that since it was not possible to boot to the existing media, then the media had to be adapted to suit the existing hardware. I was now faced with a new challenge I had not previously encountered. How do I create a bootable USB copy from my original Windows 7 DVD?

My technical quest began, like all technical quests, by paying homage to Mr. Google. After wading through a plethora

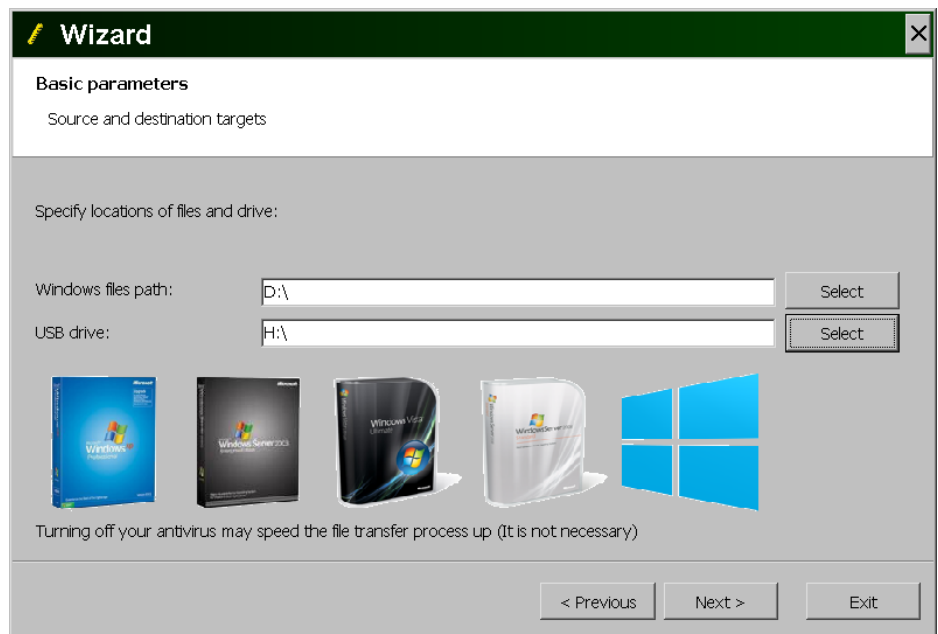
of how-to guides, what I discovered was that creating a bootable USB flash drive from a Windows 7 installation DVD could be accomplished in a number of different ways.

One method, certainly the most complex, required the use of PowerShell through which several command-line instructions were issued to partition, format, apply a boot sector and copy files to the flash drive. Not for the faint of heart but certainly a feasible option if a less arduous method could not be found.

The second method required the use of Microsoft's *Windows 7 USB-DVD Download Tool*. After reviewing the instructions on the product page, however, I suspected that an even simpler alternative must exist.

My search ended when I stumbled upon WinToFlash; a powerful utility which not only copies Windows installation files from DVD to a USB flash drive, SD Card, or external HDD, but also makes the external storage media bootable.

Unlike other Windows installation cloning solutions, WinToFlash comes with an extremely simple user interface: the user need only enter the drive letter for the respective source and destination media.



Finally, WinToFlash has an *Advanced Mode* for power users to customize the cloning process with a host of options including the ability to transfer the XP, Server 2003, Vista or Windows 7 operating systems to a USB drive and to create the Windows XP/2003 emergency bootloader, an MS-DOS USB drive and the Windows XP/2003 recovery console.

Available for download from <http://wintoflash.com>, the utility is free for non-commercial use.



ARTICLE

Troubles with USB by Chris Taylor

About 6 months ago, I started having problems with my Logitech wireless keyboard. Every now and then, it would stop responding. I could bang away at the keys and nothing would appear on-screen. Ten or fifteen seconds later, it would start responding. Sometimes, some of the keys I had typed while it wasn't responding would appear on-screen. Other times not.

