

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE ALAMO PC ORGANIZATION

PC Alamode

ALL REVIEW ISSUE

www.alamopc.org

March 2005

\$4.00

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page 34

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Alamo PC Organization, Inc.

Renew Now!

Isn't it about time for you to consider all the benefits of membership with Alamo PC? Renew your membership before the year is over!

For more information call the Learning Center at
210.736.0700



Consider A Matching Donation, or a Donation To Alamo PC Organization

Increasing members knowledge and effective use of personal computers, and providing other membership services and access to the expertise of other members, does not happen without an associated monthly expense. In recent months, although member dues and ads have offset the majority of the required monthly expense, and cost-saving measures are constantly being reviewed, the total amount of monthly funds generated has been less than the monthly expense. The shortfall has had to come from reserve funds, which have been severely depleted. We would like to offer everyone the opportunity to help rebuild the reserve fund.

If you employer has a "Matching Donation" program, please consider that you can double a donation amount by participating. All donations are tax deductible and can be dropped off at the Alamo PC Learning Center in Crossroads Mall (near the underground parking entrance, accessed from Fredericksburg Road) or mailed to **Alamo PC Organization, PO Box 65180, San Antonio, TX, 78265-5180**. Checks, Money Orders, etc., should be made payable to **Alamo PC Organization** and identified as "Donation."

On-line donations can be made at <<https://training.alamopc.org/donations>>. If you do not have on-line access, credit card donations can be made by mail if you legibly provide the following information on a piece of paper: Full Name, Address, City, State, Zip, Phone Number (to verify you want your card charged), Name of Card, Card Number, Card Expiration Date, Donation Amount, and your usual Signature. Please help us keep our membership dues low, meet our monthly expenses and rebuild the reserve fund.



Alamo PC Organization

Alamo PC Organization is a non-profit organization whose mission is to increase its members knowledge and effective use of personal computers through presentations, instructional programs, other membership services and access to the expertise of other members.



To register for a Class, Study Group or Sr. Comp classes call:

Registration number **210.736.0080**

If you **didn't** receive your issue of *PC Alamode* or have questions about your membership e-mail:

Sandra Bloom at: membership@alamopc.org

If you have questions about Alamo PC call:

Learning Center number **210.736.0700**

If you have comments about classes call

John Gaddis **210.494.9449**

If you have questions about advertising call

Joseph de Leon
send e-mail to editor@alamopc.org

Please send change of address and other correspondence to:

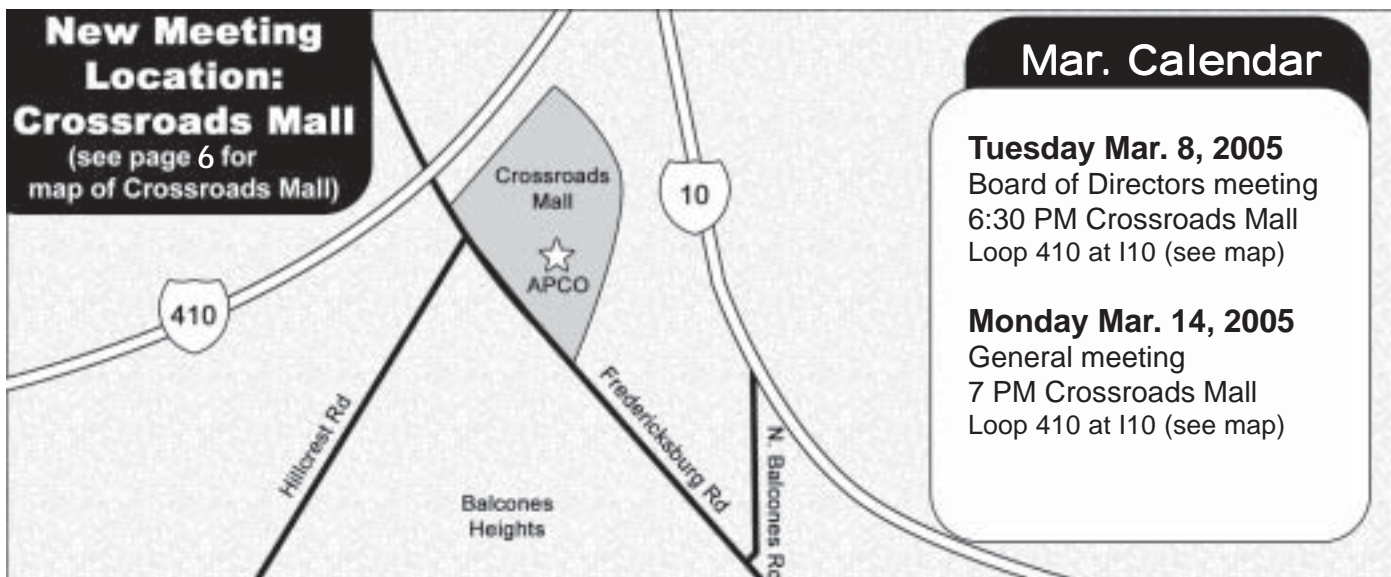
Alamo PC Organization
PO Box 65180
San Antonio, TX 78265-5180

Meetings

Monthly program meetings are normally held the second Monday of the month. Meetings are held at the Crossroads Convention Center (across from the Learning Center) located in the lower level of Crossroads Mall, Loop 410 at the intersection with I-10 starting at 7:00PM. Open to all members and the public.

The Board of Directors meets normally on the Tuesday prior to the monthly General Meeting. The BoD meets at the Alamo PC Learning Center located in the lower level of Crossroads Mall, Loop 410 at the intersection with I-10 starting at 6:30PM. Any changes will be announced via the Voice Mail/Hot Line (736-0700) and on the Calendar of Events. Open to all members.

New Meeting Location:
Crossroads Mall
(see page 6 for map of Crossroads Mall)



Mar. Calendar

Tuesday Mar. 8, 2005
Board of Directors meeting
6:30 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)

Monday Mar. 14, 2005
General meeting
7 PM Crossroads Mall
Loop 410 at I10 (see map)



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PC Alamode

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EDITOR

Joseph de Leon

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Joe Barth
Susan Ives
Larry Grosskopf

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Bill Beverley
Bruce Cramer
Shane Hicks
Tim Hoke
Bill Hudson
Susan Ives
Russell James
Larry Lentz
K. Joyce McDonald
Paul Vaughn

PRODUCT REVIEW COORDINATOR

Larry Grosskopf

ADVERTISING

Joseph de Leon

PUBLICATION SUBMISSIONS: Please check with the editor regarding submitting ads. Deadline for submissions is the first of the month preceding publication. e-mail to:

editor@alamopc.org

Joseph de Leon, Editor, PC Alamode

P.O. Box 12202

San Antonio, TX 78212

editor@alamopc.org

Ad rates effective January 2005

Rate frequency.	1 x	3 x*	6x*	12 x*
		Per insertion		
Full pg. (7 1/4" w x 9 1/2" h)	\$274	\$260	\$246	\$238
Half pg. (7 1/4" w x 4 1/2" h)	144	138	130	121
Half pg. (3 1/2" w x 9 1/2" h)	144	138	130	121
Quarter pg. (3 1/2" w x 4 1/2" h)	74	72	64	62
Bus. card (3 1/2" w x 2" h) **	43	41	39	37

*Consecutive months

**To be paid in advance

Alamo PC Directory

Learning Center
736-0700

Board of Directors

President, Programs VP	Bill Klutz	532-9122 (Home)	president@alamopc.org
Past President/Programs	David Steward	662-8606 (Home)	dsteward@texas.net
Treasurer	TBD (Bill Klutz)	532-9122 (Home)	treasurer@alamopc.org
Member Records	Bill Eastridge	223-8743 (Home)	membership@alamopc.org
Secretary	Sandra Bloom	unlisted	secretary@alamopc.org
Public Relations	Susan Ives	694-4582 (Home)	suives@texas.net
Webmaster	Mike Bianchi	226-2460 (Home)	webmaster@alamopc.org
Product Review Coordinator, Historian	Larry Grosskopf	531-8 388 (Office)	reviews@alamopc.org
VP Education, Study Groups Coord.	John Gaddis	494-9449 (Office)	education@alamopc.org
VP Member Retention/Services	Bill Klutz	532-9122 (Home)	services@alamopc.org
VP Trade Shows	Steve Tech	675-2880 (Home)	stephentechnr@yahoo.com
APCUG Representative	Dick Popp	403-2225 (Home)	rpopp@wireweb.net
Board Member	Joe Barth	696-5783 (Home)	jbarth@swbell.net
Board Member	Mark Lauterbach	492-0005 (Home)	mark.lauterbach@sbcglobal.net
Board Member	Donald Elliott	495-5950 (Home)	delliott1129@hotmail.com
Board Member	Preston McKinney	656-0083 (Office)	preston@odysseyworld.com

Executive Service Officers and other important numbers

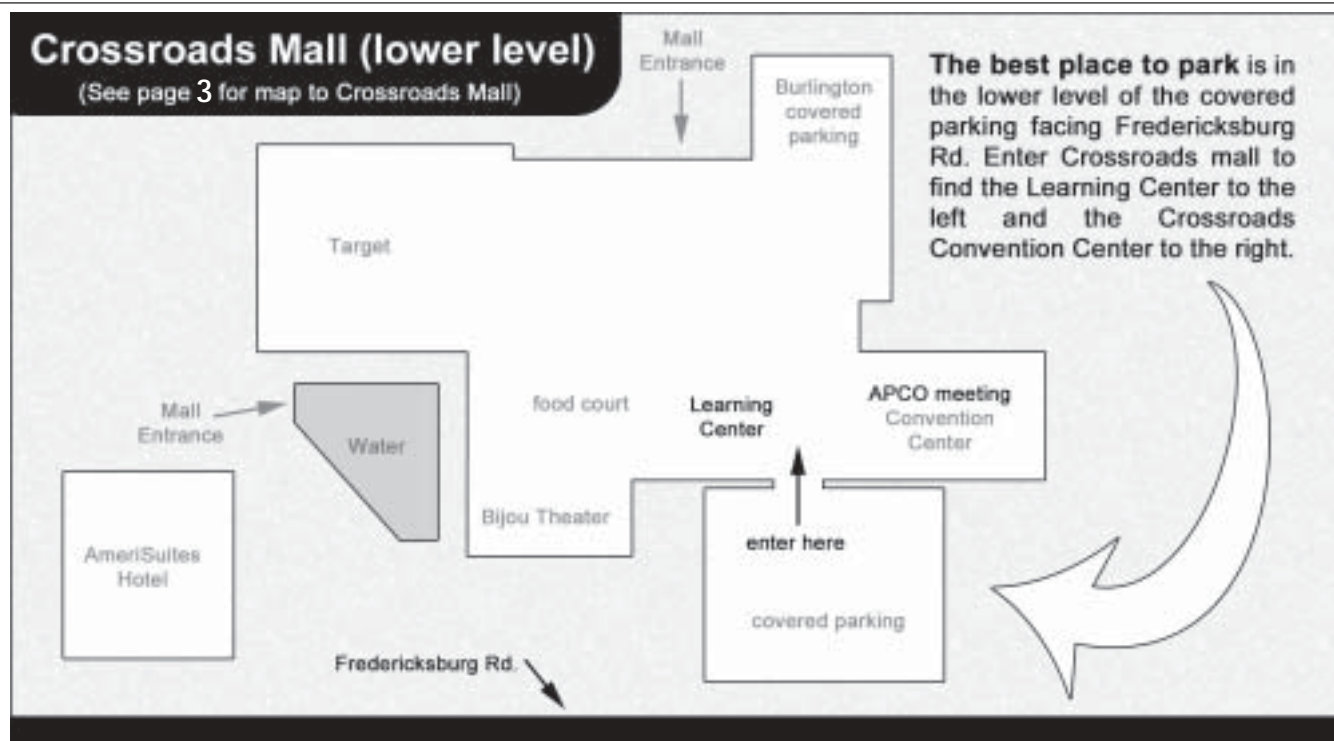
Learning Center, Crossroads Mall

736-0700

FAX 736-0032

Learning Center Manager	Cary & Jean Hall	736-0700 (Learning Center)	learncenter@alamopc.org
Special Projects	Joe Brazell	370-2207 (Office)	projects@alamopc.org
Registrar	Linda Bianchi	226-2460 (Home)	registrar@alamopc.org
Webmaster	Mike Bianchi	226-2460 (Home)	webmaster@alamopc.org
Lab/Network Administrator	Gary Grieve	492-5066 (Home)	netadmin@alamopc.org
Senior Comp Director	Ed & Audrey Henkin	494-8227 (Home)	seniorcomp@alamopc.org
Editor, PC Alamode Magazine	Joseph de Leon	unlisted	editor@alamopc.org

For Study Groups and Classes or for SeniorComp classes, phone: 736-0080



PC Alamode Photo Contest

1st Place Winner! (cover)

"Estes Park"

Submitted by Gilbert D. Pyka

"I took the picture in Estes Park, CO. in September 2004. It was taken in the early evening on the Fall River during the first snow of the season."

1st Runner Up
"Capri"



Submitted by Peggy Sowell

I took this photo April 2004 while on a vacation in Italy. Taken from Capri and was taken with a Nikon coolpix 995.

2nd Runner Up
"Tree Frog"



Submitted by Alice Kelly

"The tree frog picture was taken in November on a porch at City-by-the-Sea. The frog was about 1 1/4 inches long and about 1/2 inch wide. I didn't realize we had tree frogs on the Texas coast!"

PC Alamode Photo Contest Guidelines

1. Submit your JPG file by E-mail to <editor@alamopc.org>.
2. Each member may submit one entry per month.
3. Image will need to be cropped to 4.25" wide x 5.5" tall if selected for the cover.
4. Observe the due date – 10th of the month before publication date.
5. Only the first place winner will be notified.
6. Submit original images only.

← enter

Welcome to the first all digital issue of the PC Alamode magazine. We have a new format that has a few strengths over the paper format. We can now offer color on every page. Websites and e-mail addresses will be live links; all you need to do is click. Readers can also magnify the page to make text more readable.

From an editor's standpoint, there are other benefits as well. If a mistake is made, it will be easy to replace the file on the Alamo PC website. Try replacing 2,500 printed magazines to fix an error!

This format change is temporary, so please be patient while our organization experiences some growing pains. There are a few technical problems we will be facing over the next few issues, but in the end this new format will make the PC Alamode even more well rounded! The current version of the March 2005 issue has very little color, and web links do not yet function. I will be working on these issues for the April 2005 issue.

We will be working hard to get our organization back on track, and restore the magazine to a print version. If ever there was a time we needed your support, it is now. Please let us know your suggestions or comments. As always, I will handle comments about content in the magazine. Please send comments about the new format to Joe Barth at <jbarth@swbell.net>. Joe was kind enough to volunteer to respond to your feedback. You should also attend the general meeting and board meeting. This is your organization... please participate.

Reviews

Our theme this month is reviews. From time to time, reviews that did not fit into previous themes are presented for your enjoyment. This allows us to get our reviews out in as timely a way as possible. Please remember that you can checkout products for review at the general meetings from our product review coordinator, Larry Grosskopf.

Joseph de Leon, Editor
<editor@alamopc.org>



Joseph de Leon, Alamo PC

Joseph has worked in the graphics industry for over 6 years and teaches graphics and web classes at San Antonio College. He likes to look at the bright side.

STUDY GROUPS

Call the Learning Center for schedule information 736-0700 or see page 59-61.

President's Message

Bill Klutz

Challenges and Business Decisions!

From the very first "President's Message" I set forth to each of you, I have tried to indicate that this is "OUR" organization. In subsequent messages, I addressed the people and finance considerations that must be taken into account to make this organization functional. I addressed the declining membership issue and the need to reverse this trend, since it directly impacts the funds available to operate this organization as we know it now. I indicated we have a financial problem that is being worked and that changes may be required.

Specifically, I stated in the Feb message, "Although none of the board members want to curtail the level of services currently available to members, some curtailments (until revenue increases to a level where the curtailment can be abolished) may be required to keep the 'Ship' moving forward." At each board meeting I have addressed the declining membership and the declining funds available to operate the organization. I have also indicated that the PC Alamo, in its current form, is our single largest drain (about \$5K per month) with rent (and associated Learning Center costs) being second (about \$2,900 for a typical month). Some efforts have been made to generate additional funds from sources other than membership, but these will take time to fully develop and, initially, do not appear to be sufficient to offset the monthly decline of funds (about \$5k per month).

As of Feb 1st, had less than \$20K available to continue operating this organization. If we did nothing, we would be history by May (\$20K divided by \$5k decline each month, equals 4 months: Feb, Mar, Apr, May). The board of directors (BOD) could not let that happen.

As a reminder, from the Bylaws of the Alamo PC Organization and Policies & Procedures manual, "The affairs of the organization shall be managed by or under the direction of the Board of Directors who shall be elected by and accountable to the membership. The general duties of the Board of Directors shall include establishment of organizational policy, approval of the budget, sponsoring of meetings and activities, and setting general policies

for publications, telecommunications, and day-to-day operations of the organization" (Bylaws, Article 5.1). "As officers of the organization and according to the bylaws, we have an obligation to be responsible to the organization in many ways including financial. As a group the Board of Directors are responsible for the financial stability of the organization. As such it is important that the Board operate a balanced budget and be aware of ongoing and upcoming expenses" (Policies & Procedures Manual, Financial Responsibility, General Policies). As a board, we must be prepared to make business decisions that are based on "what is best for the business, that are sound, and that are without emotions." In the past we have become emotional about some items and it has affected the outcome of the decision making process.

From the foregoing, each of you should be clearly informed that the Alamo PC Organization is and has been experiencing financial difficulties. It was recently stated by a member that "We need to have faith that the organization will pull through this crisis and we need to keep the magazine as the jewel in our crown." I believe we have been trying to do both of these things for well over a year and members continue not to renew (apparently they do not believe the magazine is the "jewel in our crown"). The BOD could no longer operate on faith alone and we could no longer allow the magazine, as it was being published, to further drain the bank account.

Until such time as our financial condition allows us to continue operating as we were operating and cover all expenses generated each month, the proposal was made (at the 2/8/05 BOD meeting to put the PC Alamo online and cease publishing paper copies. Unless the board was willing to vote for this move (to begin with the March issue) we would have been closing the doors on this organization by May. It is unfortunate that such drastic measures must be taken, but we need to look toward the long term survival of this organization. By making this move, as a minimum, it will allow the conservation of our remaining funds and direct those critical funds toward informing members of the action taken, additional advertising and marketing efforts toward increasing membership, and

buy time for some of the other initiatives taken to begin to fully develop. It will also allow us to look at the organization in total and address such questions as "Why does anyone need or want to be a member of this organization?"; "What does Alamo PC offer the general membership and is this what the membership wants?"; "Does the number of positions on the board help or hinder the operation of this organization?"; "What should be the number of board positions and why?"; "Would streamlining the Board (fitting positions to the board rather than fitting the board to positions) and developing committees or teams to do more of the day-to-day work improve the ability of the board to operate?"; "Would a streamlining board approach be better for the organization."; and other questions that may need to be addressed and answers found to help this organization move forward.

Because we are at a critical juncture, at the Feb 8th meeting the BOD focused on the proposal previously addressed, since there was no IMMEDIATE way to offset the monthly \$5K shortfall of funds. At the meeting, each board member came prepared to make business decisions for the good of the Alamo PC organization, and voted to implement this cost cutting effort (PC Alamo online, until we can financially afford to reinstate things to the level previously enjoyed). Yes we may lose members because of this decision, but we would lose all the members if we don't? no organization, no membership. Whatever the BOD does at this point will not sit well with someone. But, I believe the majority of the membership will see that the BOD is trying to chart a course that is "best for the organization."

The Feb 8th BOD meeting lasted about 3 hours, as input from members and officers present was heard before a vote was taken. The BOD also agreed to meet weekly (Feb 15th, 22nd, and Mar 1st) before the next scheduled meeting on Mar 8th to activate many items for the long term good of this organization. I believe that each board member agrees that collectively, given time to implement actions to correct our current situation we can have the best organization around. We again ask for your help to "Make This Happen."

March Program

David Steward

On March 14th, the Alamo PC will be hosting a presentation by Office Systems Division of Microsoft. Ms NeKeta Argrow will be demonstrating the latest version of one of the most popular desktop publishing packages, Publisher 2003. Although part of the Office 2003 suite of products, Publisher can be used as a standalone part of your desktop.

From the website:

Publisher 2003 is a comprehensive solution for creating and publishing a wide variety of publications for desktop printing, commercial printing, e-mail distribution, or viewing on the Web.

So, if you are an Office user, or just want to see how using Office could improve your productivity at work and at home,

please make plans to attend this event. Come and learn from one of the best.

The General Meeting will be at the Crossroads Convention Center at 7:00 PM, and is open to all members and visitors. Of course, there will be some exciting door prizes for our members. Bring a friend. Seating will be first come, first served, so come early.



This time of year there is so much to do, nobody wants to be stuck in the kitchen laboring over a hot stove. The Geeky Gourmet presents this easy oven barbecued brisket which although it comes together over three days, takes very little actual labor.

3 Day Brisket

Day One: 6 – 8 lbs brisket

Tenderizer

4 Tablespoons Liquid Smoke

Sprinkle brisket with tenderizer and Liquid Smoke. Wrap tightly in heavy foil and refrigerate overnight.

Day Two: 4 Tablespoons brown sugar

1 teaspoon celery salt

1 teaspoon onion salt

1 teaspoon garlic salt

1 teaspoon paprika

1 teaspoon nutmeg

Mix ingredients together and sprinkle over brisket. Rewrap tightly and bake 1 hour at 300 degrees F. Loosen foil and bake at 200 degrees F. for a 5 to 6 hours.

Pour off brisket juice and refrigerate; reserve juice.

Day Three: Slice brisket very thin and pour sauce over. Heat in moderate oven until hot.

Sauce: ½ cup prepared barbecue sauce and 1 cup brisket juice.

Mix together.

Serve with your favorite side dish or make sandwiches. Finish this easy meal with the following easy dessert.

Brandied Peaches a la Mode

1 cup peach juice

1 teaspoon cinnamon

½ teaspoon nutmeg

8 canned peach halves

¼ cup brandy

Vanilla ice cream

Combine juice and spices in saucepan; bring to boil. Simmer 10 to 15 minutes. Pour in peach halves and heat until warm. Remove from heat and add brandy. Place peach halves in individual serving dishes and add scoop of ice cream. Spoon sauce

over top. Serve with plain cookies or pound cake. Yields 8 servings.

Remember to send in your favorite recipes to our e-mail address: <gg@alamopc.org>. We'll enter your name into a drawing for some interesting software and everybody can enjoy.



Significant Happenings...

