WHAT IS APCUG?

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The Association of Personal Computer User Groups (APCUG) is an international, platform-independent, volunteer-run nonprofit body devoted to helping user groups offer better services to their members. APCUG is an organization dedicated to helping member computer user groups succeed. It helps to foster communications by operating as an informal network between user group organizations and also with companies that provide computer-related and Internet-related goods and services. APCUG also assists member groups in the fulfillment of their educational missions and activities by sharing with officers of member user groups the knowledge of what it takes for user groups to better serve their members. APCUG operates as a 50l(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Is APCUG a user group?
Absolutely not. APCUG membership consists of user groups, not individual members. While APCUG facilitates information to the user groups and provides information about possible services, it is up to the individual user groups to offer the services to their memberships.

Is membership in APCUG limited to user groups of any particular operating system or platform?
No. APCUG membership is open to all microcomputer user groups. Some of the members of APCUG are computer societies that serve many different platforms.

How did APCUG get started?
The genesis of APCUG came from a series of meetings by representatives from various user groups around the country. Whenever user group officers and directors met, there were continual discussions about the need to improve communication between the groups and to share information such as newsletters, strategies, ideas, etc. As a first step, the presidents from three user groups — Boston Computer Society, Capital PC User Group, and Houston Area League of PC Users - organized the First Annual User Group Summit meeting at the 1986 Fall Comdex. As a result of the feedback from that first Summit meeting and subsequent meetings among user group representatives, the leaders of 15 user groups met in Seattle in October 1987, and proposed the formation of an association for the purpose of fostering communication among and between user groups. That proposal was presented before 130 representatives from 50 user groups at the Second Annual User Group Summit Meeting in November 1987, and was unanimously approved.

What is the organizational structure of APCUG?
The primary governing body of APCUG is a 9-person Board of Directors. Each Director is elected for a three-year term, with one-third of the Board elected each year. The Board of Directors is responsible for the implementation of APCUC activities and daily management of the organization. A 15-person Board of User Group Advisors, each of whom is elected for a two-year, staggered term (one-half of the Advisory Board is

elected each year), is the ombudsman for their assigned groups and is responsible for proposing new activities or directions for APCUG and for advising the Board of Directors on user group concerns. All of the members of the Board of User Group Advisors are active participants in APCUG-member user groups. In addition, each Member User Group designates a person to act as a representative to APCUG. The APCUG user group representatives are responsible for keeping their group's officers and members up-to-date with information sent to them by APCUG, as well as keeping their group's information in the APCUG database current. They also receive the yearly ballot.

What kinds of things does APCUG do?
APCUG has established and maintains a National Registry of PC User Groups and provides this information to participating groups, publications, and vendors. By making this information available, more groups will be able to take advantage of services provided by manufacturers, publishers, and publications. APCUG encourages hardware manufacturers and software publishers to establish formal user group support programs and provides them listings of APCUG member user groups to facilitate the implementation of such programs.

APCUG provides a number of Internet services, including web pages with information about APCUG, mailing lists for User Group officers to communicate with their peers, Web Space for User Groups, and a number of other services, all accessible through http://www.apcug.org.

APCUG also plans and coordinates user group activities at major computer shows and expositions. These activities include a series of professional development seminars for user group officers; computer product showcase and exposition; the APCUG Summit Meeting held during the Fall conference; computer industry sponsored technology briefings; and sponsored breakfasts, luncheons and receptions.

APCUG serves as a clearinghouse for user group resources and vendor programs. In this way, each user group will not have to re-invent the wheel when it comes to creating something like a new member brochure or novice user diskette. Similarly, APCUG has developed a vendor database that summarizes the various programs and identifies the contact person within each company. User groups can then contact the vendors directly to enroll their groups into the programs.

Does APCUG take stands on issues or lobby?
No. It is more appropriate for individual user groups and not an umbrella organization to take positions on issues. As an information clearinghouse, the APCUG can, however, facilitate the exchange of communication on issues and help put user groups in contact with one another. Since the policy in most user groups is that only the Board of Directors can establish policy, it would be inappropriate and harmful for the APCUG to take positions on behalf of its member organizations. If it is to be successful, it is essential that APCUG not interfere or encroach upon the inherent responsibilities of its user group members.

How does APCUG pay for its directors, officers, staff, and offices?
Like many user groups, APCUG is a non-profit organization that depends primarily on volunteer effort. APCUG does not maintain its own physical offices but instead contracts for services on an as needed basis. APCUG employs an administrative assistant who handles updating the database, sends renewal invoices to groups, etc. All director and officer positions are unpaid volunteers. Thus far, many people have stepped forward from individual user groups and volunteered their services to APCUG. This spirit is expected to continue.

How much does it cost to join APCUG?
Each APCUG member user group is assessed an annual membership fee of $50 to help defray administrative and operational expenses.

Is my group a member of APCUG?
Yes. Most APCUG member groups display the APCUG logo on their web page and in their newsletter.

APCUG Member Services
To help new User Groups to form, APCUG offers a collection of information, including sample Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. APCUG puts on one or two national events each year. The many Round Table Programs offered are set up to help leaders in running their user groups. There are also Regional Conferences held during the year where user groups can also meet to exchange ideas, share the highs and lows of running a user group, meet vendors, etc. on a more local level.

APCUG provides web space and other web services for user groups that have trouble finding a local ISP to host their web page The WebBoard offers a ListServe for groups to contact their members, chat accessibility for on-line meetings, and conferences for a group's guru to answer technical questions.

APCUG publishes APCUG Reports four times a year, and copies are mailed to selected officers of all APCUG member user groups. It contains many articles to help officers do their jobs better. These reports are also published on the Net.

Newsletter editors can often use more content for their newsletters. The APCUG Editorial Committee emails four to six articles each month to all editors in APCUG member user groups. These articles can then be published in the group's newsletter. Articles are usually written by user group members from around the world.

The monthly NOOZ newsletter from your group's advisor contains information about APCUG and the group's region.

Tips & Tricks for Running your User Group are special articles written to provide assistance to a member user group on some aspect of running a User Group. Frequently they will be based on material presented at a Round Table session at an APCUG or regional conference.

APCUG maintains a Presentation-in-a-Box list that contains information about vendor-provided material that user group members can use themselves to make a presentation at their meeting.

Occasionally, member groups receive information about discounts being offered to their members. Many vendors have special programs set-up for user group members that offer continuous discounts.

APCUG maintains a user group locator on its website which anyone can use to find another user group to arrange joint projects, arrange a vendor tour for several groups, and enable officers to find other user group officers in their area to interact with to discuss topics of interest to the groups.

The APCUG logo is available for use by APCUC member groups. Different sizes of transparent GIF files (color) for the web, and BMP and TIP files (gray scale) for print use are included, as well as AI, EPS, and PSD formats for those who need different sizes or formats than those provided.

Help is just an e-mail away – groups can contact their regional advisor or a member of the Board of Directors. All officers are willing and available to assist APCUG-member groups.

Compiled from information gleaned from the APCUG Website, http://www.apcug.org.