It was very puzzling. I took to repeatedly hitting the Windows key and waiting until I saw the Start menu pop up and then I would continue working.

I tried lots of things. I changed the batteries. I moved the wireless transceiver from a rear USB port to the front, thinking it could be a distance problem or an interference problem. I tried newer drivers. Because the transceiver works at 2.4 GHz, I thought there might be interference from my wireless router, so I separated them more. I tried a wired keyboard.

The problem persisted. I started thinking a program I had installed was causing a conflict somehow or something was wrong deep in the bowels of Windows. Unfortunately, I could not pin-point exactly when the problem started. And it was starting to get worse; it was happening more frequently, often several times a day.

All of a sudden, I had this vague memory of support techs where I used to work having an occasional problem with USB-based storage devices. On computers that had had many external hard drives and flash drives attached over time, Windows started having a difficult time recognizing them when they got plugged in. My wireless keyboard transceiver was plugged into a USB port. Could this be the same problem?

The solution had been to remove references from Windows to old devices that were no longer used. I decided to try it.

First, I should caution – your mileage may vary! This worked for me and there seemed to be no problems created. But please don't blame me if anything bad happens. Make sure you have a good backup before messing with things.

You must first start an elevated privileges command prompt. In Windows XP, you are probably running as admin already, so you can just click *Start | Run*, type in `cmd.exe` and hit enter. In Windows Vista or 7, click *Start*, type `cmd.exe`, right-click the entry that appears in the start menu and choose *Run as administrator*. In Windows 8, from the Start screen, type `cmd` and when the Apps screen comes up listing the results, right click on *Command Prompt*. At the bottom of the screen, select *Run as administrator*.

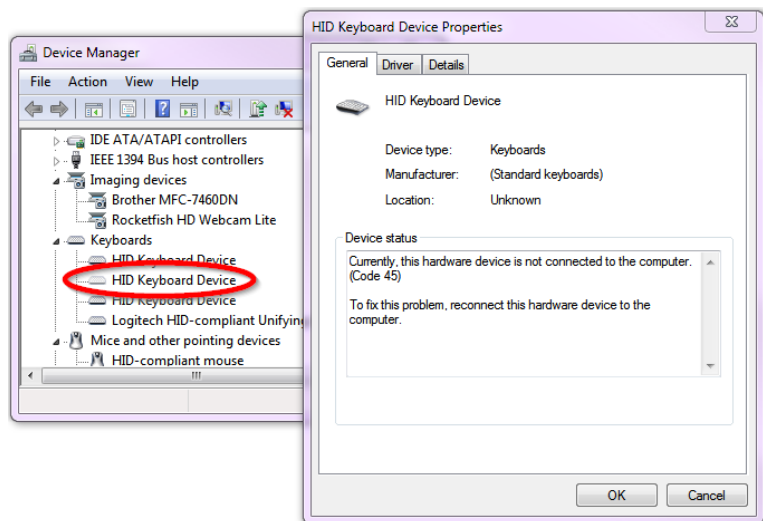
In the command prompt window, type;

```
SET DEVMGR_SHOW_NONPRESENT_DEVICES=1
```

Then type;

```
devmgmt.msc
```

When Device Manager opens, click on *View* and select *Show hidden devices*. You can then hunt for USB devices that are not currently attached to your computer. Since I was having problems with my keyboard, I started there. When I expanded the *Keyboards* section, I found quite a few entries with icons that were greyed out, indicating they were not currently connected. I right-clicked on each and selected the option to *Uninstall*.



Uninstall non-present devices

I rebooted, although I am not sure this is required. Since then I have not had any problems with the keyboard not responding.

I went back and removed most greyed out (non-present) devices that I could tell were USB devices from sections: *Disk drives*, *Human Interface Devices*, *Imaging devices*, *Mice and other pointing devices*, and *Printers*. I left devices I could recognize by name that I still have and expect to reconnect in the future.