John Gaddis, Education VP

Due to personal reasons, our Word Instructor, Joe Haggard, will not be able to continue teaching the Word Class. We all hope that he will be able to resume teaching in the future. In the mean time, Alamo PC needs a new Word instructor. If you, or someone you know, can volunteer to take this over, please call John Gaddis at 494-9449 at your earliest convenience.

Several years ago, Alamo PC was asked to offer a workshop to help Apconians get the much sought after Microsoft Certified System Engineer (MCSE) certification. We did not have a computer lab with the computers needed to offer the workshop. Tom Hodges offered his space and equipment but he was told we needed a leader. He said, "I will also be the leader". In effect, he made us an offer we could not refuse and for several years we trained members to become MCSE certified. Many of them have become leaders in the computer consulting and repair of personal computers. For the cost of one or two years

dues, a member could obtain a certification which would cost them \$8,000 - \$10,000 elsewhere.

We now have a renewed interest in members qualifying for the MCSE and newer Microsoft A+ certification. Microsoft certification is practically required in order to obtain a job in the computer industry today. MCSE certification is required to design, setup, install and maintain MS based server/workstation based computer networks. A+ certification is required in order to do computer repair. The study groups would be for those interested in taking the Microsoft tests and obtaining certification for the first time.

Members who are interested in obtaining either of these certifications should pre-register with Linda Bianchi at the Learning Center, 736-0700. Those applying will be notified when the class is formed. A+ is expected to start no later than the early May. MCSE could start earlier when we have a leader.

Alamo PC has been under increasing financial pressure from several areas for

some time. Membership in computer user groups around the country has been dropping for several years. Some people say it is because the programs have more on line help than they had in the '80s and early 90's when user groups were in their hay days. Some say it is because more information is available on the Internet. Whatever it is, Alamo PC is feeling the pinch.

Our membership has dropped significantly in the last several years. Our first move to Crossroads Mall and the burden of decorating a new office space and paying rent for the first time in its history was a big hit. Within two years we were told that we must move to another location in the mall or out. If we chose to stay in the mall, there would be a significant remodeling cost and increase in the rent.

All of this has made your organization have to start charging a nominal fee for many of the classes which were included in the annual membership. Your Board of Directors hopes that you will understand that it is making needed changes in the area of education in order to get us back in a stronger financial position.

Senior Comp Schedule

Bill Hudson, Senior Comp Instructor

Senior Comp Spring Schedule of Classes

Basic Introduction to Windows - covers topics for those absolute beginners on computers

Andy Roca and Donna Dudley
Wednesdays 10am -12pm
March 16 - April 20

Introduction To Windows (formerly Beginning Windows) - covers the fundamentals of using a computer

Don Robinson
Mondays 1pm -3pm
Mar 28 - May 2

Introduction To Windows (formerly Beginning Windows) - covers the fundamentals of using a computer

Audrey Henkin
Tuesdays 1:30pm -3:30pm
Mar 15 - April 19

Introduction To Microsoft Word - covers all the tips and tricks to use your Microsoft Word Program

Mary Lou Daugherty
Wednesdays 1pm - 3pm
March 16 - April 20

World Wide Web and E-mail

Receive pictures of your grandchildren & let your fingers do the walking through the vast world of the Internet

Bill Hudson
Tuesdays 10am - 12pm
Mar 29 - May 3

Greeting Card Class with Print Shop 15 learn to do greeting cards and personal business cards

Jane Montgomery
Wednesdays 1pm - 3pm
Mar 30 - May 4

Senior Comp Practice Lab

Open to Senior Comp Students Only
Joe Gentry and Sarah Thomas
Every Thursday 9am -12pm

Classes meet for six two-hour sessions.

Pre-registration is required Cost \$60.00 (class materials included); \$40 to repeat a class

Senior Comp classes are specifically designed to assist Adults (age 45 or older) to learn how to effectively use their computers.

Senior Comp is a nonprofit with eight years of proven success.

This schedule is subject to change. Please check with the Alamo PC Registrar at 210-736-0700.



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 Sorry, these special offers are not subject to any other discounts or coupons. Prices subject to change without notice.

Senior Comp Notes

Bill Hudson, Senior Comp Instructor

Why Seniorcomp? Or Do We Need Courses Especially for Seniors?

The Seniorcomp staff sometimes discuss the continuing need for our program. We've noted how the computer literacy of seniors has increased since we started the program in November 1995. In our initial class, none of the students had their own computer. Halfway between then and now, about half the students had a computer, with most of those owning hand-me-downs from their children, who were upgrading to more powerful PCs. Now, when we ask, every senior in our classes say they own a computer and most bought them new. That's some change in just a few years!

With that change in mind, I thought it might be interesting to review the thinking that went into starting Seniorcomp, with an eye to determining whether the issues are still relevant. Several studies available in November 1995 listed "characteristics" of older learners that guided our course construction. These studies stated that:

- Older adults as learners require more time to perform learning tasks and more opportunity to practice new skills. Also, retention is improved if practice immediately follows instruction.
- Older adults are voluntary learners. They have clearer, more immediate, and concrete goals for their learning efforts.
- Older adults often have difficulty seeing and hearing.
- Seniors tend to respond to changes in the environment at a slower rate as they age.
- Generally, recall diminishes with age in contrast with recognition, which remains largely unaffected by age.

The characteristics listed above led to a number of considerations for our initial classes. For example, anxiety reduction was a priority. The research studies demonstrated that "the impact of automation upon the personal and

private lives of our older adults or elderly citizenry has caused them to fear computers and automation." Our classes began with demonstrations of how difficult it is to damage a computer. Nowadays, this anxiety is much less of a factor, given the greater number of computer owners among seniors and their familiarity with the machines.

However, anxiety reduction is probably one of the few senior characteristics that have become less relevant to our program. The early studies indicated that since older adults require more time for learning, class sessions could not be too content intensive. The same material presented to a younger audience in four, two-hour sessions, might be more effective presented in five or even six sessions to seniors. For the most part, this concern still holds and we present our material in six, two-hour sessions.

Also, although "lectures, filmstrips, and guest speakers are tolerated, older adults learn best when they are actively involved." Hands-on activities and immediately practicing each discrete block of information before moving on to the next one will pay off when teaching seniors. This concern still holds and Seniorcomp instructors try to provide ample opportunity for active learning. I'm probably our worst teacher in this regard, but I do try.

One study noted, "An elderly person may have slower response times because of aging's effects on the central nervous system. You may have to repeat things, so be sensitive to his feelings of frustration. Use short sessions and present only one topic at a time." Since short-term memory is often a problem with the elderly, instructors should give them more time to comprehend the information, and the instructors should consider repeating demonstrations several times. This is still good advice.

The early studies led to other procedural considerations. Instructors should provide "an abridged version" of the infor-

mation required to perform each task in the form of a condensed synopsis of material to be learned, outlines, abstracts, or other devices that summarize and integrate the information for the senior students. These class handouts should essentially repeat verbal instruction and classroom demonstrations. We continue to provide textbooks and/or handouts for all our classes.

Because older adults have more immediate personal learning goals, there is little room for theory and background information in teaching the older adult. This was a lesson I had to learn early and it still holds. After only a few classes, I relegated descriptions of computer hardware to appendices in our handouts. Seniors still just want to know what time it is; they aren't too interested in a lesson on building the watch.

Finally, a classroom for seniors must meet certain physical requirements. A greater proportion of older adults are disabled, perhaps even requiring wheelchair access to the classroom and desks. Most people's eyesight deteriorates with age, and impaired vision could also impact learning.

Classroom presentations should use large print on whiteboard or computer screens close to the students. Hearing also commonly deteriorates with age. "The ability to discriminate high-frequency sounds diminishes around age 50 and declines greatly after age 65."

The instructors should speak clearly, slowly, and loudly enough to be heard easily by all. They should try to face the audience as much as possible so the students can watch his mouth. Use of an instructor microphone feeding directly to speakers at each computer station is a good technique and one we have been able to implement for SeniorComp classes.

Again, most of these factors are still applicable and continue to be reason enough for special, senior-focused courses like Seniorcomp.

Joey Crum

By Clarke Bird, Alamo PC

During the 16 years that Joey Crum was a member of Alamo PC Organization, he never attended a presentation at a General Meeting. He never attended a class at our Learning Center. The only member benefit he used was the old Alamo PC BBS and reading PC Alamo magazine from cover to cover. You see, Joey had muscular dystrophy. According to Tom Crum, Joey's father, Joey had been bed-ridden and on a ventilator for the past 20 years.

Despite his handicap, Joey was an avid computer user and in fact, was given a Meritorious Service Award by Alamo PC in 1999 as a "volunteer who steadfastly worked for the benefit of the organization for a minimum of five years". According to Linda Bianchi, former Board member and current Registrar of the organization, Joey did a number of graphics and menus for the old BBS.

His father says Joey loved the chat room activity of the old BBS and was an enthusiastic surfer of the Internet to do research. Joey used voice recognition software to write messages, compose poems and surf the Internet. "He had to verbally spell each letter of a message. He was a real inspiration to me," Crum said.

Albert Flores, former president of Alamo PC, recalled a visit with two other active members to meet Joey. "He was unable to move from the neck down and had to labor to speak. Still



Photo by Alex Flores

Tom Crum, Alex Flores and Joey Crum

his mind was working, alert and he understood everything. He was a very nice guy – an unforgettable young man." said Flores.

Joey Crum finally succumbed to muscular dystrophy last September at the age of 35. His courage, perseverance and contributions to Alamo PC will be remembered.

The Doctor Is In

See page 34 for a review of Dr. Is In

Bring your sick computer in to have it fixed good as new. Just sign at the front desk when you arrive. We do all types of repair work including hardware and software installations. We will tune your system, get rid of viruses, spyware and just about anything that is wrong. We have limited hardware and software available at the club. We provide information and instruction while we're fixing your computer. Just bring your main CPU and any software that may be giving you problems, including your Windows 98, or XP, etc., disk. If in doubt, throw it in

a bag and bring it along. If you are having a problem with a device, e.g., a printer or scanner, etc., bring the device and all cables and software that you have. The clinic is free but we shamelessly encourage donations. These donations not only help the club keep the doors open, but allows the Doctors to buy much needed equipment and software to assist patients. We do require that you be a club member and that you stay with the system while we make the repairs. We do our best to see everyone who has signed up.

Contact: Gary Grieve 210-492-5066

When: Every Friday 9 a.m. to noon

Where: The Alamo PC Organization Learning Center - Lab 3 (a waiting area is available)

Technical Rating: Be able to bring your PC at least to the CrossRoads Mall underground parking lot, preferably to the Learning Center



From the Deals Guy

Bob (The Cheapskate) Click, Greater Orlando Computer Users Group

This column is written to make user group members aware of special offers or freebies I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of any products, no matter how enthused I might sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click <Bobclick@mindspring.com>. Visit my Web site at <<http://www.dealsguy.com>> for past columns and some interesting articles.

The two announcements below look like interesting products, but I have not tried either one.

* Tax Time

I forgot to remind you previously about the free version of Tax Act for doing your Federal income tax as well as state tax. Visit <<http://www.taxactsoftware.com>>. You can download a program FREE to calculate your Federal Income tax. This is the third year I have played with it and while there are a few things I would like to see improved, you can't beat the price. There is also a pay-version, which I use, for \$12.95 that is well worth the price since it gives you one free E-tax filing. The pay version will import last year's data into the new version, which saves a lot of time. You can also do your tax right on the Tax Act Web site if you prefer. All in all, Tax Act is a good deal.

You can also do your tax right on the IRS's own official Web site. I have not tried it, but Ira Wilsker wrote an excellent article on that and if it is not in your newsletter, check the APCUG Web site. I've seen other free options for doing your own income tax calculation, but I don't have that info handy.

Don't forget that AARP has hard working volunteers who will do your tax FREE if its not too complicated, such as if you have rental homes or apartments. Check with your local AARP chapter for the times and places. If you are unsure about whether they will do yours, take it to them and ask. The worst they can do is say "sorry."

*Media Catalog Studio Announcement

This was sent to me in November of 2004. They offer a 15% user group discount. Check their Web site for more information.

"Catalog and classify your media collection easy!"

November 10, 2004 ManiacTools Releases Media Catalog Studio 1.7

"Media Catalog Studio is a handy software application that classifies and tracks media files on hard-drives, floppies, external drives, CDs, DVDs and other stor-

age media. Importantly, the information about the media files does not need to be entered manually. The program automatically detects MP3, WMA, APE, OGG, WAV, AVI, WMV, MPEG, Video and Audio CD files and inputs this information inside a database. Moreover, the software comes with CDDDB support, an online database that exports information about songs (Title, Artist, Album, Year) directly from Internet.

"Media Catalog Studio has received over a dozen awards for its usability, including the prestigious Five Cows rating at Tucows.Com, and Editor's Pick at MyMusicTools.com. The program is translated in all major European languages. A free version of Media Catalog Studio Lite 1.7 is available now; <<http://www.maniactools.com>>. The freeware Lite version supports up to 5 disks in database. An upgrade to a Pro version costs \$24.95 US Dollars/Euros for individuals and \$34.95 US Dollars/Euros for businesses and organizations. We offer a 15% discount to members of your user group. The discount coupon code is 4567841341 and is redeemable at <http://www.ManiacTools.com/soft/media_catalog_studio/discount.shtml>. If you have any questions, please contact Alex Pavlenko at <press@maniactools.com>.

Company Website

<<http://www.maniactools.com>>

Download

<http://www.maniactools.com/media_catalog_studio.exe>

*Here is an announcement for Fontonizer

I received this announcement in November of 2004 and they offer a 15% discount to user group members.

"Our company, Fast Reports Inc., would like to announce the release of Fontonizer for Windows 95/98/ME/NT/2000/XP. To get 15% discount for Fontonizer use Coupon Code 'UserGroupPR-FO' on register here: <<https://secure.element5.com/shareit/checkout.html?productid=168090>>.

"Fontonizer is making big waves in web-design and publishing industries. While an average PC has about one hundred different fonts installed - marketers, designers, publishers, editors and print professionals often have collections with 5000 different fonts or more. With so many fonts, only very experienced professionals can match font name with its appearance. But Fontonizer is not merely a font viewer, though it comes with this function built-in. Fontonizer is a font organizer.

"With Fontonizer, any professional can easily classify fonts. First, one creates categories - like "Business Letter Body", "Groovy and Hip", "Classy", "Headlines", "Attention Grabbers", "Exotic", "Fine print", "Comments and footnotes", "Hand written", "Miscellaneous". Then, fonts are "placed" in these categories, so they can be easily located when necessary. The best thing about Fontonizer is that it works with fonts that aren't currently installed on a PC. In fact, it works with fonts that are stored not only on hard-drive, but CDs, DVDs, flash-drives and External Drives.

"Finally, Fontonizer comes with even more functions font professionals need. For example, the program performs installation /deletion /restoration of the deleted fonts. Plus, Fontonizer is capable of displaying "symbol table" of any font, even if it was deleted. With Fontonizer, professionals can experiment not only with fonts and sizes, but backgrounds as well. Fontonizer is distributed electronically over the Internet; a free demo version is available at <<http://www.fontonizer.com/>> for evaluation.

The price of a single license is \$29 US Dollars for a single copy.

Company Website

<<http://www.fontonizer.com/>>

Download:

<<http://www.fontutilities.com/download/fo100.zip>>

Buy Link:

<<http://fontutilities.com/order.htm>>



Internet Sales Tax - Revisited

John Brewer, Computer Club of Oklahoma City

John Brewer practices law in Oklahoma City, is a member of the Governor's and Legislative Task Force for E-Commerce, and enjoys issues relating to eBusiness and cyberspace.

Some are wondering about the issue of taxing sales on the Internet? The controversy that surrounds this topic has not disappeared; it is simply simmering on the back burner.

The federal law regarding Internet taxes expired on November 1, 2003. The issue receded into limbo after that date. On December 3, 2004, President Bush signed new legislation regarding this issue.

The Internet Tax Non-Discrimination Act passed by the House of Representatives in 2003 would have made the ban permanent. But the version adopted by the Senate and signed by President Bush on December 3 limits the ban to 3 years. The final version clarifies that the ban applies to all Internet access whether provided over telephone, cable or DSL. It also prohibits telephone companies from avoiding state taxes on long distances services when the long distance traffic is provided as Voice over Internet Protocol. States that have been charging sales taxes on Internet services (some prior to the original federal ban in 1998) can continue to charge them for 4 more years under this legislation. This new law does not alter the current ban on state sales tax collection for online sales of goods.

The Commerce clause in the U.S. Constitution, as interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court, limits the ability of State governments to impose sales tax on interstate commerce. The exception occurs when the selling vendor has a physical presence in the State where the purchaser resides. This physical presence is called "nexus." Thus Wal-Mart (with a nexus practically everywhere) has to collect sales tax and remit it to the revenue division of the State where the purchaser resides (point of delivery). Amazon with a physical presence in only a handful of States only has to collect sales tax for sales delivered to those States.

This duty of the vendor to collect sales tax does not avoid the responsibility for the purchaser to pay the tax in his/her home State. The tax that is imposed by the home State is generally called a "use" tax. However, enforcement of the use tax is difficult and few individuals pay the

tax. Payment by commercial customers is more frequent.

It is reported that there are 7,500 different sales taxing formulas that exist within the United States. No other country relies on the sales tax to fund local and State governments to the degree that exists within the United States. Generally, the sale tax is imposed on the sale of goods although, in some States, the sale of certain services is also included.

In order to plug this hole in the revenue stream, the National Governor's Association has been diligently working towards a solution that would satisfy the requirements of the U.S. Constitution. This solution is called the Streamlined Sales Tax Project (SSTP). It sounds like a project by Boeing but it is far from that.

The SSTP is a multi-state effort to develop a simplified sales tax collection system for all types of commerce, including Internet and traditional transactions. Most businesses and taxpayers responsible for sales and use taxes will be affected by this effort, which has been underway since March of 2000. More and more state tax authorities are beginning to enact provisions proposed by the project. The provisions will affect all types of businesses and all modes of selling.

According to reports, as of August 1, 2004, twenty-one States had enacted legislation that substantially conforms to the SSTP (although reports seem to differ on the exact number). However, collection of sales tax by vendors in those States is still voluntary. The SSTP does not mandate that a vendor in a SSTP-implementing State must collect sales tax on an interstate sale.

Thus, the focus is on Congress and how it will respond to the SSTP initiative. There is legislation pending in Congress that will implement the SSTP.

Senators Byron Dorgan (D-SD) and Michael Enzi (R-WY) introduced legislation in 2003 titled the "Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Act," that would authorize States to enter into an Interstate Sales Tax Compact and to adopt a stream-

lined sales tax system; i.e., Senate Bill 1736. There is a companion bill in the House of Representatives. The House bill is H.R. 3184. The languages of the Senate and House bills are identical. The sponsors for the House bill are Ernest Istook (R-OK) and William Delahunt (D-MA). It is important to note that the sponsors are bi-partisan.

Once 10 states representing at least 20 percent of the population in States with sales taxes have joined the Compact, the bill would authorize those states to require companies with more than \$5 million in annual gross sales to collect and remit sales taxes on remote sales (i.e., Internet and mail order sales).

Authority of interstate compacts is found in the U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 10. Section 10 allows states to form interstate compacts, provided they are approved in identical form by each state involved and then by Congress. Compacts enable participating states to enact policies in a particular area (such as tax collection from out-of-state companies) that would otherwise violate the Constitution's interstate commerce clause. The Northeast Interstate Dairy Compact is one example.

This debate has not gone away and is slowly progressing to some sort of resolution. It will be interesting to see the end result.

Reprinted from February 2005 eMonitor.

STUDY GROUPS

Call the Learning Center for schedule information 736-0700 or see page 59-61.



Who's to Blame?

Russell James, Alamo PC

Russell is General Manager at BJ Associates of San Antonio, The Laptop Specialist. They are an authorized service center for Toshiba and Sony systems. They are the laptop specialist and also handle system builds and parts for desktops. They take care of any IBM compatible hardware or software problem that you have. e-mail <russell@bjassociates.com> or visit them on the web at <<http://bjassociates.com>>.

Preventive Maintenance

Who should we blame for the many attacks on our computer systems? We have viruses that try to attack us through e-mail, Web pages and through our networks. Some of them will even try to get into our systems through some port on our system that we had no idea was there much less open. There are three main groups that can be considered as we try to stop this nonsense.

There is the end user, Microsoft and the hackers that are all being touted as the culprits in this war of code on the Internet. An argument could be made for any one of these groups and all should be held responsible to some degree. Let's take a look at each of the groups and you can make up your own mind.

Microsoft and the other software vendor should be expected to put out a product that is secure and able to withstand the blows that the hackers throw at them. The problem with this thought is that it is going to be virtually impossible to produce a software product that is totally free from vulnerabilities. If they could, they would, but we would never have any new products because it would take so long for them to develop and write the code.

Even though the product on the market is not as secure as it can be from the beginning, I think that Microsoft and most of the other vendors are doing the most that can be expected of them. The Windows Update site has gotten to the point that it is easy enough for end users to navigate without to much fear. There are some improvements that could be made and it seems that they are coming online at an admirable pace. It has been a long while since there has been a problem with one of the updates crashing computers instead of helping the situation. You can get to the site free of charge and the activeX component will analyze your software to determine what updates you need. The updates are listed in three separate categories with the Critical Updates and Service Packs being the ones that need to be installed.

The next group that is being blamed is the end users. They play a big part in keeping the viruses out of their own systems by the amount of time that they spend updating their software. With the Windows Update site and the notification programs that are available for download, there is no reason to allow your system to be without one of the security updates that will stop the breaches of your computer programs. There is a program that is available for download from the Windows Update site under the heading of Critical Updates and Service Packs called the Windows Critical Update Notification.

This is one item that should be running on startup on every Windows 98 machine out there. It will connect to the Microsoft Windows Update site whenever you are connected to the Internet and check for Critical Updates. If one is available you will get a notification on your screen telling you about the update. You click on the button and the Windows Update site appears. All you need to do is agree to the License Agreement and the download and installation will proceed. Windows XP users have this installed as a default with the only difference being that the notification comes in the form of an icon in the taskbar and the update is downloaded before you are notified. You click on the icon and you can start the install right away without going to the update site.

The last group is the hackers and they are the ones that should be held accountable for their misdeeds. The hackers are the ones that are writing the viruses and they are the ones that should be hung from their toenails at first light. They are the kids with too much time on their hands that spend weeks on end writing code that will infiltrate

our systems through a vulnerability that has been revealed in a chat room or on the Microsoft Windows update site. Most of the active exploits that are out on the net do not come to full strength until many months after the patch has been released.

