Originally sent on October 26, 2008

To: OLLI Colleagues   From: Paul Howard
Re: An OLLI Computer Club / Computer User Group (Club Letter 1)

Thanks for responding to my note in the OLLI Enews regarding the establishment of a club for folks interested in Windows personal computers. I'm going to impose a bit of personal history, so you'll have an appreciation for my approach to this arena.

In 1981, living in New Jersey, I got my first personal computer as part of a GI Bill correspondence course. I've been using them as an all-consuming hobby, as well as for work, ever since. In 1982, I joined the Amateur Computer Group of New Jersey, which had been formed in 1975. It's still around, the oldest such group still active in the country. I currently belong to, and am an officer of, two Northern Virginia computer user groups, each of which has a number of OLLI folks as members.

A computer user group is, quite simply, a group of people who join together to learn more about their computers, hardware and software. Most operate on the premise of "Users Helping Users" - teaching others today, learning from others tomorrow, which seemed an ideal fit with the way OLLI works.

Some folks are reluctant to join user groups - "I'm too much of a beginner" or "I'm intimidated by those who are experts." With a collective total of 35 years involvement with user groups, here's what I've learned: The "rookie" questions open up new paths for the "so-called experts" because there are so many different ways to do things with computers that the "newbys" are trying to do things the "experts" never thought of, or the answer will reveal a method the expert never tried before. Result - everybody learns "new stuff !" Questions help everyone in the room, more often than not.

About half of you have let me know the kinds of things you struggle with, or would like to learn about. Some have provided topics on which they could provide presentations to the group. If you didn't send me those sorts of info with your expression of interest, please do - it will help with planning.

Please look at this web page: http://www.wacug.org/meetingsold.html

This is a "non-public" page - i.e. - no links to it exist on the primary site. This is where the details on past meetings for one of the user groups I mentioned are stored / dumped by the web master (me) - when I remember to do it! Are these the kinds of topics you want to learn about, or trigger thoughts on subjects you'd like to discuss? Please - let me know !!