If you have problems on your computer with USB devices that are not recognized properly or start acting strangely, you might want to try this to see if it solves your problems. The real beauty with most USB devices is, if you ever do reconnect a device you blew away in Device Manager, it should be recognized and automatically set up again on your system.



OPCUG Free Software Guide—Part 40 Compiled by Alan German

This guide features an annotated list of free computer programs. The software mentioned has not been reviewed (except where noted) nor have any tests necessarily been conducted. Consequently, no guarantees are provided that the individual programs will perform as described. Rather the list of available software is provided for the information of our members who may find one or more of the programs useful.

Easy Thumbnails

This free utility creates thumbnail images (and scaled-up copies) from a wide range of popular picture formats. The user interface makes it a snap to find your images and select them for processing individually or in groups. Use slider controls to rotate images and adjust their contrast, brightness, sharpness and quality. Check out the results with the built-in image viewer.

Current Release: Version 3.0

Web Site: <http://www.fookes.com/ezthumbs/>



Free Editor

Free Editor will allow you to view and edit many different types of files. The program supports multiple document formats (e.g. doc, docx, and odt) and features an integrated spelling checker. An image editor will resize, rotate and crop your images, and let you add special effects. For “techies” a hex editor and a resource editor are included.

Current Release: Version 2.0.1.0

Web Site: <http://www.freeeditor.com/>

Semper Driver Backup

This program will run through your system and find every single driver. With one click it will back up all drivers to a folder of your choice and create a backup log.

Web Site: <http://preview.tinyurl.com/7p7z8sb>

T3Desk

Manage your applications more easily by adding a third dimension to your display. T3Desk shows “minimized” applications in transparent 3-d windows that can be flipped, zoomed, and swiveled in almost any way you want.

Current Release: Version T3Desk 2 (2013) - Build 13.02

Web Site: <http://tehnif.com/t3desk>

Comodo Time Machine

This powerful system rollback utility allows users to quickly restore their computers to an earlier point in time. Time Machine’s snapshots are a complete record of your entire system, including the registry, critical operating system files and user created documents.

Web Site: <http://preview.tinyurl.com/6ftxjhp>

Free Jigsaw Puzzles

Ten on-screen jigsaw puzzles for you to try in an executable file that doesn’t need installing.

Web Site: <http://preview.tinyurl.com/ce956vq>

Hamster Free ZIP Archiver

This powerful archiver works with multiple file formats (e.g. zip, 7zip and WinRAR). Its new algorithm reduces the time required to create an archive by more than two-fold. The program also has multi-core processor support.

Web Site: <http://www.hamstersoft.com/free-zip-archiver/>



**HAMSTER Free
ZIP Archiver**

VirtualDub

This open-source video capture and editing utility runs on both 32-bit and 64-bit Windows platforms. The program’s author indicates that it is “*Proof that I had too much free time in college.*” VirtualDub is mainly geared toward processing AVI files, although it can read (not write) MPEG-1, and also handle sets of BMP images.

Current Release: Version 1.9.11

Web Site: <http://www.virtualdub.org/index.html>

OTTAWA PC NEWS

Ottawa PC News is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July and August. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members.

Member participation is encouraged. If you would like to contribute an article to Ottawa PC News, please submit it to the newsletter editor (contact info below). Deadline for submissions is three Sundays before the next General Meeting.

Group Meetings

OPCUG meets on the second Wednesday in the month, except July and August, at the Canada Science and Technology Museum, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa. Meetings are 7:30–9:00 p.m. and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) go until 10 p.m.

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--------------|
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Within a couple of minutes you will receive a confirmation message from the listserver.

“Announcements” is a low volume list that the Board of Directors uses to get in touch with the membership. Subscribers can expect at least one message per month – the meeting reminder that goes out a few days in advance of the general meeting. Other than that, the only time it is used is when the Board feels there is some important news that should be brought to the attention of all members.