There is no way that all the blame can be laid on the end users and Microsoft. We all know that the hackers are the true criminals and the end users and Microsoft are innocent victims. The problem is that you can't leave the keys in the ignition and then get mad when your car gets stolen. Microsoft is doing what it can to combat the situation and you as the end user need to do your part to use the tools that they are giving us to help to alleviate this problem. People who allow their systems to get infected with viruses because of the lack of virus protection or not installing updates as needed need to have their license for the Internet Superhighway suspended until they can bring their software back up to an acceptable level that does not endanger the rest of us.

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Scrabble for the PDA

K. Joyce McDonald, Alamo PC

Joyce is a contract technical writer specializing in Internet/intranet infrastructure documentation. Visit her Internet domains at <www.jbmcdonaldandson.com> and <www.taichi-interactive.com>. E-mail her at <kjoycemcdonald@satx.rr.com>.

Take a game initially conceived in 1931 and developed in its current incarnation in 1948. Code the process and put the resulting product on a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA). The resulting product is the game of Scrabble for the Palm and the most amazing thing about this electronic game is that an old linguistic board game lends itself to computerization as if it were designed for it. Computerization actually improves on the old board game with speed and instant dictionary lookup and access to players of varying skill levels. Scrabble is available for download at Handango <www.handango.com> for about \$20.

I grew up playing Scrabble. It is one of the few games I continued to play into adulthood. Every couple of years I fly to Indianapolis to visit my friend Sheryl. My favorite month to visit is February, when we are assured a small snow if not a blizzard. During those chilly evenings, we sit by the fire and play endless games of Scrabble. I admit that my PDA as a Scrabble opponent is not as companionable as Sheryl. For one, it looks askance on four-letter words that are not said in polite company, even if Mr. Webster documented them and Sheryl never challenged them. My PDA also lacks Sheryl's sense of humor. I'm sure that Sheryl would have no trouble accepting the word "elfpies" especially during the holiday season.

The PDA game differs from the board game in that my opponent challenges every word I use. When playing the board game with humans, your opponent can challenge a word; however, if the opponent is wrong, and the word does indeed exist, the opponent loses his/her turn. If your opponent is right, meaning there is no such word, you lose your turn. Since the PDA game has the official Scrabble Dictionary coded into it, every move is tested against the dictionary. If you try to use an unofficial word, the system stops you. You have the option to override the injunction, but the warning screen is usually enough to take the wind out of your sails.

After you get over your original annoyance with the dictionary, though, it does serve to make the game more interesting. Sometimes I just start laying down letters testing

to see if the dictionary will accept them as a word. I use the "Score" button to see if it is an acceptable word, and even more important, how many points it is worth. This way, I can test word without making a commitment. Once I decide on a move, I tap the "Done" button to register the move.

Another departure from the board game is that the PDA distributes the tiles. This must be the reason why I often end up with all vowels or all consonants. All consonants are especially a bummer, especially if it is your turn to open the game. I recently had to open the game with the word "pht."

If my tiles are real dogs, I can exchange them. When I do, I usually get worse tiles. Although my digital opponent trades tiles at least once every game, I have never seen the benefit of this strategy. For one, you can't make any points on a turn where all you exchange tiles. Second, if you exchange high value tiles (like J, Q or Z) your opponent can get them and use them on a triple-point square. Nevertheless, the more expert the opponent, the more likely it will invest at least one turn on tile exchange. Perhaps I am not experienced enough to see why.

Although I don't often speak of my Scrabble opponent in complimentary terms, I do have options with regards to how it behaves. When setting up a new game, I can define one to three opponents and select their characteristics. If I choose a computerized opponent, I can define its skill level: beginner, novice, intermediate or expert. If I choose a human opponent, I can opt for us both to use the same device or to beam moves back and forth from two devices via bluetooth or infrared.

I can also choose to establish either a friendly or tournament rule set. If "Friendly" I can opt to allow the "Suggest Move" feature, a handy learning tool that asks the PDA to find a move for you. It is particularly useful for opening and ending moves, but it isn't foolproof. I have often made a word that gained more points than the one the PDA suggested. What it did teach me is that a two-letter word can rack up a lot of points if used in a parallel play.

A parallel play is one in which you stack a word on top of (or below) another (in-

stead of the standard perpendicular cross-word-type move.) In a parallel move, each of the letters makes a new word when combined with the letter above or below. In this case, you get points for each of the words you make.

When I first began to play PDA Scrabble, I set my computerized opponent at the "expert" level. I don't know if I ever won a game at this level. What I did learn is that Scrabble is as much a game of strategy as it is a test of linguistic prowess. The object of the game, my opponent taught me, was to capitalize on the colored squares: light and dark blue for double and triple letter scores, pink and red for double and triple word scores. You get a fifty-point bonus if you use all your tiles in a single move. Usually you can't. In this case, a three- or four-letter word, strategically placed, especially in parallel mode, can bring you a bigger score than a seven-letter word placed on ordinary squares.

The "Game" menu allows you to view past games and scores and to see a "score summary" that tells you how many points you and your opponent(s) made on a move-by-move basis. The "View" menu allows you to view the "tile distribution," the number of game tiles that exist for each letter, the "board legend," which tells you the point values of the colored squares, and "look up word," which allows you to see the definition of any of the words used in the current game.

The "Options" menu allows you to beam the Scrabble game or the dictionary to another device via infrared or bluetooth. You can also turn on and off such features as the automatic dictionary display, the timer or the feature that saves previous games. The only thing the menus lack that I would really like to see is an "undo move" feature that allows me to rethink some of the stupid moves I make.

If you decide to get Scrabble, I recommend that you also purchase "Dictionary to Go" (\$9.95) from the same site. This well-presented dictionary is useful to double-check some of the Scrabble dictionary's decisions, improve your spelling or cheat your digital opponent.



Does your ISP offer the Protection you Need?

Bruce Cramer, Alamo PC

A+, Network+, Microsoft Certified Professional (Windows XP). Bruce is retired from the Army. He is the owner/operator of PC Pro Computer Services <www.pcpro4u.com> where he provides in-home/on-site computer services. He is a regular at the Doctors Is In on Friday mornings, at the Learning Center and has never met a piece of malware that he couldn't get rid of. Bruce can be reached by e-mail at <service@pcpro4u.com>. See his ad for PC Pro Computer Services on page 21.

Broadband ISPs or Internet service providers such as SBC, Time Warner and EarthLink have been providing some form of protection from online threats for a little over a year.

But how well do they actually protect you from the ITDs (Internet Transmitted Diseases). Some times I feel like I'm back in the Army with all these acronyms. Most ISPs started out by providing an email spam filtering service. This is great but far from the protection you need from the wild wild web these days. Within the last year ISPs have recognized the ever growing threat and have introduced more protection. Here we will take a look at what some of the ISPs have to offer.

I will be discussing the broadband providers since that are where most of the problems are because these connections are always on. However, don't let your guard down simply because you have dialup.

With the introduction of version 9.0 AOL teamed up with Aluria Software, makers of Spyware Eliminator, to provide its customers with spyware protection simply called "AOL Spyware Protection." AOL will even let people not using AOL's service download and use AOL Spyware Protection.

AOL Spyware Protection automatically scans a member's computer once a week. Members can also manually initiate a spyware/adware scan by clicking on the AOL Spyware Protection icon on the member's desktop, or they can set up automatic spyware scans at more regular intervals, such as daily/weekly or at a specific day and time.

The database for AOL Spyware Protection is regularly updated to help members find and disable the latest spyware and adware applications. There was much to do about AOL's teaming up with Aluria as its antispysware warrior because Aluria claimed one of its other partners, Whenu was not spyware. Aluria took

whenu out of its spyware definitions and its software would not detect it during a scan. However whenu is a well known distributor of adware and is on the list of many antispysware sites. No, this is not good for AOL.

EarthLink, the nations third largest ISP was the first to provide spyware protection late in 2003 when it began providing Spyware Blocker to their customers through their TotalAccess Software. EarthLink recently upgraded Spyware Blocker which now lets you schedule spyware scans and it performs real time scans much like most antivirus software does.

You can go to the EarthLink site and they will do a quick scan of your computer for spyware. Quick was an understatement, It took less than 10 seconds to scan my computer which has a 160 Gigabyte hard drive. I have seen many instances where computers that have Spy Blocker did not catch common spyware.

SBC Yahoo partnered with Pest Patrol and released its contender, Anti-Spy in August of last year. At initial release there was some controversy about Anti-Spy not detecting some spyware that it had a financial interest in. Anti-Spy scans your computer for possibly unwanted software, and allows you to review, remove, or add to the whitelist any applications that are found. If you accidentally delete something important, in many cases, SBC Yahoo! Anti-Spy can restore it.

Roadrunner offers free access to anti-virus and firewall protection as well as pop-up blockers provided by EZ Trust. I was surprised that you cannot find this offer on the local Roadrunner site - <www.satx.rr.com>. At the local site they tell you about other companies that offer free software such as AVG's antivirus software and Zone Alarms firewall but do not address the issue of spyware or offer any software directly from their local site.

You have to go to the National site located at <www.rr.com> and type antivirus into the search bar at the top of the page, click the search button and you are off on your



way to downloading the EZ Trust suite of tools that includes a firewall, antivirus and spam blocker. You will need your Roadrunner user ID and password before you can begin the download.

Grande makes no mention of any online protection software offers to its customers.

Guadalupe Valley Communications, or GVC, offers a spam blocker to its customers called Postini. This free service will store any suspected spam and keep it on GVC's servers for 14 days. GVC cautions its customers that this is not a substitute for an antivirus application.

Two things to remember. First off I would not hold it against an ISP if it did not offer some free online protection software. Most of the tools the ISPs are offering simply aren't enough for the job and are mere window dressing for its customers and potential customers.

Secondly, when it comes down to it you are your own best watchdog. I recommend downloading a reputable antispysware application such as Spybot-S&D from <security.kolla.de> or Ad-Aware from <www.lavasoftusa.com/software/adaware>. While there are many programs out there these two are well known dependable and free. It is recommended that you run more than one program because unfortunately spyware or malware removal, unlike computer viruses, has not been nailed down to a science.

Stay tuned, next month I will review some of the top dogs in spyware removal.



Freeware & Shareware

Tim Hoke, Alamo PC

Tim is a long-time member of Alamo PC and writer for the PC Alamode. He also served on the board of directors for many years.

Customize the look and feel of Windows 2000 or Windows XP with WindowBlinds 4.5. It can change virtually every aspect of the Windows GUI such as title bars, push buttons, the Start bar, radio buttons, scrollbars and more. WindowBlinds is what Microsoft, nVidia, ATI, Nintendo, and many other companies use to provide additional visual styles for Windows users. Try it for yourself. WindowBlinds also supports changing toolbar icons, progress animations, and much more. WindowBlind 4.5 is faster enables users to have semi-transparent pieces in the Start-menu. You'll find it at <<http://www.stardock.com/>> to try for free, then pay \$20 to keep it.

RecordSmart 4.0 is home?use personal health record (PHR) management software. You can use it to record your family's doctor visits, drugs, immunization, and health conditions. No longer worry you'll lose paper medical records. Now you can scan and store your medical records, prescriptions, and lab reports permanently. Ever worry you'll miss diagnosis when out of town or in emergency? Now you can print a pocket-size emergency medical card and carry it in your wallet. You can also print a complete medical record and bring it with you while traveling. Do you worry about your aging parents' health? You can use RecordSmart to help your parents manage their health. You can help them record their medical conditions so they can communicate with their doctors more effectively. Why, you can even use RecordSmart to keep a permanent record of your child's growth history, doctor visits, allergies, and immunization records. You can also use it to record you and your spouse's health baseline. You can try it for free up to 30 days. After that you'll pay a hefty \$39.00 to keep it. Find this one at <www.zdnet.com> in the downloads area.

WeightWare 3.0.3 is a program for understanding your current weight, setting appropriate weight goals, and tracking your progress as your weight changes. Using WeightWare's built-in data analysis tools you can see how your weight is changing, and get the information you need to modify your eating and exercise

habits to achieve your goals. Version 3.0.3 features improvements in calendar, and new graphs. New features included: Exercise Tracking, and Calendar Notes. It's free to try and \$35 to keep at <<http://www.shastasoftware.com/>>.

Ever wondered why you have to use antispyware tools to regularly scan, detect, and clean up your computer? The fact is that spyware tools don't always stop your PC from becoming infected, firewalls can't block virus infiltration, and antivirus software is always one step behind the latest threats, leaving PCs open to new, previously unseen attacks.

Prevx Home 2.0 provides a critical last line of defense, protecting your computer against sophisticated, new attacks all other security measures fail to stop. This powerful, host-intrusion-prevention software will protect against malicious intrusions capable of crashing your system, stealing confidential information, tracking your browsing behavior, hijacking your PC, and slowing down your Internet connection. Prevx Home works by protecting the areas of your computer most likely to be targeted during an attack, including your PC's memory, file system, operating system, registry, and programs. Potentially harmful behavior is blocked and you are notified via a pop-up alert asking if you want to allow or deny the activity. If you're uncertain what to do, you can get advice by accessing our online database of alerts, where you will be able to view the percentage of fellow users who've previously allowed or denied the security event you're experiencing. Prevx Home stops spyware attacks that change the IE default home page and install malicious browser helper objects or toolbars. It also stops the installation and execution of in-memory/buffer overflow attacks, tactics commonly used by Internet worms and for hack attacks. Intrusion-prevention technology of this type and strength has only previously been available to major enterprises. Prevx is the first and only organization to provide it, free of charge, to the consumer. It's free at <<http://www.prevx.com/>>.

With TV 1.0 Now you can watch hundreds (300+) of live worldwide TV chan-

nels on your PC, free of charge. Anyone can find their own favorite stations on TV. Music, news, educational, sports, and shopping channels together with TV in English, Spanish, German, and Arabic sections. You may also browse world TV by regions or by country name. No configurations or settings are needed. The best part is that it is free at <<http://www.tvexe.com/>>.

Internet Explorer 6 SP1 is the next update to the Internet Explorer technologies representing general improvements to Internet Explorer 6. Internet Explorer 6 SP1 includes a well-tested collection of updates that focuses on a variety of customer-reported concerns with Internet Explorer 6. Internet Explorer 6 SP1 includes all prior patches and updates as well as enhancements to security and reliability. Microsoft recommends customers review Internet Explorer 6 SP1 documentation and determine whether to install Internet Explorer 6 SP1.

The Download Now link will deliver a 479K setup file called ie6setup.exe to your computer. Remain connected to the Internet and double-click the file to begin installation. During setup, you can choose the type of installation you prefer, and Internet Explorer downloads only the files you need to complete the installation. Total download size for a typical installation is approximately 25MB. However, because setup downloads only those files that are necessary for your computer, this size can vary between 11MB and 75MB. It is free from Microsoft at <<http://www.microsoft.com/>>.

FREE CLASSES

Call the Learning Center for schedule information 736-0700 or see page 59-61.

Windows XP, Part VI

Bill Beverley, Alamo PC

Bill is retired military and an intermediate computer enthusiast who has been an APCO member for six years. He has contributed for the past five years.



If you're thinking about getting a new computer or upgrading one, then note the following decisions. If getting WinXP, you'll have to decide on either the Home or Professional versions.

Home goes for about \$200, while Professional is \$100 more. The Professional edition is a superset of Home. Every feature in WinXP Home is included in WinXP Professional. However, many of Professional's features were designed for a network administrator. But, there are also benefits to the home computer user or small business.

Let's suppose you are at home and want to do some work on your office computer. If your office computer had WinXP Professional, you could use Remote Desktop to access it. It allows full use of the office computer to check e-mail, work on files, and swap files with others just as if you're there.

All of this work is done over the Internet. It performs best with broadband, cable, or DSL. It will also work well with a dial-up account because only data from the mouse, keyboard, and monitor are being transmitted between computers. You can do all this from a computer running WinXP Home. The computer you're using to access the remote machine is called the "client."

Home comes with the client software installed on it. You can use any computer as the client as long as it is running Win 95 or any later Windows version. You simply have to install the client software from an XP Professional disk. But the remote computer, the one you're accessing, must have XP Professional.

Another advantage of XP Professional is encryption. Many laptops are stolen or lost. With WinXP Professional, you can encrypt files and folders. When you add files or subfolders, they will automatically be encrypted. Encryption can even be used on removable media, such as a CD or floppy disk.

If you're running a small business, you may need WinXP Professional. You can network computers using WinXP Home. It offers workgroup networking, in which every computer is on the same level.

Access can be restricted on an individual basis. In other words, Bill can give John access to his files, and deny access to Judy. Virtually everything is done on the individual computer level. This setup works best with only a few computers.

If you have more than 10 computers, you should set up a domain. This option allows you to manage permissions and other access issues from a server. Keeping track of passwords is much easier as computers are added to the domain. If you're a home user or have a small business, WinXP Home will be sufficient.

But, if you need to access that home computer from elsewhere or know that data encryption is a requirement important for your needs, then you should get WinXP Professional. If you already have WinXP Home or later find need for additional tools available only in WinXP Professional, then upgrade to this operating system.

Floppy Disk Maintenance

Here is good advice for computer users who have emergency boot floppies and rescue disks that Windows and other programs instruct us to have on hand. Floppies can accumulate bad sectors in a matter of weeks. To confirm that they still work, check them every few months by booting from the floppy or by evaluating them with a disk-scanning tool. In Win98/Me, select Start, Programs, Accessories, System Tools, ScanDisk. In Win2000/XP, choose Start, My Computer, right-click the floppy drive, select Properties, and click Tools, Check Now.

Folders

To open folders with a single click, open a folder, click Tools, and select Folder Options. Under "Click items as follows," select "Single click to open an item," and click Apply, OK.

Highlighting

There's a way to highlight and print sections of a document that are not consecutive. For instance, if you want to highlight the first paragraph, but want to omit the second paragraph, and then highlight the third one. Windows has an easy way of doing this task.

Highlight the first paragraph. Now, hold down the Ctrl key and highlight the third paragraph. That will leave both paragraphs highlighted. Continue on, highlighting just the paragraphs you need for your work. You can use the same procedure to highlight individual words or phrases. When you print, you have the printer select only the highlighted portions by clicking File, Print, Selection, OK.

System Restore

System Restore is present in WinXP/Me. It saves a picture of Windows' system state and can be used to go back in time if something makes Windows unstable. However, saving those pictures takes a lot of space. If you need to make room on your hard drive, delete old restore points. There are a few ways to perform this function.

In WinXP, click Start, Control Panel, double-click System, select the System Restore tab, click Settings, and move the slider to 1,000 MB (1 gigabyte).

In WinMe, click Start, Settings, Control Panel, double-click System, select the Performance tab, click File System, select the Hard Disk tab, and move the slider to 500 MB. Windows will delete old restore points to accommodate the new limits. That should solve your problem permanently.

You can also turn System Restore off, which isn't recommended because it takes away protection for your files. To disable it in WinXP, click Start, Control Panel, double-click System, select the System Restore tab, and click "Turn off System Restore on all drives." In WinMe, click Start, Settings, Control Panel, double-click System, select the Performance tab, click File System, select the Troubleshooting tab, click Disable System Restore, click Apply, Close, Close.

and click Yes when asked if you want to restart the computer.

Finally departing from the operating system tips, the best way to share digital photos is to publish an album on the Web instead of e-mailing individual photos. That way you can e-mail family and friends the web site so they can view them at leisure without the hassle of downloading individual pictures.

Most Internet Service Providers give you some server space and the tools to upload Web pages easily. PowerPoint has a command that lets you create a photo album. It includes tools that let you jazz up your photos with frames, layout effects, and captions. Best of all, you can quickly save everything in HTML format for publishing on the Web.

The command is Insert, Picture, New Photo Album. PowerPoint displays the Photo Album dialog box, where you can click to add photos. If the image files are already on your hard drive, click the File, Disk button. Locate your pictures in the Insert New Pictures dialog box (Ctrl-click to select more than one) and click Insert.

To insert pictures directly from your camera or scanner, click the Scanner, Camera button instead. In the "Insert Picture from Scanner or Camera" dialog box, choose your device from the Device drop-down list and select Custom Insert.

The next dialog box will look slightly different, depending upon your device. For example, when inserting pictures directly from a camera, chose "Get Pictures from Camera." In the Get Camera Pictures dialog box, click the picture name in the left pane and click "Add to List" to move the picture to the right pane.

Next click OK, then Close to return to the Photo Album dialog box. Back in the Photo Album dialog box, you'll see your pictures' file names displayed in the "Pictures in album" list. Click any file name to see the image in the Preview window. At this point, if happy with the pictures, you could click the Create button to tell PowerPoint to create the slide show. PowerPoint will allow you to create frames, captions, text slides, layout changes, and photo enhancements.

The New Text Box button in the Photo Album dialog box lets you add a text slide to your photo album at any point. Click that button to insert the slide, then edit it later, just as you would any other PowerPoint text slide. Beneath the "Pictures in album" and Preview panes, you'll find a row of buttons. To move any picture in the album, click it, and then click

the up or down arrow. To remove a picture (or a text slide), select its name in the list and click the Remove button.

The next three sets of buttons let you rotate, adjust the contrast of a photo, or adjust the brightness of a photo. To experiment with these settings, just click any photo's name in the "Pictures in album" list and click the appropriate button. You can watch the effects in the Preview window.

At the bottom of the Photo Album dialog box, in the Album Layout section, you'll find a couple of great tools: "Picture layout" and "Frame shape." Both of these commands display a mockup of your layout in the space to the right. The "Picture layout" drop-down list lets you choose how many pictures will appear on each Web page for: one, two, or four pictures per page.

You can also determine whether a photo will include a title. Titles will make it easier for friends/family to browse, so it's best to include them. In the "Frame shape" list, you can choose from seven frame options.

To enhance your layout, you can choose a PowerPoint design template using the Design Template's Browse button. There are other fancy touches which are available to you. For example, in the middle of the Photo Album dialog box, you'll see two more options: They are "Captions below ALL pictures" and "ALL pictures black and white."

If choosing a layout other than "Fit to slide," you can include captions beneath all your photos. The black-and-white option works only in PowerPoint. On the Web, color photos will appear in color. It's a good option if you don't plan to publish your photos on the Web.

Once you're satisfied with your photo album, click the Create button and PowerPoint creates the album and closes the Photo Album dialog box. At this point edit your album as you would any other

PowerPoint presentation. To change text, such as captions and titles, just click the text and edit. You can click a picture and drag to reposition it or click one of the corner "circles" and drag to resize the picture.

PowerPoint includes a title slide at the beginning of your album. Click the slide's text to change the message. To preview your photo album, choose File, Web Page Preview. If you're not happy with it, select Format, Photo Album to return to the Photo Album dialog box and make changes.

All that's left is to save your album in HTML format and post it online by choosing File, Save as Web Page. When the Save As dialog box opens, click the Change Title button, give the album a logical title, and click OK. Next, type a file name (no spaces) in the File Name text box and be sure to use the HTM or HTML extension, e.g. "name.htm," and click Save.

PowerPoint creates an HTML photo album, along with a folder of all the graphics you'll need for your album. You must upload both the HTML file and the accompanying folder to your Web site to preclude problems with your photo album.

 <p>Computer Services Bruce Cramer, A+ Certified Computer Technician</p>	<h2>Computer Problems?</h2>	
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Microsoft CRM

Larry Lentz, MCSE+I & W2K, MCDBA, MCSA: Messaging W2K3

Larry Lentz is an MCSE + Internet, an MCSE on Windows 2000, a Microsoft Certified Database Administrator, an MCSA: Messaging on Windows Server 2003 and Exchange 2003, and Past President of Alamo PC. He is the owner of Lentz Computer Services, www.LentzComputer.Net, which he founded in 1989. Larry has over 22 years as a computer professional and specializes in Microsoft Small Business Server. He chairs the MCSE Advanced SIG affectionately called 'The Geeks' and the Alamo PC Small Business Server Special Interest Group (SBS SIG). Larry is available for presentations on technology for small business and can be reached via e-mail at Larry@LentzComputer.Net

When I started Lentz Computer Services in 1989, I wrote a simple customer database in Paradox. It had basic contact information and the ability to add related records to keep a history of calls and meetings, etc.

Then a friend suggested I look at ACT!. I did and dumped my Paradox program. I considered myself the San Antonio ACT! guru for many years until I was introduced to GoldMine. I then became a GoldMine Certified Professional and continued to use that until recently when I switched to Microsoft's CRM (Customer Relationship Management).

Microsoft has been putting a big push behind its CRM recently, especially in the Small Business Server arena. Plus I found when I switched to a Pocket PC from a Palm Pilot, that GoldMine's support for that platform was somewhat lacking. Microsoft's release of its free CRM Mobile pushed me over the edge.

MS CRM is not the kind of product that a novice is likely to purchase off the shelf and install over the weekend. It requires some level of expertise in Windows Server 2003, Active Directory, IIS 6.0 (Microsoft's web server), Exchange Server 2003, and MS SQL Server 2000.

Knowledge of ISA Server is also nice to have. These are all components of the Small Business Server. One will need to call upon the talents of a technology specialist to implement CRM. The software requires a server component plus licenses for each user. Therefore it is better suited for a workgroup of say 4 or 5 users, up to a few hundred, rather than a single user.

There are three user interfaces. primary, fully functional web browser (figure 1), Sales for Outlook (figure 2), and CRM Mobile (figure 3) designed for the Pocket PC.

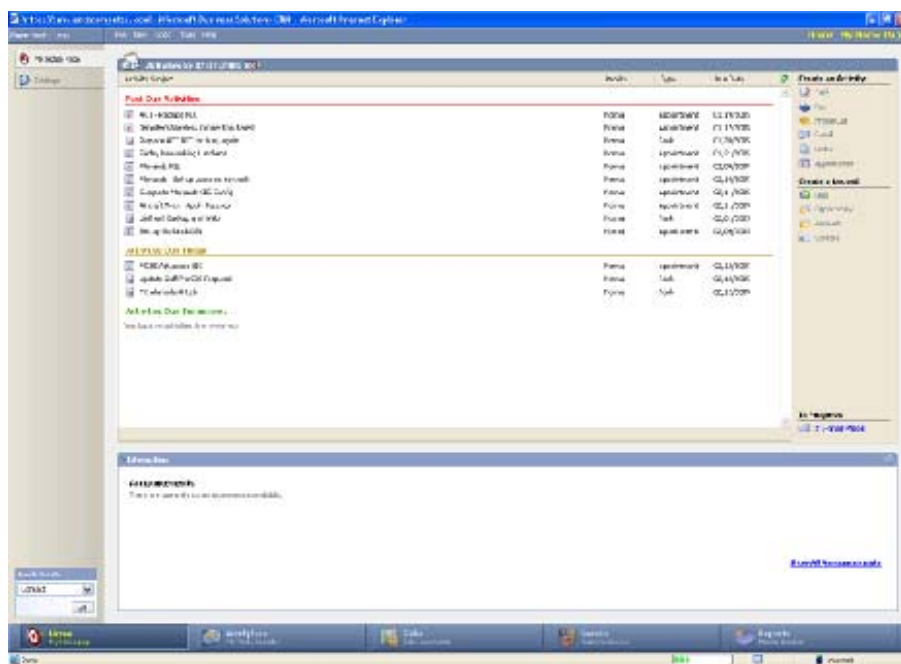


Figure 1 - CRM Home

The web browser allows access to all licensed features and can be accessed across the Internet if desired. This could be a benefit to companies with branch offices or telecommuters working from home. Of course you'll want to set it up as a secured site.

The Sales for Outlook (SfO) has two purposes. First for those workers who use Outlook a lot in their daily routine, SfO provides a familiar home for CRM. It also allows for tighter integration between CRM and Outlook. Secondly for the road warriors, it allows them to take CRM with them and sync up any changes upon their return.

CRM Mobile is for guys like me who love their Pocket PCs (I'm writing this on my PPC with a notebook sitting beside me for reference and web search). The CRM Mobile allows me to sync up a subset of the database and take it with me for very fast and easy access throughout the day. The home screen shows at a glance the

activities I have scheduled for the day. As I go about my daily rounds, I use this to record my actual arrival and departing times and notes about what I did while I was there. I can add new contacts and activities which can be linked to existing or newly created activities and contacts. I can link a meeting to multiple attendees which I find handy. All this is synchronized back to the server when I hook back up.

MS CRM actually has two separate modules (and a couple of levels of each). These are Sales and Service. As you might imagine, Sales is intended to facilitate the sales process. In addition to recording contact information and schedules, CRM is designed to step a new lead through the sales process.

Perhaps you have a Marketing department (or person) who generates leads and enters the lead into the system, as a Lead. Once the lead is qualified, it can be appropriately assigned to a sales person to follow up and move the Lead to an Op-

portunity and eventually converting it to an account and a satisfied customer. Along the way, dollar values may be assigned to opportunities along with a probability of success. These can be used by the Sales Manager, or individual sales person, to make a valid forecast of anticipated revenues. Actual sales may be tracked as Quotes are converted to Orders, which are turned into Invoices which are tracked until they are paid in full.

The Service module is designed for companies that provide help desk and customer service support. Requests or issues from customers are entered and tracked as Cases. Activities are related to their respective cases and the time spent accumulated when the case is Resolved. Cases can be related to service Contracts and a Knowledge Base can be maintained to assist in resolving future cases.

As mentioned earlier, MS CRM requires Exchange Server. CRM uses this in two ways; sending and receiving. CRM can send e-mail to individual contacts, or do an e-mail merge to a number of contacts. Out going messages generated by CRM include a GUID (Globally Unique Identifier) in the Subject line such as CRM:{5494B101-2AC8-464F-980D-1A9F0B8F1696}:MRC. Wow! That's a mouth full.

When the recipient responds to such a message, the E-mail Router on the server routes it to the appropriate user in CRM. I find this a very useful feature. Such e-mails show up in your CRM 'home page' so they are readily recognizable and available. Queues for e-mail, such as Info or Sales, etc. can also be configured so all users can see them and respond to them as appropriate. It is also possible

to configure CRM to capture all incoming e-mail. However, I'd prefer to keep the junk out.

Although I really like MS CRM, it is an early version (1.2) and I miss a lot of the creature features I grew used to in GoldMine such as automatic formatting of phone numbers, city/state fill in based on zip code, etc. But I am getting used to it and coming up with workarounds for features like Groups. But I am viewing it less as a Contact Manager, and more as the Customer Relationship Management tool it's designed to be.

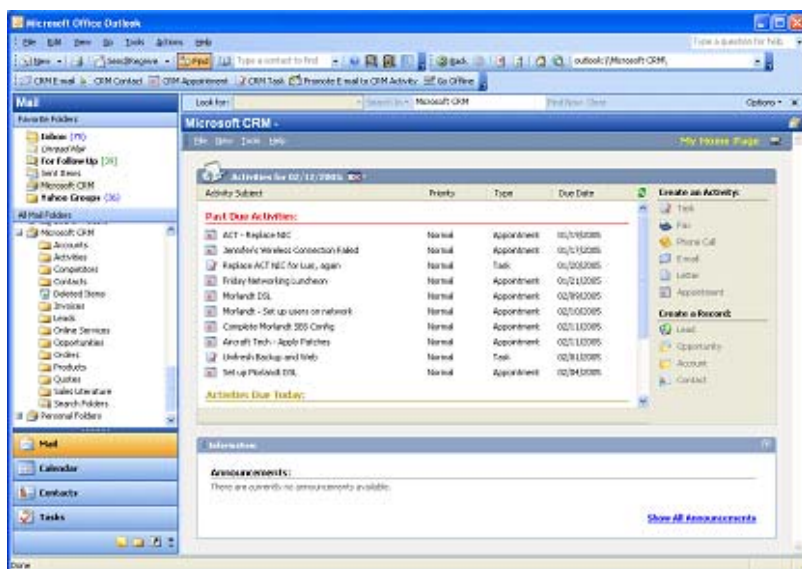


Figure 2 - Sales for Outlook



Figure 3

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Free iPod?

Shane Hicks, (certified certifiable)

Shane just wants to know if this works or not. E-mail him at <shane@vpwn.com>.

This is NOT spam! Do NOT delete! (or No such thing as a FREE iPod?)

Okay, have you received the SPAM message about receiving a FREE iPod just by signing up for a "special offer" and referring some friends? I've gotten so many I delete the messages without reading them. So I was absolutely shocked when a technically savvy, privacy paranoid friend of mine endorsed this program!

His company hosts the site <www.freeipods.com> and he feels they're legitimate. The site received coverage in Wired magazine. He claims his boss participated and is now showing off his new iPod around the office.

Why are they giving away iPods?

It's all about marketing. With the implementation of pop-up blockers, advertisers are looking for new ways to gain access to Internet users. This marketing company has sponsors placing advertising offers on their web site. The company gets a finder's fee for everyone that successfully completes one of the offers. They use a portion of these assets to purchase and ship the iPods.

Should we be skeptical?

Always. I e-mailed my friend to tell him this is a classic pyramid scheme. He balked at the use of those words. He quickly informed me that a pyramid scheme, as defined by law, is one on which there is never any actual product traded hands. It generates cash solely on referrals.

I responded: if you gain something by bringing two or more people up under you, and they gain something by bringing two or more people under them, it's a freaking pyramid. It may be legal in the set up, but it's still a pyramid.

I use the word scheme, rather than scam, because (as with my friend's boss) reports are that some have met the requirements, getting five other people to sign up, and have indeed re-

ceived a free iPod. Of course, there are also reports that some people haven't received them or have been disqualified even though they think they met the requirements.

Can this work?

Maybe. The marketing company makes this offer based on the referral fees. To stay in business, they have to take more from referrals than they pay out. They can do this as long as the qualifying customer pool is limited.

Those who get in early, with friends that also qualify, should get their iPods. However, over time, those likely to participate will have already participated. This makes it harder for those farther down to find enough people to earn their reward. When someone accepts an offer but doesn't qualify for the reward, the marketing company takes the referral fee and delivers nothing.

What are the risks to participants?

You might get a lot of spam. Several on the Internet reported getting hammered with spam after signing up. I wonder how they tell if they're getting more spam than they were already getting anyway. According to my friend, his boss claims there's no increase (but he may have a really good spam blocker!) You can mitigate this risk by creating a throw-away account somewhere and use it only to catch the spam generated by offers like this.

Is this a bad program to participate in?

I've got mixed feelings. Some participants who can't find five friends to qualify for these offers create their own spam on message boards and newsgroups. In the process, they add to the growing problem that is spam.

But you could be one of the lucky ones. Just be aware of the odds not being in your favor. One site I went to <http://www.homepage.net/pyramidcalculator/> allows you to compute your chances of success in a pyramid scheme. It clearly shows those that join late are hard pressed to get their reward.

The Experiment:

I've decided to see if I can help my friend get his iPod. So here goes...

Step One: I went to Road Runner and created a dummy account to catch spam. There have been problems with users that try to use FREE e-mail accounts, such as Hotmail. I assume this problem occurs due to the marketing company having problems validating certain types of e-mail accounts.

Step Two: I clicked on the link (with my friend's reference number) to access the marketing web site. I entered my dummy mail account and a password. I then entered my name, address, and birthday.

Step Three: I clicked NO to 11 different offers for on-line schools, career programs, and health insurance supplements.

Step Four: I reviewed the offers. I can see where the qualification pool might be extremely limited. Most of the offers are for credit cards and services I already use, or for services I have absolutely no interest in.

They tell you that if you've disabled cookies, you may not get credit for participating in your offer. Also, I've been warned to view the site using a PC with the latest version of Internet Explorer. Other browsers, like Firefox and Opera, have known problems. You'll most likely want to allow pop-ups while you're completing your offer, as well.

I decided to go for the GM card to get approved online. When I selected that option, I got the following pop-up message detailing the requirements for the offer: Apply for, get online approval, accept to receive and activate the GM card. You will be credited within 1-2 weeks. As expected, when I returned to the main site, it said I hadn't completed my offer. We'll have to wait for that.

Step Five: Make qualified referrals.

UPDATE:

Well, it's been about a week since I started this. I got an e-mail from my

friend saying that my account appeared as a qualified referral in his account. He needs one more referral to get his iPod.

I then got this message from the site:

“Congratulations, you just received credit for completing the GM Card offer! To get your free iPod, be sure to get 5 friends to sign up and complete offers using your unique referral link:

<<http://www.freeiPods.com/default.aspx?referrer=apc1234@austin.rr.com>>

Thanks,
The freeiPods.com team”

If you want to play along, feel free. I don’t plan to e-mail this link to anyone, so the receipt of an iPod will most likely be determined by whether I get 5 qualified

referrals from this article! The GM Card seems pretty harmless and easy to qualify for. Just type the link above into your Internet Explorer browser.

I’ll post in a future article whether the iPod Experiment works or not, or if the spam e-mail address gets hammered with junk.

The Switcher



...the ongoing tale of a Man and his Mac More Free Software

Shane’s a Mac user. Assist in his quest to learn OS X — e-mail him at <mac@vpwn.com>.

This month, I’m going to provide a list of the latest free software and some hints on how to use it. I hope you enjoy them!

IPMenu 1.1 <www.loopware.com>

If your Mac’s IP address changes, it’s often difficult (unless you know UNIX) to figure out what it is. This can cause problems when establishing files shares or when connecting to the Internet or to another computer for LAN gaming. You need to be able to determine what your IP address is at a particular time. IPMenu helps do this. It sits in the menu bar and gives you instant access to your Mac’s IP address. If your Mac is behind a router, IPMenu will give you both the local (internal) and Internet (external) IP addresses. IPMenu can even send you (or anyone) an e-mail message when your external IP address changes. This comes in handy if you’re using your Mac as a server.

R-Name 3

<find.macworld.com/0071>

R-Name is a utility that does one thing: rename multiple files quickly and easily. This can come in handy if you have a large number of files, say all the picture files from your last vacation. You can replace multiple characters in file names, add or remove characters from the beginning or end of file names, change the names case, and more. If you know UNIX, you can even use regular expressions for pattern-matching replacement. R-Name also provides a New Name Preview, which shows you exactly how each file will be renamed before you rename anything.

MemoryStick 1.3

<www.tidbits.com/matt/>

While OS X handles memory a lot better than OS 9, you can still tax your system by running too many applications at once. Even a poorly executed program can grab memory and refuse to let it go. Sometimes, you may just not have enough physical RAM to do what you want. This can result in slow performance, spinning beach balls, and excessive virtual memory swap files that can take up significant space on your hard drive. MemoryStick helps keep an eye on your memory allocation by providing a small graphical display of your Mac’s RAM usage broken down into Wired, Active, Inactive, and Free categories. It can also notify you when new virtual memory swap files are created and when pageouts, or when memory contents is swapped between actual RAM and your hard drive, happen. MemoryStick is a great diagnostic for figuring out when you have too many applications open, or when it’s time to buy more RAM.

Fetch Art

<find.macworld.com/0045>

Fetch Art for iTunes is a small program that will fetch album art for one or more songs using Amazon’s XML interface, allow you to preview the art that was found, and add the art you want to iTunes. The program is controlled through the iTunes Script menu. Once it’s installed, album art can be downloaded by selecting one or more songs in iTunes and choosing “Fetch Art” from the Script menu. If Fetch Art doesn’t do enough for you, there are other artwork related utilities located at <www.macilife.com/itunes>.

More iTunes Cover Art Hints...

iTunes’s ability to attach cover art to your songs is cool, but did you know that it actually embeds the graphics into the actual music file on your hard drive? If you

have much of a collection (I know people with over 200GB of stored music!), those covers can take up a significant amount of space on the hard drive. For example, a single song that was purchased from the iTunes Music Store was reduced from 3.8MB with the picture to 3.3MB without the picture. Even if this half a megabyte doesn’t seem like much up front, think about how much space several hundred songs can chew up. If you’ve got a huge 160GB hard drive, like those in the G5s, you might not care. But if you’re trying to fit as much music as you can on 5GB iPod, you might think twice.

You can remove the artwork by opening the Get Info windows for each song in iTunes, clicking on the Artwork tab, clicking on the album cover, and then clicking on Delete and OK. This can take awhile, and there is a quicker solution.

Select a number of songs at once from the iTunes library. Select the Get Info window for the multiple files. iTunes will ask whether you’re sure you want to edit information for multiple songs (unless you’ve disabled this warning). Click on Yes. In the resulting dialog box, the Artwork field is empty. To remove the artwork from all the selected songs at once, simply put a check mark in the box next to the Artwork field, and click on OK. Although it appears you are enabling artwork, you’re actually enabling blank artwork—in other words, deleting it.

If you miss the album artwork, you can use an application such as Clutter from Sprote Rsrch. This program is FREE and can be found at <www.sprote.com>. It can display artwork on the desktop without adding it to your music files.



Tables

Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Susan Ives is a former president of Alamo PC. She archives these columns on her Web site, www.susanives.com/. If you visit, you can cut-and-paste the code instead of retyping it from the magazine – the ultimate in lazy Webmastering!

If you've spent just five minutes looking at the World Wide Web you've seen tables in action. Tables are intended to organize data – like a spreadsheet organizes data – but are most commonly used to specify the layout of a Web page.

The basic of tables are deceptively easy, but, as you will see, a lot can go wrong, or at least not the way you expected. I'm going to spend the next few months deconstructing tables. This month, we'll address the lines.

From a design standpoint, I find lines useful if I am presenting tightly packed tabular data: a phone list, for example. Lines help keep connected information together. Generally, however, lines look fussy and if you are using tables for layout they are better omitted.

The tag pair for a table is `<TABLE>``</TABLE>`. This in and of itself doesn't do anything except alert the Web browser to render everything between the tags in a tabular format.

Next come `<TR>``</TR>`. This indicates a table ROW.

Finally, there will be `<TD>``</TD>`. This is table DATA. Anything placed

within this tag is what will show up on the screen.

Figure 1 shows a typical use for a table. Here is a slightly stripped down coding for this table:

```
<TABLE border="4"><TR><TD>
ESCHER EYE (1946)<TD><TD></
TD></TR><TR><TD>
</font></TD><TD> In this piece,
Maurits Cornelis Escher (Dutch, 1898-
1972) has drawn his own eye, which was
greatly magnified by a convex shaving
mirror. In the center of his pupil is, Escher
teases, the one who watches us all.</
TD></TR></TABLE>
```

Let's deconstruct it.

I've added one parameter to the table tag – border – and specified that it be 4 pixels wide. This is the big black border around the outside of the table, properly called the external frame. The interior lines (technically called vertical and horizontal rules) are the default: they show up automatically if I specify a border size.

Most of the tables that are used for layout do not use a border tag at all: the table acts as an invisible grid. If I were to omit the border parameter all together – `<TABLE>` – or to specify that the border

should be zero – `<TABLE border="0">` – all of the lines will be removed. If I were to specify `<TABLE border="NONE">` the exterior frame will be eliminated but all of the interior rules will remain.

Here are some parameters that will help you determine where the lines appear:

FRAME: This attribute specifies which sides of the frame surrounding a table will be visible. The format is `<TABLE frame="vsides">`; figure 2 shows the results of using the `TABLE frame="vsides">` variable. The possible values are:

void: No sides. This is the default value.

above: The top side only.

below: The bottom side only.

hsides: The top and bottom sides only.

vsides: The right and left sides only.

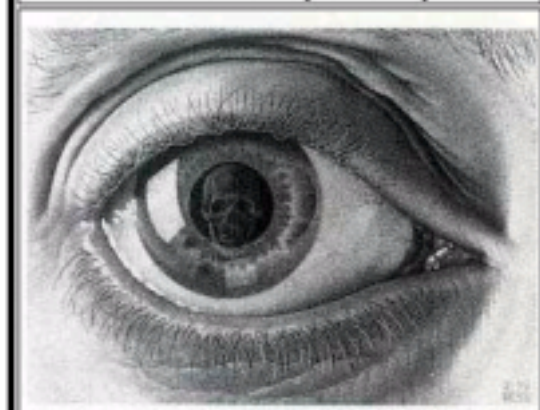
lhs: The left-hand side only.

rhs: The right-hand side only.

box: All four sides.

border: All four sides.

ESCHER EYE (1946)



In this piece, Maurits Cornelis Escher (Dutch, 1898-1972) has drawn his own eye, which was greatly magnified by a convex shaving mirror. In the center of his pupil is, Escher teases, the one who watches us all.

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

RULE: This attribute specifies which rules will appear between cells within a table. The format is `<TABLE rules="rows">`; figure 3 shows the results of using the `TABLE frame="rows">` variable. The possible values are:

none: No rules. This is the default value.

groups: Rules will appear between row groups.

rows: Rules will appear between rows only.

cols: Rules will appear between columns only.

all: Rules will appear between all rows and columns.

groups: Rules will appear between row groups (we'll discuss groups at a later time!)

You'll notice that the exterior frame around figure 1, the Escher Eye, is flat and black while the exterior frame around figure 2 has a 3D, shaded look. I find the 3D effect old-fashioned and unappealing, but this is, alas, the default.

Here's a work-around:

```
<table border="5"bordercolor=
"#000000"bordercolorlight
=" # 0 0 0 0 0 0 "
bordercolordark="#000000">
```

If you deconstruct how the external frame is made, it is actually three shades of gray; a base color, a lighter color and a darker color. The coding above makes all of the shades the same color: black. This eliminates the 3D effect.

I hear your brain cells clicking. If you can make the border all black, could you make it red or blue? Of course you can! Just exchange the RGB code for black (000000) with the code for the color of your choice. Red would be FF0000. Chartreuse would be 7FFF00. Get a complete list of the color codes at www.keller.com/html-quickref/4a.html.

You can use these same variables within the `<TR>` and the `<TD>` tags, which will change the colors of the vertical and horizontal rules.

Look back at figure 1 and review the code for this table. You'll notice in the first table row specified in the first `<TD>` that `COLSPAN="2"`. This table has two columns and two rows. By specifying that the first data element, `<TD>`, in the first row, `<TR>`, spans two columns, I eliminate the horizontal rule that would normally appear in that top row. Figure 4 gives you an idea what it would look like without this refinement. Combining table rows (it works with columns too!) has additional advantages: I could center the "Escher Eye" text over both columns, for example.

Here's your assignment for this month. Copy the code below into Notepad:

```
<table border="5"><TR><TD><font
size=" + 3 ">ONE</font></
TD><TD><font size="+3">TWO</
font></TD></TR><TR><TD><font
size=" + 3 ">THREE</font></
TD><TD><font size="+3">FOUR</
font></TD></TR></TABLE>
```

I made the font sizes bigger so that you would have a table big enough to see the results. Next, play around with EVERY parameter. Eliminate interior rules. Change the colors. Expand the size. After a half hour you'll know more about lines that half of the world's Webmasters.

Tables are key to attractive Web design. In succeeding months we'll learn how to control the table size, about cell padding and cell spacing, how to nest tables, the secret of the transparent pixel, how to add color to tables: in fact, we'll turn into the Lazy Tablemaster for a while.

David's Essential Domains



Website Hosting Starting at \$3.95/month!

Economy	Deluxe	Business
\$3.95/mo.	\$8.95/mo.	\$29.95/mo.
50MB storage	1GB storage	2GB storage
1 GB transfer	15 GB transfer	30 GB transfer
50 e-mails	unlimited e-mails	unlimited e-mails

Domain Names

COMs starting at \$7.85!

FREE with every domain:

- FREE! Change of Registration
- FREE! Parked Page w/ Domain
- FREE! Domain Name Locking
- FREE! Status Alerts

Website Tonight

Click 'n build your site online, in minutes!

- Hosting is built in
- 5 Page Site - \$4.95/mo
- 10 Page Site - \$8.95/mo
- 20 Page Site - \$12.95/mo
- 100+ professional templates

SECURE SSL Certificates

Build trust, build confidence, and build your online business with a Secure SSL Certificate

TRAFFICBLAZER™

Prepare your site to the search engines and get

<http://www.davidsessentialdomains.com>



In Love with Layer Comps

Paul Vaughn, Alamo PC

Paul Vaughn is a freelance graphic artist, writer and web designer. He also writes the Mac Guy column in the Business section of the Sunday Express-News newspaper. If you would like to a specific topic addressed, email Paul Vaughn at < paulv@mac.com>.

Valentine's Day has just passed and I am once again reminded what a great tool Adobe Photoshop is and how much better it continues to get. Take one subtle feature found Photoshop CS – Layer Comps. This new tool extends the functionality of Photoshop's layers, letting you create multiple versions of your artwork without making multiple documents.

This month, I'll show you how you can use Layer Comps to get even more power from Photoshop. Unfortunately, this feature is not in Photoshop Elements, but if it seems like something you need you can add it to the list of reasons to invest in the professional version of the program. Layer Comps are also supported in Photoshop's sister program ImageReady.

I sat down to make my Valentine cards. I created my design in Photoshop, with each element on it's own layer. I added effects and ran a couple of filters until I was satisfied with the results. I then added the text "For Ruth, My One True Love", sized it and added an outer glow Layer Style (Fig. 1). This is all well and good, but I am fortunate enough to be blessed with more than one true love. So I turned to the Layer Comp feature to help out.

A Layer Comp saves the state of all of your Photoshop document's layers: layer visibility – whether they are on or off and what their opacity is, layer position, and layer appearance – whether a Layer Style has been applied and what compositing mode it is in. When you create a new Layer Comp (comp in this case is short for composition) you save the current state of the layers in your Photoshop document.

Once I had the first design the way I wanted it, I opened the Layer Comps palette (Window > Layer Comps) and clicked the Create New Layer Comp button at the bottom (it looks like a document) (Fig. 2). This brings up the New Layer Comp dialog box (Fig. 3). Here you need to fill out the name of the Layer Comp, what of the three op-



Figure 1

tions you want it to control and any comments you may have. Comments appear in the palette by clicking a dropdown triangle next to the Layer Comp's name.

This first Layer Comp, which I labeled 'Ruth', records the document as it now stands. If I make any changes to the document, I'll need to note that by clicking the Update Layer Comp button. At this point, I needed to start on my next design. I copied the text layer I had created, turned off the original one and changed the name in the text. I wanted the card to look a little different so I swapped the design elements on left for the ones on the right and changed the opacity settings of the heart layers. Once again, I created a new Layer Comp, naming this one 'Alaina' (Fig. 4).

You can toggle back and forth between the Layer Comps by clicking in the open square to the left of the Comp's name in the Layer Comps palette. Satisfied with the results, I pressed on to make my third card. Wanting it to look more like the first one, this time I selected the 'Ruth' Layer Comp and dragged it to the Create New Layer Comp button to make a duplicate.

Double-click the new comp to change the properties as needed; I renamed mine 'Heather'.

On this new comp, I changed the Layer Styles on the hearts (Layer > Layer Style), adding an Outer Glow and increasing the black Inner Glow. I finished by clicking the Update Layer Comp button.

You can cycle through the Layer Comps by clicking the arrow buttons at the bottom of the Layer Comps palette. If you want to only cycle through some of your Layer Comps, you can select them and then the arrow buttons will only cycle through the ones that are highlighted. You can delete a Layer Comp by dragging it to the Trash icon.

Note that at the top of the Layer Comps palette is a comp called Last Document State. Clicking the box next to this will return the document to the most recent version regardless of what Layer Comp you have selected.

There are times when you may see a caution icon next to one or more of your

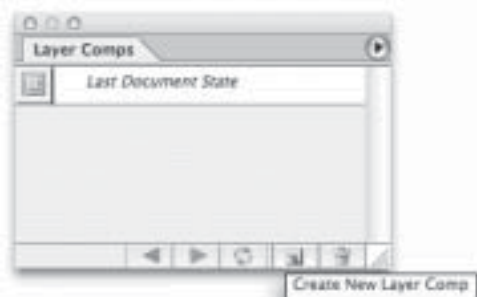


Figure 2

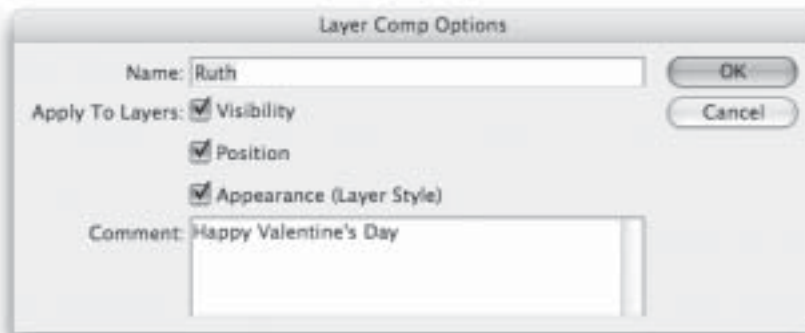


Figure 3

Layer Comps (Fig. 5). This happens when you delete a layer, convert a layer to the background or change the color mode of the document. When this occurs, you can either update the Layer Comp or right-click (control-click for one-button Macs) to clear the warning flag without changing the Layer Comp.

Now that all the Layer Comps are completed, I can export individual flattened files of each design for output. This is easily accomplished by selecting File > Scripts > Layer Comps to Files (Fig. 6). This script lets you select the file type and output options you want and then proceeds to duplicate and flatten your various compositions without altering your original Photoshop file. You can also find scripts here that will convert your Layer Comps to a multi-page PDF or a Web Photo Gallery. This is a brilliant way to share multiple design concepts with colleagues or clients...just email them a PDF file or a link to a web gallery.

As Adobe Photoshop continues to evolve, it is the little touches like the addition of Layer Comps that keep users excited about the program. This is my favorite new feature in Photoshop CS. I think I may be in love.



Figure 4

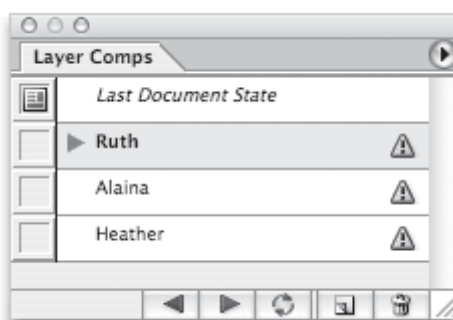


Figure 5

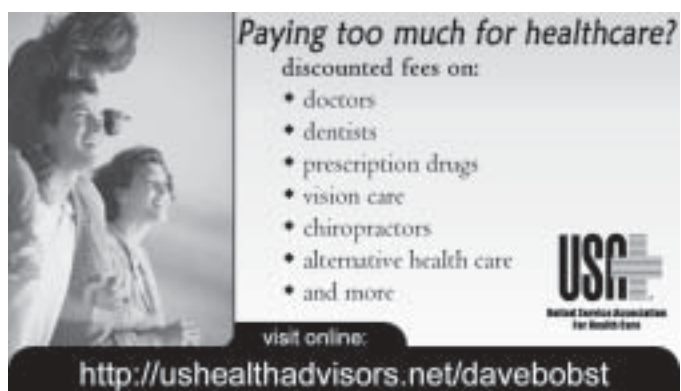


Figure 6



Windows Accessories “System Tools” Clipboard Viewer

Ron Ingraham, Space Coast PC User Group

Ron is a member of Space Coast PC Users Group. Instructions in this column were created on a Windows 98 system. e-mail him at <ringram728@earthlink.net>

Clicking on the icon pictured in figure 1 will open a window I'll show you later. Right now I need to explain what will appear when you open that window, and how the image gets there.

The ClipBoard is a temporary storage place for items you acquire via the copy command, like using the Print Screen key on your keyboard. This can be a variety of things, depending on what you're doing at the time.

Let's say you are on the Internet and are viewing an item of interest that you'd like to save. If you hit the Print Screen key, it will save the entire window just as it appears. For example, you're looking at the club website (you do look at the club website, don't you?) and see an interesting reference. If you hit the Print Screen key, the page you are viewing, the current window, will be placed on the ClipBoard.

I should stress that the image saved to the ClipBoard will be the entire screen. Now, if you open a program like Windows Paint, and click on Paste, in the Edit drop down menu, the image from the ClipBoard will be displayed. You may then save the file to a location of your choice, or print it directly. If an Active Window appears (Indicated by the default colored Title Bar at the top) you may capture just the Active Window by holding down the “Alt” key as you hit the “Print Screen” key.

Digressing even further, I should point out that should the image you saved still contain more information than you want, it is possible in some graphics programs to crop only that portion of the captured screen. The graphic in figure 1 was created in that fashion. When I followed the opening sequence, Start, Programs, Accessories, System Tools, and hovered the cursor over Clipboard Viewer, the entire screen was displayed. After pasting it to a suitable graphics program, in my case Irfanview, I was able to crop the image down to that portion.

I then saved it in that form for insertion into this article. Most of the

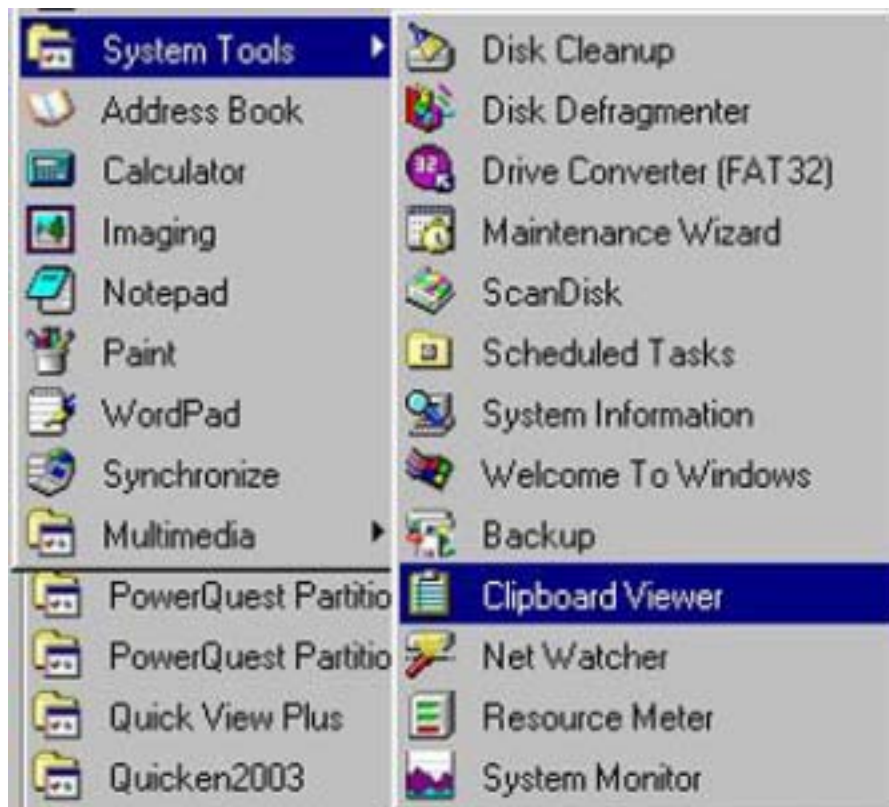


Figure 1

graphic clips you've seen in this series of articles were created in this fashion.

One point to keep in mind is that most flavors of Windows will allow only one item at a time in the Clipboard. It will remain there until Windows is shut down, or another item is captured. Until it is replaced, it may be pasted as often as you wish.

The Clipboard functions in Windows XP exactly as described. However, I have been unable to find any reference to a Clipboard or Viewer in that program. I have read that Microsoft Office XP has what is called a ClipBook Viewer, which contains a Clipboard viewer. ClipBook can hold up to 24 clips. As I understand it, the Clipboard still holds only one at a time, but each one may be saved to the ClipBook, from which it may be pasted by selection.

The only exception I have found to this in XP is that Microsoft Word XP will display the contents of the clipboard from an Office Clipboard item in the Edit drop-down menu. This version also allows 24 clips to stored, however as best as I can tell they may only be pasted into a Word document. Only the first one may be pasted into other programs. At least now those of you with Windows XP who've been wondering what happened to the Clipboard Viewer will know where to look.

The Print Screen key is not the only way to capture images to the Clipboard. Let's say you want to copy a paragraph or two from a document. It can be any document that you see on screen. If you select (highlight) the desired text or graphic you may then use the Edit “Cut” or “Copy” commands. This will place the selected item on the Clipboard. Once there you may use the Edit “Paste” command to place it in a new location. For example, I just se-

lected three sentences from above and copied them to the ClipBoard. I will now use the “Paste” command to place them just below here.

Let’s say you want to copy a paragraph or two from a document. It can be any document that you see on screen. If you select (highlight) the desired text or graphic you may then use the Edit “Cut” or “Copy” commands.

As you can see, it is an exact duplicate of that appearing above. I have changed it to bold text to make it stand out. This was not a result of the “paste” action. Note that I used the “Copy” command to capture this to the Clipboard. Had I wanted to shift things around in the paragraph for effect, I could have used the “Cut” command, which would have moved the text to the Clipboard, but also removed it from the initial location.

As is so often the case in Windows, there is another way to do this. After the text is selected, if you rightclick anywhere in the highlighted area, you will get a drop-down menu like figure 2.

Yours may not look exactly like this, but should have at least the top portion, with Cut, Copy, and Paste. The remaining items are related to the PageMaker program I’m working in. This is another example of using Irfanview to crop out just this menu from an entire screen.

So far, this entire discussion has had to do with how we get items onto the Clipboard. We haven’t actually used the Clipboard Viewer as it appears in the graphic on the first page in System Tools. If you don’t necessarily want to paste the image into a viewing program, you can just go to that menu item and click on it.

This will produce an image of whatever is on the Clipboard. For example, let’s look at the text I selected and captured figure 3. The image at top right (after some sizing adjustments to fit the space) is what you’d see. You notice that the text is all there, but not in the font or size of the original. Wherever you paste it, it will conform to the text in that document.

Now let’s consider capturing a picture. In order to get the picture of Kim Komando that I used with her column, I went to her website and rightclicked on her picture which is featured on the first page. This gave me a slightly different menu, shown in figure 4.

Notice that I had two options, Save Picture As or Copy. Copy allows you to Paste the exact picture, while the Save Picture As feature lets you place the picture in a desired location for editing if necessary.

In this case the picture could be saved either as a .bmp (bitmapped) image, or a .gif (Compuserve format) image. I elected to Save As, in .gif format. I was then able to open the file in Photoshop, resize it to the size I wanted for the Journal and save it as a .jpeg for compression. The same process will work for pictures on any site. Text should be treated just I showed you earlier, select the desired text, right click on it, and Copy.

That pretty well takes care of the discussion on Clipboard. Next time we’ll take a look at the remaining features in System Tools, Resource Meter and System Monitor. Net Watcher is mainly pertinent only for system administrators and won’t be covered in this series. From there we’ll move on to some of the remaining features under Accessories, such as the Calculator, Imaging, and NotePad.

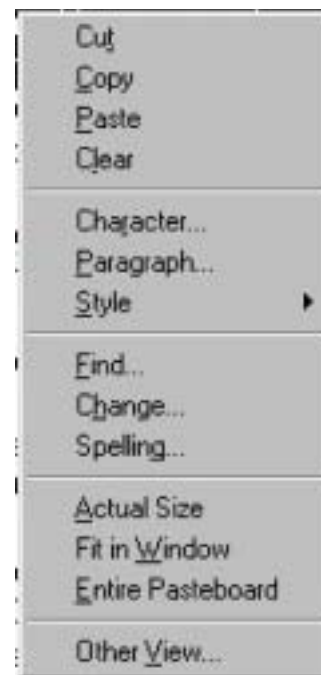


Figure 2

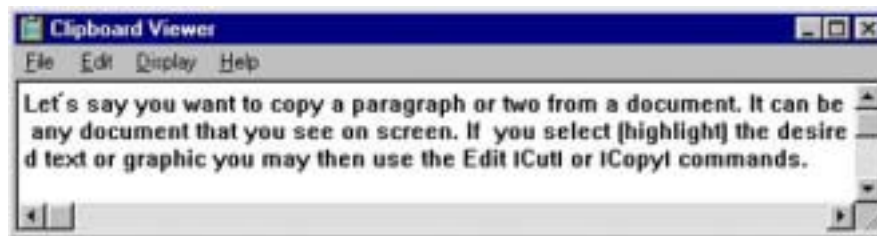


Figure 3



Figure 4

Ponderings

Meredith Poor

Front page news for San Antonio: Computer Bugs Cost City. Further details describe an ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system that has taken several years and millions of dollars to develop. Some aspects work, many don't, and supposedly the recently ex-city manager lost her job in part over the computer problems. While not part of this particular newspaper article, one can't help seeing some other difficulties with the city government, including serious declines in many of the parks and recreational facilities, an impossible flood control situation, and rising water and sewer fees.

The rationale for the system upgrade is, presumably, that older systems didn't communicate with each other and operated on obsolete hardware. Ronald Reagan's Grace Commission noticed, in the early 1980's, that the Army Corps of Engineers was still using IBM 1401s, a computer architecture that was made obsolete in 1963. What the City is running is a good question, but it isn't hard to imagine that some systems are 20 years old. One can imagine that a system designed in the mid 1980's ran on mainframes or more traditional minicomputers. The latter, of course, are no longer sold or supported in any form whatsoever.

If one looks at the City of San Antonio website, it indicates that the city boundaries now encompass about 500 square miles, which times 640 acres per square mile is roughly 320,000 acres. It furthermore denotes the population within these limits as 1.2 million. When one divides

320,000 by 1.2 million one gets about 4 people per acre. Since a typical house fits on 1/8th of an acre and houses two people, one gets the feeling that for every acre land in the city 1/4th is populated with residences. If one assumes that there is one square foot of business real estate for every square foot of residential real estate, one gets to 1/2 acre used per acre under administration. In short, half of San Antonio is either vacant, for sale, or for lease.

Obviously such real estate has to have services: water, sewer, power, natural gas, police and fire protection, and

street construction and maintenance. Pretty quickly the distance adds up: we have twice as much pipe underground as we need, and an emergency vehicle has to run though miles of vacant real estate to arrive at the scene. All of the vacant real estate creates opportunity for mischief, in particular graffiti and illegal dumping. Furthermore, all the impermeable cover (parking lots, buildings, and other paving) empties water into the creeks and drainage ditches, creating flood conditions that impact landowners and other municipalities miles downstream.

This illustrates where the problem starts: taxpayers and their respective local governments are overextended. Of course, this is always true: government as service provider has an enormous mandate. The fact that urban density in San Antonio is low isn't necessarily bad: obviously high urban density has its costs, particular in the development and support of mass transit services. Taxpaying citizens, however, are facing exponentially rising costs as the city diffuses into the countryside.

The people running the city, then, are forever chasing money pots, whether in the form of property taxes, fees, federal and state funding, or tourists. Sometimes this makes the situation worse, since visitors need venues, such as stadiums, hotels, etc., which the city loves to build or at least subsidize. Elected officials get into the 'make it grand' mindset that construction is good, since this creates jobs, and electees get campaign money from developers. One of the most stagnant political environments in the world is Japan, and this describes the Japanese patronage system perfectly.

Aging computer systems, in this context, are a distraction. To understand the architecture of a business application, one has to understand the flow of information that goes with it. The flow of information through city government (particularly financial data) is immense. Therefore, even an experienced and disciplined bean counter can barely grasp what's happening. This does not describe the current occupants in City Hall, or any of those that might be elected any time soon.

Strictly speaking, the City Manager is the one that should define the objectives and measure the performance metrics of the

city's computing infrastructure. To place this in context, imagine your undergraduate college days, when you muddled through English Comp, Statistics, and Chemistry on your way to getting a degree in Philosophy. This took you four years, and the real purpose of those four years was to make friends for life, drink lots of beer, and make out with members of the opposite sex.

If you went for a Master's degree you spent another two years studying, now a bit more diligently, and wrote a 100-page thesis. For those few of you who pursued a PhD this might have been another two to four years of field research and a publication the size of a book. All of this effort taken together would be sufficient to understand the business rules of one major department in a city government, say for building permits. Multiply this by every department, and one gets some idea of what it takes to understand the system, as it exists. This is before such a system is redesigned.

What it takes to keep a business system running, not to mention extending it, is a fanatical devotion to results. This means, in particular, figuring out what's happening in the real world that leads to variances in the information system. High turnover, an underpaid staff doesn't do this.

For the computer system to be used properly, the users have to understand the mission of the organization, and that requires a degree of leadership that simply doesn't exist on the scale of every city department of every city government.

Free Class

Call the Learning Center for schedule information 736-0700 or see page 59-61.

DotNetNuke

This is a class on using the DotNetNuke portal software for hosting your website. For more information, contact Joe Brazell at <ejbrazell@satx.rr.com> or by phone 345-2207.

The Wonder of the Current Computer Hardware Transitions

By Timothy Everingham, <teveringham@acm.org>, TUGNET, www.tugnet.org

Timothy Everingham is CEO of Timothy Everingham Consulting in Azusa, California. He is also part-time press in the areas of high technology, computers, video, audio, and entertainment/media and has had articles published throughout the United States and Canada plus Australia, England, & Japan. He is a member of TUGNET. Further information can be found at <<http://home.earthlink.net/~teveringham>>

When we have been changing computer hardware standards frequently, it has been one thing at a time. At other times those in authority say that if we are going to change one thing lets get some other changes done too. We are going through much more of the latter right now.

The thing that is more in the forefront of change currently is the move from PCI and AGP motherboard card slots to PCI Express (PCIe). PCI Express also changes the way data is transferred (serial rather than parallel) and has more intelligent data traffic management.

This puts you in the position of having to decide whether to migrate to the AGP and PCI cards when upgrading to a new processor and motherboard or buying a new computer, something that is more of a problem if you recently paid a lot of money for a high end AGP graphics card or have a specialized PCI card where there is no equivalent PCIe card available. However, there are motherboards currently available that have both old and new type slots.

On the other hand you could go to the other extreme by buying a computer with the new NVIDIA SLI system. That is a motherboard with two PCIe graphics slots where you can run two NVIDIA graphics cards in parallel to get a 3D graphics performance boost similar to what was done to the old 3dfx Voodoo 2. We also started a shift last spring from Sockets 940 and 754 to Socket 939 for AMD 64 bit processors (Socket A remains for 32 Bit AMD processors) and from Socket 478 to 775 for Intel Pentium 4 processors, which also limits your upgrade options.

Dual core processors, which have two CPUs on one chip, will be coming out for workstations, servers, and desktops in the second half of this year. Support for dual core processors will come from more of a BIOS change than socket change; however, some motherboards will be able to support dual core processors by upgrading your flash BIOS, but

others will not. We also are making the transition from DDR to DDR2 system RAM, and some motherboards only support DDR2.

Now you think you have had enough. I am nowhere near finished. We now have a new power supply standard too. ATX Power Supply 2.01 is in process of replacing ATX Power Supply 1.3. Newer motherboards have different power connectors now.

The new connector has 24 pins rather than the old one with 20. There have been adapters for the 1.3 power connectors to fit 2.01 compliant motherboards, but now we are going to move to adapters for 2.01 power supplies to fit into 1.3 compliant motherboards. Some motherboards and power supplies had AUX connectors, but the new standard does away with that.

One thing that is nice with the new standard is that having SATA drive power connectors is now mandatory rather than optional. Also power supplies under the new standard are supposed to be more efficient. Nevertheless be aware that some power supply manufacturers have been exaggerating the capacity of their power supplies.

However, this new power supply standard is just a step in another transition, the move from the ATX motherboard and case design standards to BTX design standards. I say standards because there are three different BTX motherboard design formats: BTX, MicroBTX, and Pico BTX. BTX replaces the standard ATX motherboards, with MicroBTX going against the Mini-ATX motherboards and PicoBTX goes against the ITX motherboards. Part of the reasons for the change is to redesign the airflows in the case to get rid of all heat generated by the latest processors.

The airflow of BTX designs is from the front of the computer straight through to the back of the computer rather than typical lower front intake with exhaust in the upper back. The CPU has been reposi-

tioned towards the front of the computer so it gets the cool air first. That means a redesign of the power supply to a new BTX standard.

Also a thermal module has replaced the standard CPU heat sink and fan. It takes a more global approach in covering the highest heat producing components sitting on the motherboard, including the CPU. Intel is the one who is pushing this because their Pentium 4s have higher clock speeds than an equivalent AMD Athlon 64 chip, which means they produce higher heat. There is so much heat that Intel had to abandon their goal of producing a 4 GHz Pentium 4 chip. As such AMD is not in such pressure to move to BTX, so BTX motherboards supporting AMD processors will be a few months behind those supporting Intel processors. The first BTX motherboards just recently came out, and should become dominate in 2006.

What does all this mean? By the second half of 2005 if you have a computer that is more than one year old it will probably be better to get an entire new computer rather than upgrade. This puts into motion another round of the old computer becoming the backup computer and the old backup computer becoming a boat anchor, flowerpot, or for the more adventurous: Christmas or Chanukah display control system for the whole house and yard.

However, because there are so many changes with these transitions that many people will get a new computer sooner than normal, resulting in some of the retiring old backup computers being new enough to where nonprofit organizations and schools may want them. As such the probability is that not just those selling computers and computer components benefit from the chaos caused by this round of the wonder of computer hardware transitions.



How to write a product review

By Susan Ives, Alamo PC

Susan Ives is a past president of Alamo PC.

I'm going to let you in on a little secret. Writing product reviews for the PC Alamo mode pays well – better than, say, writing a weekly column for the Express-News. No, you don't get cash but you get stuff. Good stuff.

In the 10 years I've been a reviewer I've reviewed Adobe Acrobat (list price \$449); Adobe PhotoShop (list price \$649) and in this very issue Cable Wrapz (list price \$3.49.) Well, the payoff isn't always great, but the Wrapz review took all of 10 minutes and I got a free sample of a neat product.

There's another benefit to review writing, though. When I'm reviewing a product I give it a good workout. I try features that I might otherwise skip over and get nit-picky about features that are missing or don't work the way they're advertised. Sometimes it will take me an entire day to test-drive a product but by the end of that day I'm an expert, or close to it. Writing for an audience of 2,500 people focuses your mind wonderfully.

Larry Grosskopf, the software review coordinator, is the point man for the free stuff. He brings it to the monthly meeting, held on the second Monday of the month in the convention center at Crossroads Mall, across the hall from the Alamo PC Learning Center.

All the goodies are on display so you can look it over and ask questions. If you find something that strikes your fancy, you enter your name for the drawing. At 6:30 Larry pulls the first name, and that member gets the first choice of software. This system ensures that everyone gets an equal shot at the popular products. Most people seem to get their first choice.

Larry will have you fill out a tracking form and, if you are a new reviewer, give you a fact sheet that explains the review process. You get a month to write your review. If for some reason you can't complete it – your computer crashes, the software won't work on your system, or you selected software that is beyond your skill level – you can return it at the next meeting.

When your review is complete you e-mail it to Larry and cc the editor of the Alamo and the Webmaster. If you don't have e-mail, alternative arrangements can be made.

When your review is accepted by the editor of the Alamo you can consider the product yours, free and clear. Then, you can sign out another product .. and another .. and another.

If you've never written a review before I suggest starting out with a book review. Larry gets books for a wide range of skill levels and on a variety of topics so there's bound to be something that appeals to you. Book reviews are the easiest to write because you don't have to install and learn a new software program.

Here's another hint. Some of the software is on homemade CD-ROMS. Many software companies distribute their products over the Internet (it's hard to get a product on store shelves) and Larry downloads it and provides you with the software key. These are full-blown versions of the software – not trial versions – and most of the

programs are excellent. Don't be put off just because they're not in fancy boxes.

I like to start off a review by explaining what the product does and describing its intended audience. This only takes a sentence or two but it helps readers decide whether to keep reading. If I'm reviewing a Web design program and you have no intention of ever designing a Web site, well you can stop reading right now. If it requires a specialized piece of equipment – like a scanner or CD burner – I'll let you know up front. If it's an expensive professional-level program and you are a beginner who would be just as happy with the \$50 consumer product, I'll tell you.

The bulk of the review is an evaluation of the features. Here, I try to picture a friend who is looking for a software solution and talk directly to her. This is what the program does. This is what it doesn't do. It was easy to learn (or, it took me three hours to get started. Yuck.) It's better (or worse) than a similar product I have used.

Look back over the reviews that you have found useful and enjoyable to read and try to adapt them to your own style.

A graphic or two brightens things up: no one wants to read page after page of plain grey text. You can usually get a picture of the box or book cover from the company's Web site. To capture it, right click on the graphic and "save this picture as ..." somewhere on your hard drive. JPG or TIF are the preferred formats.

Screen captures are often helpful in describing a program. Maximize the screen you want to capture then press the "print screen" key. Open up a graphics program (if you don't have anything better, you can use Windows Paint, which is free with Windows and can be found under Start-Accessories.) From the top menu, select Edit/Paste (or the keyboard shortcut Ctrl-V) and the screen images will be copied into the graphics program. Again, save it as a TIF or JPG.

The PC Alamo editor prefers that graphics are saved as separate files rather than incorporated into your word processing document. Give all of your files unique names: for example, wrapz.doc, wrapz-1.jpg, wrapz-2.jpg. It helps the editor keep things straight on his hard drive.

Somewhere in a software review you need to list the system requirements. Unless the program requires something out of the ordinary, I usually stick this down at the end. You also need to provide the price, and contact information for the manufacturer. I usually double-check the price by searching on Froogle

<www.froogle.com>, Google's shopping center. I usually shove this down at the end too, unless the price is a significant plus or minus.

A review should be long enough to cover what a potential buyer needs to know. No longer, no shorter. My Cable Wrapz review is only 200 words: how much can you say about a rubber band, even if it does have a toggle? A review of a complicated and expensive program may be a few thousand words. One page in the magazine is 900 words, and most products can be reviewed in that space.

Your reviews should be honest. If the product is bad, feel free to say so. However, if I give a product a negative review I take extra pains to make sure that I am being fair. Does my computer meet all of the requirements for this program? Am I expecting it to do something it was never intended to do? Is my disappointment caused by my incompetence rather than a flaw in the software? I might search the Internet for other reviews to see if other people had the same bad experience, or call or e-mail the manufacturer to verify that I am using the product correctly.

People who own a previous version of an expensive program often wonder whether it is worth it to purchase an upgrade. If it's a program that I've not used before, I always research the changes on the Internet.

The PC Alamo editor does the happy dance when members review their own stuff. Very rarely do manufacturers give us hardware to review, but our members still want to know about monitors, printers and digital cameras. Almost all of the hardware reviews in the magazine are of member's own equipment. You don't get any free stuff, but you don't have a deadline either.

Sometimes we get expensive hardware on loan from a manufacturer. Joe Barth and I are in the process of reviewing three global positioning systems that you will read about in our travel issue. Even though we only get to play with the equipment for a month or so, and the end of the trial we will know a lot about them and, if we decide to buy units for ourselves, we will be savvy consumers.

Getting products for review is a member benefit. You don't have to be a professional writer or a computer guru: just be willing to spend some time evaluating a product and sharing your insights with your fellow members.

My Experience with "The Dr Is In Program" at Alamo PC

Leon B. Franklin, Alamo PC

Being a fairly new member I did not know what to expect when I showed up with my very ill PC to have the Dr's look at it and hopefully not tell me to go dump it in the dumpster.

While my computer is a few years old, it had been working pretty well and then it started to become a real slug (slower that slow). I know just enough about computers to be dangerous, (now if they were only mechanical items I would do much better). I had determined that it was infected with some spy ware that none of the popular programs could get rid of.

Fri morning I showed up at the club location with "Blinky" in hand and a lot of CD's (backed up data files). I was warmly welcomed and greeted by Gary Grieve, one of the Dr's. He gave me the forms to fill out while he took charge of "Blinky" and got it hooked up. Shortly thereafter, it was up and running and Gary and some of the other Dr's were looking into it to fig-

ure out why it was running so slow. Their work revealed that yes it was infected by spy ware so it was time to remove it. As they started to run various programs, it was determined that this was going to be a long process, with the way it was operating. Gary suggested that it might be better to do a rebuild (complete overhaul in my mechanical mind). I concurred and Gary set off copying and moving files to another hard drive so that my data would not be lost and could be reinstalled.

The rebuild took several hours on my computer and while this was going on, several other members had arrived to help, while others brought in their sick PC's. The other Dr's took charge of those and I believe everyone was fixed and we had another happy club member. Gary continued to work on "Blinky", reinstalling the necessary software and programs. While at the club I not only learned a lot but was offered sound and great advice on what anti-spy ware programs worked best, they were downloaded and installed. It was late that afternoon before Gary got finished.

I got introduced to several other Dr's and helpers and I found each one friendly and willing to help. I don't remember all the names, but I do recall, Bruce, Cary, Robin and Forest and I want to personally thank these and the others, who's names if forgot (senior moment) for the help and advice they provided. I most of all want to personally thank Gary Grieve for what he did. I think he went way beyond anything I could have expected.

For those club members like myself who are reluctant to show up and ask for help, I would tell you from my experience that you will be surprised and pleased with the help you will receive. As far as I'm concerned, the "Dr's In Program" is wonderful and a great program for the Alamo PC Club. As far as cost for the work they do, there is not charge, however donations are accepted. If you have ever priced computer repairs, then you will know what a great program this is.

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Random Access Murders, by Linda Grant

Paperback, Avon,
1988, \$2.95, 186
pages

Corporate security expert Catherine Saylor, in her first case, defends her boyfriend, private detective Peter Harman, who is charged with murdering the mistress of a high-powered computer company CEO.

Good series, with a high-tech twist to every book. In this one, an interesting discussion about gray market computer components: parts in short supply that are brokered by shady intermediaries. Also an introduction to Saylor's partner Jesse, who joins the Silicon Valley hacker community and uses his new-found skills to get information not



available through legitimate channels. Recommended – Grant is a thoughtful writer who combines intricate plots, high tech shenanigans and social comment in a readable package.

Country Comes to Town, by Toni L.P. Kelner

Hardback,
Kensington, 1996,
\$18.95, 308 pages

While her college professor husband spends a month in England leading a Shakespeare seminar, Laura's North Carolina cousin Thaddeous comes to Boston to keep her company. An old boyfriend is found dead in the alley behind her apartment. He was being forced out of the software



company he helped found, just as it was ready to go public. Laura takes a programming job at the company – run by her old MIT friends – and tries to solve the murder.

Even though the heroine of this series is a programmer based in Boston, most of the series take place in her cozy North Carolina hometown and do not make use of her computer skills. This book is the exception. Technical details about programming code, intellectual property and viruses.

Susan Ives, past president of Alamo PC, claims that computers are a mystery to her. Remember the Alibi Bookstore at 8055 West Ave. #101, San Antonio, TX (at the corner of West Ave. and Lockhill-Selma), (210) 344-7776, tries its darndest to keep the recommended books in stock.

Book Review

Mac OS X KillerTips

By Scott Kelby

\$29.99 US

Published by New Riders

Reviewed by Shane Hicks, Alamo PC

This edition of Mac OS X KillerTips covers OS X 10.3 Panther. It claims on the cover to be the ultimate collection of Mac OS X sidebar tips (without the sidebars). Let's find out!

Of the Mac books I've read recently, this is a pretty thin read. At 299 total pages, the book contains 13 chapters covering various topics. A quick overview shows colorful pages with clearly delineated tips. These tips are separated by paragraph breaks which resemble the close/minimize buttons at the top of Mac windows.

Believe it or not, I started by reading the introduction. This wasn't a bad idea. Scott explains why he wrote the book the way he did—basically because he really likes the tips he finds in other computer

books, but gets bored reading through the normal text. He wanted a book with nothing but interesting tips. I can see where he's coming from!

He explains this isn't a book for beginners. The KillerTips are designed for those already using Mac OS X on a regular basis. However, as a bonus, he includes a link to download a FREE chapter for beginners. If you want to check out Scott's style, download the chapter at <http://www.scottkelbybooks.com/begtips.html>.

Scott describes the books intended audience. His focus is on those that want to learn tricks of the Mac graphical interface. Many know OS X is UNIX-based and may expect a section on UNIX power tips. Those aren't covered in this book.



Scott does include a link to UNIX tips: <http://www.scottkelbybooks.com/macosexkillertips/scaryunixstuff.html>.

Window Wonderland: Cool Window Tips

Chapter One is all about Finder windows and how to manage files within them. The first tip that caught my eye dealt with how to get "tool tips," the full name of whatever you mouse over, to appear immediately. Another tip

shows how to get Finder to always open in Column view, which is my favorite and much closer to folder navigation found in Microsoft Windows products. There's a tip on how to use the Page Up / Page Down keys instead of having to take your hands off the keyboard and moving to the mouse. He closes the section with several tips on how to use Exposé.

For Those About To Dock! : Docking Miracles Made Easy

Obviously, this chapter is about using, managing, and manipulating the Dock. The first tip shows how to move the Dock to the sides, rather than the bottom, of your screen. There's another shortcut demonstrated for how to manage the Properties of the Dock. The Dock is always getting in my way, especially when I have a lot of programs open at once. I quickly took advantage of the tip for making the Dock as small as possible, and using the Icon preferences to maximize the size of the Dock icons as you mouse over them. You can even make the Dock act like the Windows Start button by placing your Home and Application folders in the Dock.

Icon See Clearly Now

You guessed it. Chapter Three is on icons. Scott covers several interesting features, such as performing actions by dragging-and-dropping certain icons. He also discusses being able to com-

press files from within the operating system.

Show Me The Way: Navigating Your New World

Chapter Four provides more file management tips. I'd already turned on file extensions—but that's a good tip! This is a pretty short chapter.

She Drives Me Crazy: How To Stop Annoying Things

Chapter Five allows you to turn off things that might annoy you in OS X—like the Alert sounds or the Speech Recognition icon that floats in your way when using voice-enabled applications.

Hooked On Classics: Chapter Six covers classic Mac tips. I don't use Classic.

Mac OS X Speed Tips: Doing things faster. I didn't find this chapter all that interesting.

Cool & The Gang: Way Cool Tips

This chapter provides a random list of tips. I liked the ones on quickly changing system volume and taking screen captures of different sizes. There are also several Font tips.

Cheap Tricks: OS X Pranks: You always need ways to screw with other users!

Built-in Business Applications: Tips for using Address Book, iCal, Safari,

TextEdit, Preview, Sherlock, and Stickies.

Jukebox Hero: iTunes Tips

I've fallen in love with iTunes for importing music from my CD collection. This chapter has a ton of tips on how to better use iTunes. One tip is on setting the action of INSERT DISC to automatically rip a disc and then eject it. You just continually feed CDs to the system and all your tunes are imported! Another tip shows how to consolidate all your music under your iTunes folder.

Electric Avenue: This chapter covers the remaining iLife applications.

Trouble Shooting Tips: The last chapter shows you how to fix broken things. I found these tips to be too basic. Most were, in my opinion, common sense on a Mac. Scott said this wasn't a beginner's book—so I expected more.

Summary

Overall, this was a very enjoyable read and one I would recommend to any Mac user. I enjoyed Scott's writing style and his humor. Make sure you read all of his introductions! It'd be fairly easy to break out some sticky-flags and mark the tips you like to use the most. In my opinion, the chapters on the Dock and iTunes alone are worth the price of admission. Enjoy!

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Book Review

Old Fart's Guide to the Macintosh

By Aaron Rosenzweig

\$25.00 US

Published by Trafford Publishing

Reviewed by Stuart Bonwit, Washington Apple Pi Journal

Author Aaron Rosenzweig has produced a well written, well organized, and, most importantly, clear book on the use of the Macintosh. The book cover tells us, this is "A book for those who recognize the word 'Computer' but do not know exactly what they do." The Preface starts, "This unique book caters to the person who has never used a computer...or can never get [one] to work right...or just feels that computers are the world's biggest mystery." One should not be fooled. While the book starts off expecting that the reader is as just described, it ends with subjects that are quite advanced.

This reviewer has found only one item to complain about: the lack of an index. A good Glossary with term definitions is provided but with no reference to page numbers. The Table of Contents is very comprehensive but, while most items could probably be found through its use, an index would make a search much easier.

The title of this book gave the reviewer some pause. Should "that" word appear in a review in the Washington Apple Pi Journal? A quick check with the powers-to-be assured me that it would be OK. Here's how the author explains it. "I was a strange boy for two reason: 1) I was obsessed with why computers work and 2) I was more likely to go to the movies with my classmates parents than I was to go with my classmates -- many nicknames [were] given to me, most of them good, but [one] stuck out... 'Old Fart.'"

The physical layout of the pages is well designed. A typical page shows several features. Every page has a sidebar in which the chapter title is displayed in the lower corner with the page number. Notes highlighting the important points of a paragraph are printed adjacent to that paragraph. And images are included alongside the paragraphs describing them. Even though some people "think it is messy," the author encourages writ-

ing notes in the sidebars rather than in notebooks or on paper scraps that will get lost.

Chapter headings listed in the Table of Contents give some idea of the topic coverage:

What is a Computer?

What is an Operating System?

The Macintosh for You

The Importance of Passwords

Turning Your Mac On and Off

Understanding Your Mac's Desktop

What is the Internet? (the largest chapter with 63 pages)

Typing Letters and Organizing Info in AppleWorks (2 chapters)

How Do I Print?

Where Does Information Go?

Common Software Categories

Digit Hub (stills, movies, and music)

Macintosh User Groups

Computer Problems

Magic Key Combinations



Advanced Topics for the Curious (including UNIX, programming, graphics, book writing, and writing, playing, and recording music)

Useful Web Sites

Glossary

The writing style is very easy and clear. There is no techno-babble and, when specific computer terms are introduced, they are clearly explained. The book is comprehensive and up-to-date. It shows the 17-inch iMac and gets into Mac OS X but doesn't mention Mac OS X 10.2.

The book is published by Trafford Publishing, Victoria BC Canada with a list price of \$25.00 USD or \$39.50 CAD plus \$2.00 shipping and handling. It may be ordered from Cocoa Nuts or Trafford Publishing at

<<http://www.cocanutstech.com/books.html>>

I would strongly recommend this book for any Mac beginner and I think any Mac user would benefit from it.



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Book Review

The Non-Designers Web Book

By Robin Williams and John Tollett

\$29.95 US

Published by Peachpit Press

Reviewed by David Harris, Washington Apple Pi Journal

The Non-Designer's Web Book is not just about Web page design, but contains chapters describing in plain language what the Web is, how to do an Internet search, the salient differences between print and Web publishing, designing and making Web pages of your own, and how to get your pages online for all the world to see.

As the authors say, readers of this book are likely to be either experienced designers, who will be able to design circles around 75% of current Web designers already on the Internet, or those with little or no design experience, who will be able to design circles around 75% of current Web designers already on the Internet.

I liked this book and got good tips for improving the pages I had already created. At times I also found somewhat irritating the emphasis on designing for commercial (as opposed to personal or other) sites, with the authors' preferences in style (e.g. blue links are the sign of an amateur) extended to near-absolute dictates.

In addition, most chapters of the book have little lesson plans for what the reader should look for on the Web, and a quiz on what they have learned. This is probably a good approach for some people; in me it just roused performance anxiety.

Web pages are just text files; the HTML text tells Web browsers how to display them. I have created all my own pages just using a word processor, but the authors persuasively recommend using Web-authoring software instead. As they say, if you use a page-layout program such as Adobe PageMaker or QuarkXPress, it converts everything to PostScript code for screen display and for sending to a printer, but all you are interested in is the page appearance, not the code. Imagine writing PostScript code to

create printed pages! Although present Web-authoring software creates pages with code that sometimes has to be touched up by a person with some knowledge of HTML, it is probably the wave of the future nevertheless.

This book illustrates how to make your pages using several popular software programs such as Adobe PageMill or Claris Home Page (does that still exist?). The authors show how to format text, add background colors or graphics, make links, add pictures, use tables and frames. They also discuss how to organize your planned Web site, collect materials, and understand file types.

I found the chapter on print vs. Web publishing and how it affects design to be illuminating. Web publishing has the advantages of immediacy (changes can be made rapidly), full color at low cost, with small file sizes, the possibility of adding sound and animation, links to enormous amounts of information created by others, and interaction with the user. It allows the designer to reside in a remote location such as Santa Fe, and not have to be in close physical proximity with producers or clients. Print, on the other hand, is cheaper and more portable, doesn't require costly user equipment, and is more reliably WYSIWYG. It downloads much faster, too.

The chapter on design principles stresses the four rules of alignment, proximity, repetition, and contrast. Now these are ideas that I find hard to absorb just by having them stated. Illustrations are given (and the illustrations are one of this book's delights) by which I gradually came to understand most of the points presented. I changed my own Web pages, for instance, to include the same small graphic on each relevant page as a link back to its "home" -- that's repetition.

It ties pages together so the viewer can see a common theme. Proximity just means keeping related things close to each other. Alignment is one that I found

a bit harder: they state it doesn't mean everything must be aligned along the same edge, but that it should be aligned all flush left, center, or flush right. "Choose one alignment and use it on the entire page...if you choose to align the basic text on the left, then don't center the headline." This dictate is illustrated by comparative examples of Web pages with somewhat random alignment, and the same page aligned following their recommendations.

In most cases I agree that their choice makes for a better-looking page -- especially if it's for a commercial site. And it makes sense to write a book mostly for those who will be designing to convince someone to buy a product or a service. But I don't agree with their strictness, especially if you are designing something a little different. I'd recommend a little experimentation.

The chapter on How to Recognize Good and Bad Design has many illustrations taken from the Web, with details changed to protect the guilty. I agree with many of the examples of what not to do, such as text that's nearly the same color as the background, distracting background graphics, links that mislead, enormous graphics that take forever to download, animations that won't stop, having to scroll sideways to see all the page (and when you do scroll usually not much is added). They also deride things I don't mind, such as nearly-full-width text, tables with borders, links within text, under-construction signs, etc. Take a look at the chapter and see what you think. I must say I took some of their ideas to heart and changed many of my pages -- yes, I use Blockquote (to indent text) a lot more now. But not everywhere.

The chapters that most filled in the gaps in my technical understanding were Color on the Web and Graphic Definitions. Indexed color, browser-safe colors (that most browsers will present identically), graphic file formats (mostly GIF -- yes, with a G sound -- and JPEG), get-

ting pictures or making your own. They even tell how to make a gently textured background, or an animated GIF (but make it turn itself off).

Here's a tip that I used: for those backgrounds that consist only of a color swipe (with or without textured borders) down the left or across the top of a page, create a GIF that's as small as 10 pixels high, by 1000 pixels wide (for the vertical format). Make the left side a different (browser-safe) color. Your browser will replicate it down the page to make the entire left side colored, and if it's 1000 pixels wide it will extend full width on most monitors. File size for this kind of GIF is very small and it will load quickly.

The chapter on Typography on the Web promotes ideas that Robin Williams has written about in her previous books. One of the recommendations is to set your

browser's default proportional type to New York (designed for screens) instead of Times (designed for printing). I did so and found that, even when the font size was changed to compensate for the change in font, New York looked worse on my monitor than Times. So there!

On the other hand I agree that curly quotes are nice at least in areas where the type is large, and I was pleased to find the HTML codes to produce those quotation marks and a few other uncommon characters. The authors do recognize that total control is impossible on the Web, and that one should design pages with that in mind.

Advanced Tips and Tricks includes fun with tables, pre-loading graphics, PhotoShop tips, and so on. I did find nice hints on how to add padding space around graphics (you can also make use of hid-

den text to widen margins or to make tables behave), and how to make a link open in a new window.

The last three chapters are about testing and maintaining your Web site, uploading it to its final destination, updating it, and how to get it noticed (assuming you want the whole world to know). All these are useful for those without much Web experience.

I'll end with a complaint about one thing that surprised me throughout this book, considering the authors' attention to literary and design correctness: Web is not capitalized. Now there are many webs, but there is only one World Wide Web. It should be capitalized.

Software Review

Windows Media Player 10

Free

Published by Microsoft

Reviewed by Chuck Guion, Editor, Rockport Computer Users' Group, Inc.

Microsoft has a new Windows Media Player 10 (WMP10) available now. Go to www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia to download it. It was designed for Windows XP. It does not have any help files, but there is an article: Using Windows Media Player 10 on the web and you can download it at: www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/mp10/usingplayer.aspx.

You can use WMP 10 to listen to music on CDs, MP3s, MIDI, Wave, etc. You can play CD's and DVD's (if you have a DVD drive on your computer) with the program. You can also use it to watch your home movies, film clips, etc. You can also use the Internet to find more information about a CD or DVD; i.e. the Album and the Artist. You can quickly Rip from a CD to your computer as well as use different Formats for doing this.

You can also burn your own CD's. Most of the music CD's that you buy have only one or two songs you really like. With WMP10 you can pick and choose your favorite songs from several CD's and put them on one Master CD. Isn't that great & it's free!

You can also organize your digital media collection. The program will even tell you where you can buy your favorite albums! All in all, I think it is a great program and it is free! About the only disadvantage is not having any help file.

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Software Review

Capture Wiz Pro

\$30.00 US

Published by Pixel Metrics

Reviewed by Gabe Goldberg <gabe@gabegold.com>

When you have a problem with your car, you bring it to the repair shop. When you're sick, you visit the doctor. But computer problems sometimes show up as nasty messages plopped in the middle of the screen. So it's hard to capture information needed to research and fix the problem. And someone trying to help you via email or phone may ask questions about system settings or application options which may be tedious to record and communicate. A previous article describes information that's useful for solving problems.

<<http://www.aarp.org/computers-howto/Articles/a2004-07-12-getanswers>>

But sometimes the best information is a picture of what happens or what's wrong.

The good news is that all Windows versions provide basic tools to capture the entire screen or just the active application window.

You may have tried to use the PrintScreen (or PrtScr on some keyboards) key and not seen anything happen. This is because that key doesn't really *print* anything, it simply copies the entire screen (or just the active window if you press Alt-then-PrintScreen keys) to the Windows clipboard (an invisible Windows area for storing temporary data). Here's a tip: if you're capturing the entire screen and you'd like to timestamp the image, move the mouse cursor over the time shown at the right side of the Windows taskbar. That will pop up the date, which will be included in the captured image.

While you can't see the clipboard, you can paste the captured image from it into a word processing or graphics program from which you can print or save it. Open an application you like -- Microsoft Paint or its equivalent (included with Windows), Microsoft Word, or any graphics program. Posi-

tion the cursor where you want to place the image and press

Ctrl-V (Ctrl and V keys simultaneously). The image will appear. If you like, you can add descriptive information such as the date, the nature of your problem, your Windows version, applications which were running, etc.

You can now print the image from the application (click File and Print); you're also close to being able to save or email the captured image! To save it, within the application click File and Save As. Specify a location (hard drive, floppy disk, USB key, etc.). Programs may offer different choices of filetype for saving. Common choices are JPG (good for photographs, can be compressed), PNG (new/free standard format, good for non-photos), GIF (commonly used, produces relatively small files, limited to 256 colors), and BMP (produces large files, Windows-only format, usable if files won't be transmitted). Once the file is saved you can attach it to an e-mail.

But Windows' built-in screen capture is primitive and inflexible. That's led many people and companies to develop tools providing more functions. Searching Google for "screen capture" produced about 227,000 choices! Many of these are free, available for download. You can find good choices at Web sites such as Tucows Downloads <www.tucows.com>. Some are shareware -- free to try, priced to continue using. A modestly priced choice that is powerful and easy to use is CaptureWizPro from PixelMetrics <www.pixelmetrics.com>.

Costing \$30 and requiring a one-mega-byte download, it provides a small toolbar that allows capturing any part of the screen, not just the full screen or the active window. The toolbar can be docked anywhere on the screen edge. It will hide until you mouse near it, then several selection tools (area, frame, scroll, etc.) allow precisely selecting what to copy.

Area selection allows simple selection of a rectangular section to copy. Frame se-

lection displays rulers that show the selected area's size in pixels and inches; the frame border opens fast, remembers its position, and lets you interactively prepare applications below it. Scrolling selection tools solve a nasty problem: how to capture an image that

doesn't fit on the screen. You can select a scrollable area, energize Full AutoScroll, and the image will scroll before your eyes as CaptureWizPro collects it.

Once an image is captured, you can copy it to the clipboard for saving as described above, or you can do many more fun things with it: save it directly to a disk file, print it directly, make an on-screen PostIt-style note out of it (to keep visible something needed for reference), e-mail it directly, manipulate it with a built-in editor, etc.

CaptureWizPro installation offers a friendly list of tips for use. It also does something I wish more applications did: allows printing a one-page guide including capture basics, Q&A, and suggested uses. The tool is handy for recording configuration changes, comparing results of testing applications, sending information to people who don't have the same applications as you, creating paper checklists from screen lists, etc. A little imagination will suggest many more uses for the friendly fly-out capture tool bar.

No matter how you capture information -- with Windows' built-in PrintScreen handling or any of the many add-in tools -- you'll never have to describe what you saw on the screen; you'll be able to show it. You'll never laboriously transcribe option settings to report to a help desk; you'll send a picture. You'll wonder how you did without this powerful and simple tool.

This article appeared originally on AARP's Computers and Technology Web site, <www.aarp.org/computers>. (c) AARP 2004.

Software Review

MWSnap

Free

Published by Snapfiles

Reviewed by Jeff Hughes - A+ Certified Owner MyDomainSpot.com
Assistance by Nora Tarr Owner OnTheWebHosting.com

While looking for a screen capture program to add some pictures to an article for PCAlamode, I came across this easy to use and free program named MWSnap.

This is a small but easy to use and featured filled screen capture program that will allow you to create professional screen shots for presentations, pictures for documents, and even for those occasions when you may have to send an e-mail to a computer technician when you get that occasional odd error message that you have never seen in your life!

MWSnap provides five (5) screen capture options; Fixed Rectangle, Any Rectangle Area, Windows/Menus, Full Desktop, and Repeat Last these options allow you to select any part of the screen, webpage, or document, or desktop you need to feature.

- **Fixed Rectangle** – This option allows you to use a pre-determined rectangle size or allows you to enter the scale of the rectangle to capture an object.

- **Any Rectangle Area** – Enables you to drag the cursor over the object or text and MWSnap will take a picture of that area. This option is a bit easier to use when you are trying to capture specific area.

- **Window/Menu** – This option provides the ability to take a snapshot of open Windows just by moving the mouse cursor over the Window/Menu, this allows you to select a single object without having to worry about getting unwanted clutter in the background. This is a nice feature when showing multiple step-by-step instructions for manuals, capturing a variety of different webpages or Windows boxes.

- **Full Desktop** – This feature enables you to make a screenshot of the whole desktop or you can use this feature when multiple windows are open and don't want to take individual snapshots.

- **Repeat Last** - This is a time saving feature that allows you to use the same cap-

ture option repeatedly without have to select the option every time.

MWSnap comes with some nice extras such as Transform, Adding Frames, Adding Cursors, Color Background, Zoom, and even a Color Picker that enable you to enhance your screenshot, again these tools can be helpful for instructional manuals, presentations, or to highlight individual areas.

The Edit menu offers you the tools to Copy, Paste, Transform, Add Frame, and Add Cursor.

- **Transform** – The Transform tool enables you to flip vertically and horizontally and rotate the image left or right.

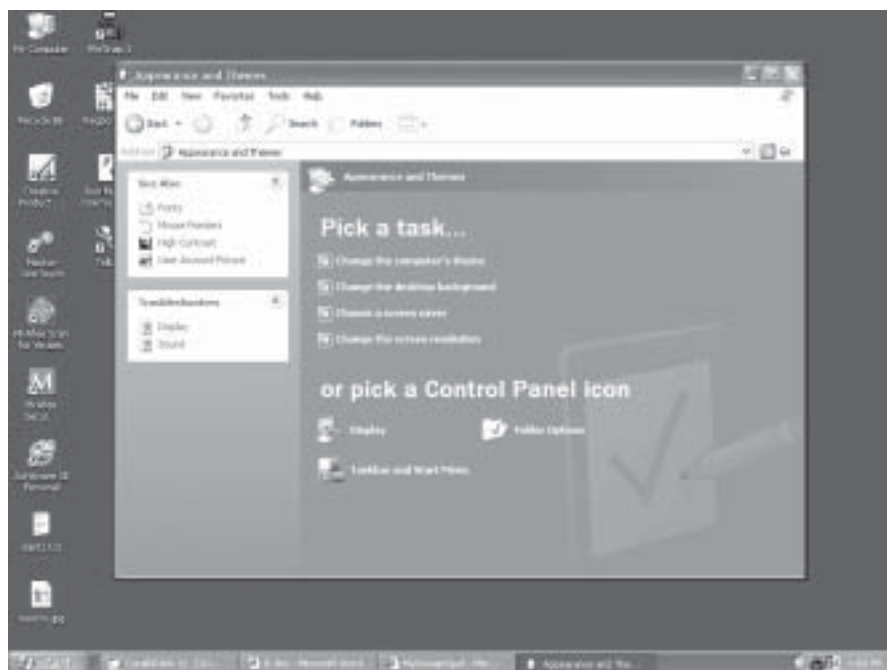
- **Adding Frames** - The Frame tool gives you the option to add a Simple Frame or Shaded Frame to the screenshot, in addition a Buttonize tool is also offered if you wish to create a button from you screenshot.

- **Adding Cursor**- The Cursor tools enables you to place a variety of cursors on



the screenshot, the cursors can be added very simply by selecting a cursor and then placing the cursor in the designated area.

Many other tools are included in the Tools menu, such as a pretty handy color picker, and Ruler tool. Also in the Tools menu is the Settings area, this section includes options to set background color and the ability to set the snapshot size.



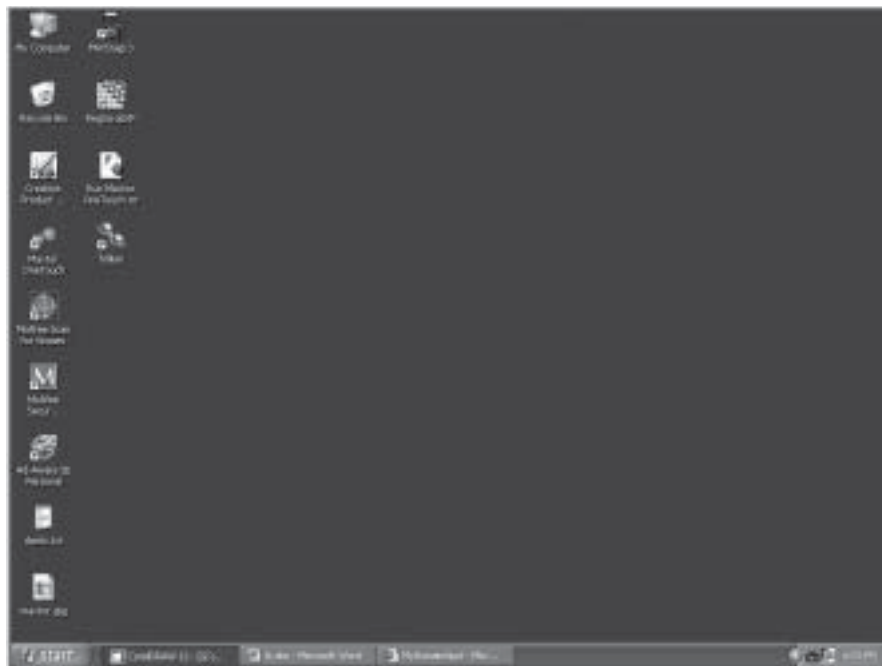
I know there are many other screen capture programs on the market and many have a lot more bells and whistles but those come with a price tag attached to them. MWSnap is very easy to use and comes with some really nice and useful tools built into the application, that will meet most screen capture needs, and it's Free!

MWSnap can be found at:

Snapfiles <<http://www.snapfiles.com/freeware/gmm/fwscreen.html>>

Mirek's Personal Homepage <<http://www.mirekw.com/>>

Thank you for reading this review and I hope you enjoy MWSnap as much as I do and enjoyed telling you about it.



Software Review

Spy Sweeper 3.5

\$29.95 US

Published by Webroot

Reviewed by Chuck Du Val, Alamo PC

Having been given Spy Sweeper v3.2 to review, one of the first things I found out was that this version is no longer available and has been replaced by a version 3.5.

Spy Sweeper v3.5 is available from Webroot at www.webroot.com for \$29.95. It is also available on Amazon.com for \$27.88 (the version, v3.2 or v3.5, was not specified).

This quote from the "Getting Started" Menu sums up the total functioning of Spy Sweeper.

"Spy Sweeper lets you protect your privacy and your computer from a variety of spyware, from those that monitor all of your computer's activities (system monitors), to those that can steal or destroy data (Trojan horses). It also detects spyware that pops up advertising on your computer (adware) and cookies that may contain personal information (tracking cookies).

Spy Sweeper "sweeps" your computer looking for evidence of spyware, reports its findings, and lets you decide

whether to quarantine and remove the spyware or keep it. The quarantine and the remove function disable the spyware until you decide to delete it completely or restore it."

The v3.2 program is organized in such a manner that the user can customize it to perform all or only the desired functions that the program offers.

On installing the program a glitch was encountered and the program "locked-up". However, an email to the support team was promptly answered with complete and detailed instructions as to how the glitch could be resolved. With these easy to follow instructions the installation was completed and the program ran perfectly.

I had another "spy" program on my computer and decided to run Spy Sweeper after having first run my other program. Spy Sweeper found three items that the other program had missed or over looked. It takes about 40 minutes or so to do a complete sweep on my computer but it

seems to be a good program to detect and remove spyware from your computer.

The newer version, Spy Sweeper v3.5 is said to be 30 percent faster. This finding was confirmed by PC Magazine.

As a novice it is difficult for me to rate this program. It seems to do the job for which it was intended as far as I can tell. For this type of program we must rely on the reviews of experts for this type of evaluation. Along these lines PC Magazine gives it a rating of 4 ½ stars out of a possible score of 5 stars. Adware Report gives it a 3 star rating out of a possible 4 stars.

With the endorsement of these raters I believe that I would be safe in recommending this program to aid in protecting your computer privacy.

I have been a member of AlamoPC since 09/1999 and continue to enjoy the challenge of learning to use a computer.

Software Review

Instant Photo Artist

\$39.99

Published by Streetwise

Reviewed by Jacquelyn Sykes

Streetwise Software's Professor Franklin's Instant Photo Artist version 1.01 is a photo-editing program that allows you to "paint like a master". You actually do make strokes with your mouse. The direction, length, and speed of your strokes make a difference. The program is particularly strong in Impressionism. It's the one area with named artist styles: Renoir, Van Gogh, and Cezanne.

While I haven't used any Professor Franklin programs before, I have used many different PC graphics programs since 1993. The fifteen programs I've used the most range from 'greeting card' programs such as American Greetings CreatoCard, through MGI PhotoSuite to full featured drawing and painting programs such as A&L Express, Art Dabber, and The Gimp.

What Does the Box Hold?

The software bundle I received included a User Guide, a Quick Start Guide, and a CD-ROM (no box).

The 40-page User Guide has eight sections and a Table of Contents but no index. It's digest sized and printed in black and white with legible text.

The digest-sized Quick Start Guide is printed in full color on glossy card stock. It provides a very basic 5-step illustrated tutorial on "creating a masterpiece in minutes".

What Makes Instant Photo Artist Different?

I use many graphics programs with art filters that change an image into artwork. However they work on the whole image at once and you can only apply one filter at a time. In Instant Photo Artist, you can make part of a picture an oil painting and part a watercolor, if you wish, or any other combination. You have the control, not the program.

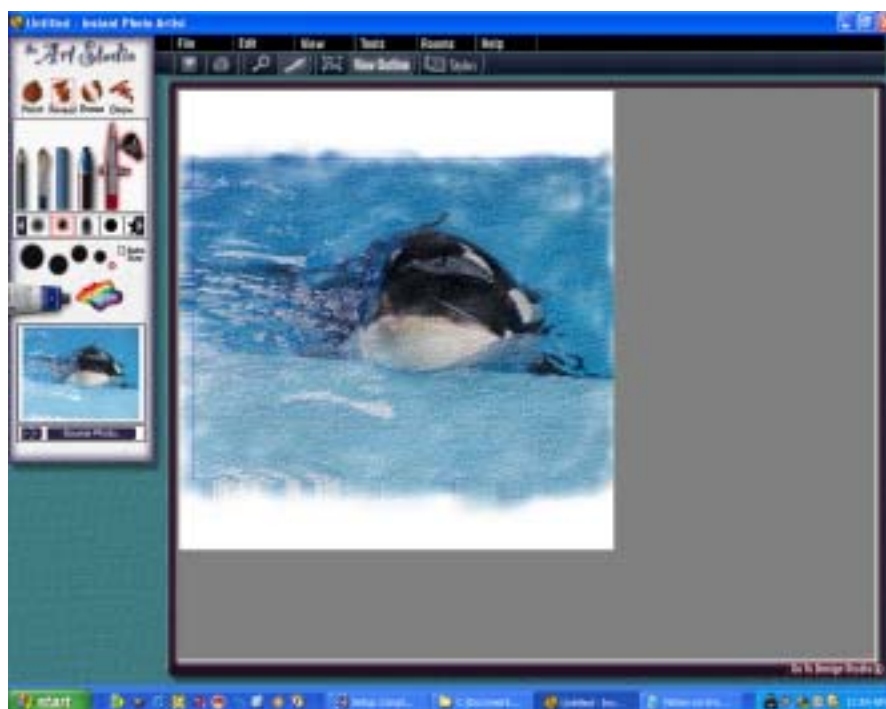


Figure 1



Figure 2

Learning the Program

The Quick Start Guide states, “Getting started with Professor Franklin’s Instant Photo Artist is fun and easy. By following these steps you will be creating a masterpiece in minutes.” Yes, starting a project is easy. However, you need some experience to create a masterpiece in minutes. I started five or six projects before I got savable results. Even then, my results were crude. It took me three hours to learn how to paint a photo well enough to show anyone.

Their web site says you can create a masterpiece in ten minutes. I found that it takes more than ten minutes to create a good painting although I am getting faster.

While the User Guide describes how to get started and explains all the buttons and menu items it doesn’t really tell you how to paint. The Help File has no added content. The program needs an interactive tutorial to really teach you how to paint.

Running the Program

Instant Photo Artist has two major workspaces: The Art Studio and The Design Studio. You create your artwork in The Art Studio (Figure 1).

First, you select your photo. The User Guide gives the following characteristics of the best images:

1. A single focus on a single subject
2. Simple backgrounds
3. Well-lighted
4. High contrast
5. Large, well-defined subjects and shapes

Second, you select and customize a preferred painting style. Pre-set painting styles include Renaissance, Heavy oils, Airbrush, Charcoal, eight types of Impressionist, Watercolor, Colored Pencil, Chalk, plus many more. You can also create your own style by selecting natural media such as paintbrushes, crayon, pencil, airbrush and marker. You can change the brush pressure and utilize splattering paint and canvas textures to create your custom look.

Third, you start painting by moving your mouse over a blue outline of your photo. “Use large brushes to paint abstractly and smaller brushes for finer detail. You paint the size, direction, and type of brushstrokes. Your painting begins to



Figure 3

appear before your eyes and in minutes you’ve become one of the masters!” It reminds me of the children’s coloring books where you paint water on the page and the picture magically appears. Using these methods allow you to blur distracting backgrounds. You can leave portions of the picture out by not painting over them.

You can combine more than one image in your painting but the instructions are difficult to follow. I made a couple of attempts. I created a usable piece although it’s not really what I wanted (Figure 2).

When you’ve finished painting, you enter The Design Studio (Figure 3). This is where you add text, clip art, or picture frames. You can apply many special effects to your text including color, transparency, shadows, and glow. Although they only include a limited number of picture frames, they are all impressive. Or you can use a pre-designed template for cards, certificates, transfers, magazines, invitations, and other items. You can modify the templates although I found it difficult to select objects.

If you wish to use your painting in another application, you use the Export Painting command in the File menu.

Professor Franklin’s Instant Photo Album

Professor Franklin’s Instant Photo Album is a separate application that allows you to store and organize all your graphic images. You can run it on its own or from within Instant Photo Artist. It provides

the Gallery photos and Clip Art images when you’re looking for images for your Instant Photo Artist project. I found it harder to add my own images than in other catalog programs I’ve used.

One of the common questions on the web site referred to getting a “Server Busy Error” when using Instant Photo Album. The solution provided says, “Just click on OK to continue. The problem is generally due to a slower machine.” I received this error several times and the solution works. However, the reason for the error isn’t always correct. I have a fast AMD processor. However the photos and clip art are on the CD-ROM and it takes a while for my DVD drive to wake up if I haven’t accessed the CD-ROM recently.

Supported file formats:

You can export your completed masterpiece in any of the following formats:

Portable Network Graphics (*.png)
Targa (*.tga)
Macintosh Pict (*.pct/*.pict)
Seattle Film Works (*.sfw)
Kodak FlashPix (*.fpx)
TIF (*.tif)
Kodak Photo CD (*.pcd)
Windows Bitmap (*.bmp)
Windows Metafile (*.wmf)
JPEG (*.jpeg/*.jpg)
GIF (*.gif)
Photoshop (*.psd),
PCX (*.pcs)

Other Comments

Instant Photo Artist version 1.01 is copyrighted 1998. I checked the web site for a newer edition. I couldn't find a version number so I sent an e-mail to Tech Support. They replied promptly, saying, "Yes that is the most recent release of that title. We expect to have a new version later this year. I would recommend our Instant Photo Effects software (last update was 2002). You can download a trial version from <www.picturebuzz.com/download/photoeffects.exe>."

The program comes with 99 stock photos, 509 clip art images, and 35 True Type fonts (many unusual ones).

Bottom Line

Instant Photo Artist is unique in my experience and a lot of fun. I think both adults and children would like this program. However, I recommend you wait for the new version before buying it.

System Requirements

CPU: 486- 33 MHz processor or higher

RAM: 16 MB or more

Operating system: Windows 95, 98, 2000, NT, ME, XP or higher

Free disk space: 30 MB hard disk space for minimum install, 50 MB for a Typical Install

CD-ROM Drive: 2X or faster

Monitor: SVGA with 256 colors minimum; True color 17" flat screen display recommended

Display properties: Set to 256 colors minimum; High Color (16 bit) recommended, 800 x 600 resolution settings

Interface: Mouse or pointing device

My System

I installed Instant Photo Artist on an AllGen Computer Warehouse AMD XP 1600+ computer system with integrated S3 Graphics Pro Savage DDR 8MB display adapter, 1 GB RAM, and 3 Hard Drives totaling 240 GB. Its operating system is Windows XP Home Edition.

Web Resources

Visit Streetwise Software's Home Page at <<http://www.swsoftware.com/>> for information about all their products. In addition to software, they also sell T-shirts and specialty paper. Visit <<http://www.swsoftware.com/supplies.htm>> for more information.

You can read about Streetwise Software Inc. at: <<http://www.soft411.com/company/Streetwise-Software/about.html>>

Vital Statistics

Streetwise Software Inc.

Mailing Address: 2801 Ocean Park Blvd. PMB 290, Santa Monica, CA 90405

Tel: 310-829-7827

Fax: 310-828-8258

Sales: 800-743-6765

E-mail: <info@swsoftware.com>

Tech Support:

<<http://www.swsoftware.com/Tech.htm>>

I've never noticed Professor Franklin's Instant Photo Artist in local retail stores. Streetwise Software sells the program on their web site for \$39.99 including 10 sheets of canvas paper. When I visited 11 May 2004, they were offering several software bundles with discounts.

Jacquelyn has reviewed eight other graphics programs for the PC Alamode since 1997. She took the Orca photos during a SeaFari tour of Sea World in April 2004. Her e-mail address is <jazzs@satx.rr.com>.

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Software Review

PhotoElf ver 3.9.18

\$24.99 US

By Landofcom Software

Reviewed by Bill Klutz, Alamo PC

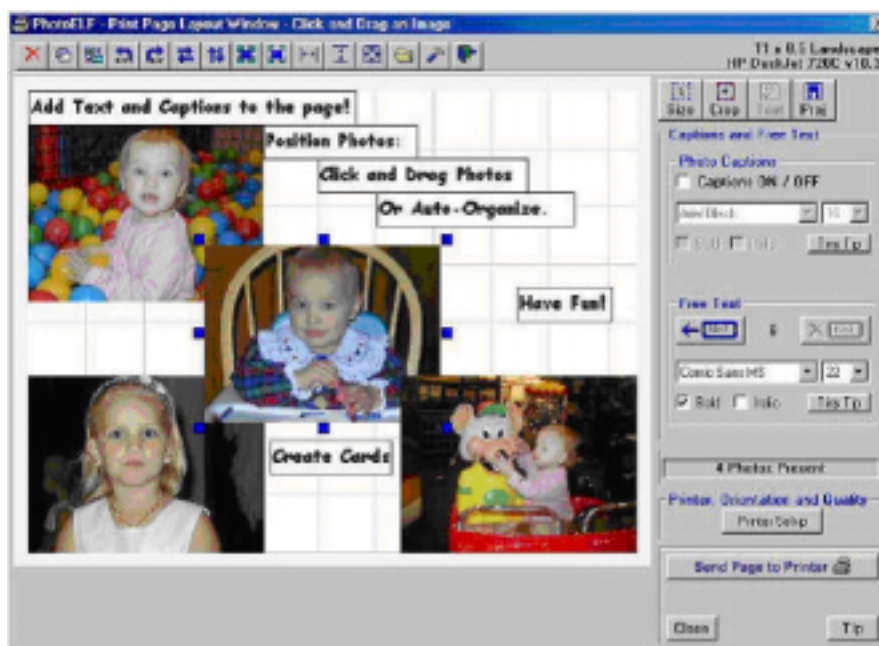
Once-in-a-while you come across a "sleeper program" - one that is very good but that not many people know about (although the program was introduced about 3 plus years ago). This is probably because the program is from a "mom & pop" software development operation - Landofcom Software (The web site has family photos as product examples).

PhotoELF is for the Professional or Home user and is listed as a "Digital Photo Printing and Editing Software" (the two main features). But, it is really more. With this one software package, you should not need any other product to View, Organize, Edit, and Print your Digital Photos. I believe having the word "Printing" first and the descriptive statement, "The Professional Choice for Printing Digital Photos" skews ones thinking toward printing, and does not do justice to the entire program.

Whether you are new to digital photography or a seasoned professional, PhotoELF Software will make working with Digital Photos easy and fun. PhotoELF is not just considered THE BEST photo printing software program on the market, it is also a complete photo viewing, organizing and editing software package, with hundreds of features - red eye removal, image format conversion, creating photo albums (for CD storage), slide show capability, and batch taskings (to name a few).

View Mode

Here you have a fast photo viewer to look at photos wherever they reside (hard drive, CD, floppy, etc.). The status bar reports the properties of the image being viewed. Photos can automatically fit your window or be at the optional 100% level. Also, you can view sample printing layouts and photo album print pages, plus view slide shows with adjustable dwell time. You can do optional thumbnail viewing of folders, as well.



PhotoElf organize mode

Organize Mode

The digital photo organizer allows you to have the standard Windows features of copy, cut, delete, paste and new folder functions, and can calculate the size, in bytes, of selected files. You can create your own custom print page templates, or use the standard "Auto Organize" features. It also allows you to rename hundreds of photos and/or set READ-ONLY or READ/WRITE on hundreds of photos, in about 1 second. In addition you can specify user selected "Fast Open Folders;" 1 click file copy in Manage Mode; and rotate, resize or convert formats in Batch (many images at once) Mode. Here you can also organize photos for albums or to burn onto disks to play on JPG Ready DVD Players. (Most DVD Players today will play home burned CD's of JPG photos as a Slide Show.)

Edit Mode

PhotoELF allows you to edit and enhance photos, rotate, crop, and remove red-eye.

It also allows you to add text and captions to photos, text to the print page, and fun masks and shapes to your photos before printing!

With the PhotoELF Image Editor you can view 17 popular image formats (including BMP, ICO, FPX, JPG, PCX, PCT, PSD, TIF) and save images as one of 60 different image formats. You can also Resize and adjust contrast, brightness, color saturation and sharpness, gamma and despeckle. The crop function is particularly clever. Instead of making you select the part of the image you want to crop, the program generates a selection area that you can adjust either manually or with buttons.

Also, you can adjust quality by converting an image into formats from 8-bit gray scale to 24-bit color. When you change the quality of an image, the image editor lets you preview it to see how much space the revised image will take up. Scanner support and calendar creation are also possible. Using "Advanced Cropping," you can crop to an exact size or ratio,

and slice a photo into equal sizes to create huge posters for printing. With the JPG Compressor Utility, you can save a JPG to any file size for better handling or storage. You can also adjust photo position and size on a page for viewing or printing, and prepare "Contact Sheets" ? Proof sheets with filenames under each picture. You also have available a transparent paint palette. Photos may also be clicked, dragged, sized and edited right on the print page itself.

Batch Operations

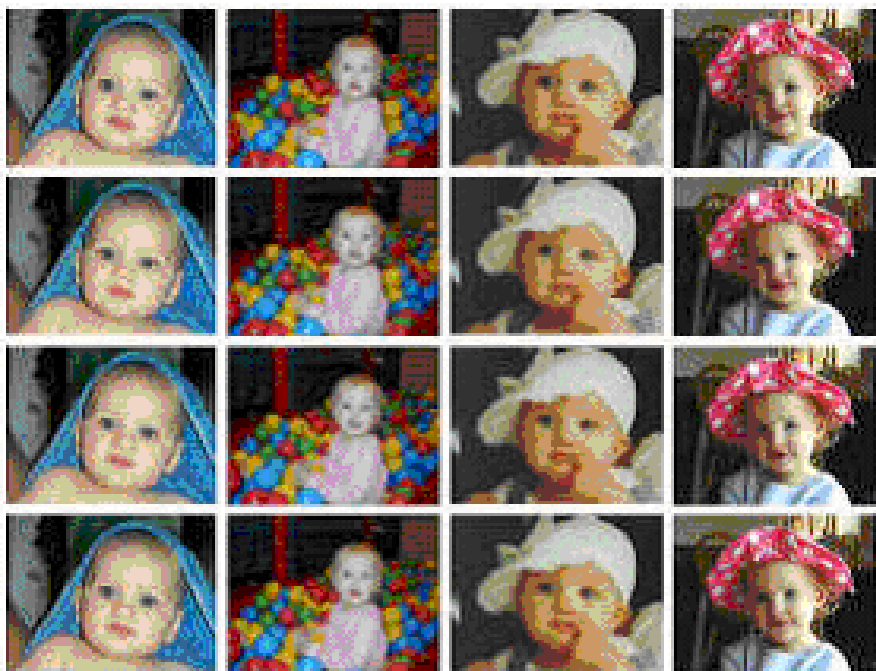
PhotoELF also allows the following Batch features: Rotate, Rename, Resize, Convert Photo File Formats, JPG (JPEG) Compression, Set DPI, Brightness, Contrast, Color Saturation, Hue, Printing, Cropping, change Read-Only and Read/Write. If you work with many photos, some of these features can be a great time saver.

Printing

PhotoELF allows photo quality printing of almost any size (including the popular standards of 8 x 10, 5 x 7, 4 x 6, 3 x 4, and wallet size)! Printing can be on any size and quality of paper, although photo quality paper should be preferred for finished products. You can use the photo printing templates provided or create your own templates. Then you can print up to 144 photos (same or different) on 1 Page, batch print individual photos or a folder of photos (2 to a page, 4 to a page, or as many as you wish up to 144, or a folder of pictures onto many pages), make duplicates, and/or save paper by printing a full page of photos. PhotoELF should work with all Printers, including the Olympus P400, Hewlett Packard, Epson, Canon, Lexmark, Compaq, and Xerox.

Note 1: Professional Digital Camera software batch operations are a necessity when working with many digital photos. PhotoELF will batch print hundreds of photos, as many to a page as you wish up to 144. All you need to do is select all of the photos in any folder and then go to: Batch Printing from the Edit Menu. The batch printing window will then appear and all you have to do is select either a pre-defined template, or a template that you have created. You can then send the batch print job to the printer, or run it through a preview first, before printing. PhotoELF Offers more Batch Functions than any other software program on the market, and should certainly be the professional's choice.

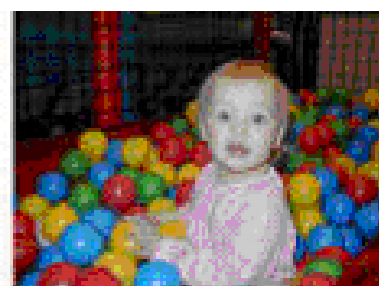
Note 2: Many Professionals use PhotoELF "Photo Printing Software" to print their customers pictures on the



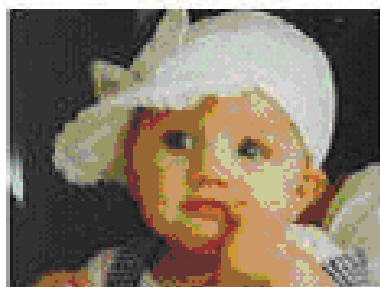
Print wallet size photos



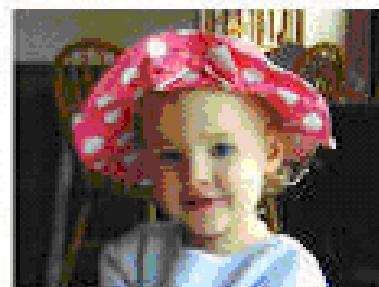
abbey98.jpg



Sara at Chucky Cheese.JPG



Abigail 1 yr old.TIF



Sara 18 months.JPG

Print photos with file name or titles.

Olympus P400 "Die Sub" Printer or the Kodak 8500. While both printers are a bit expensive (about \$700) they produce Photo Lab Print Results that will not fade and can even get wet without running.

Other Features

Create Albums ready for burning to a CD that will Autorun when the CD is inserted; Create web browser based photo albums using the HTML Photo Album

Wizard; view Photo Albums with any Web Browser ON or OFF?Line; create slide show options (sequential or random); and add music to photo albums - MP3 and WAV files. PhotoELF is not just for Digital Cameras! PhotoELF should work with any pictures, on any digital medium (regular CD, Kodak CD, Film Processing Store storage, Digital Camera, Scanner, etc.), and in almost any format (BMP, EMF,

FPX, IFF, JPG, PCT, PCX, PNG, PSD, TIF, WMF and more).

System Requirements

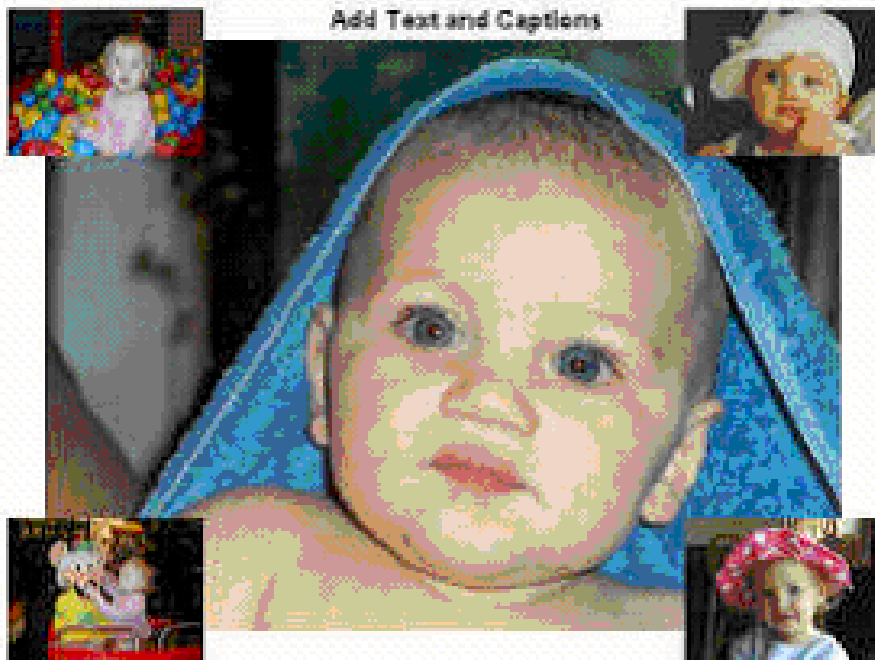
The only information provided was that PhotoELF is designed for Windows 95, 98, ME, 2000, NT and XP. Since it is compatible with Windows 95, it should run on almost any machine that most folks currently have.

Get Your Copy

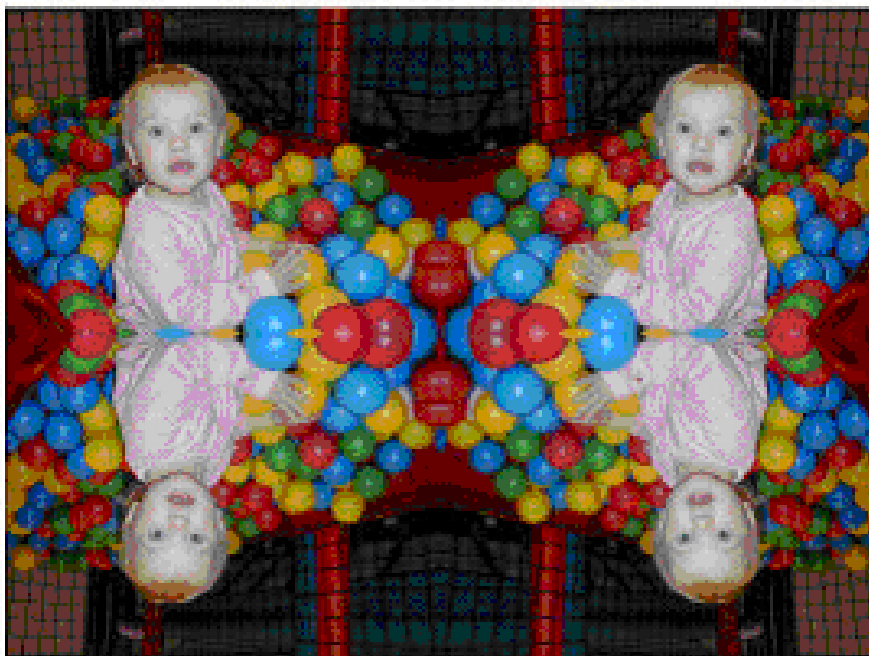
Why take my word about PhotoELF when you can find out for yourself? I said I believe it is a "sleeper program," but maybe not for long (one site reported 5,613 downloads during the 4 weeks after listing the program). If you try it, you may help "spread the word" and awaken this "sleeper" (which will please the developer). Remember, "Try Before you Buy!" is always a good idea. Download the free trial (6.78 MB) of what could be "The Best" photo printing and editing software package around and give the fully functioning program a "Try" for about 2 weeks. (If you need it, "Help," as reported on the web site is at <www.photoelf.org>. If you don't feel the program is for you, an Uninstaller has been included.) If you like how PhotoELF works, you may return to the PhotoELF site and purchase it for only \$24.95 US.

For more information, please e-mail: <info@photoelf.com> or visit one of the following web sites: <photoelf.com> or <landofcom.com>. You may also call (763) 263-2989. If you wish to contact the "PhotoELF Family" (Rick & Dana Kuntz) at their office: Landofcom Software, 17845 211th Ave., Big Lake, MN 55309 USA; <rick@landofcom.com>; (763) 263-2989.

Bill Klutz does consulting work, primarily in the areas of Management and Computer Applications/Hardware/Software.



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Hardware Review

Cable Wrapz

\$3.49 US

By Alliance Rubber Company

Reviewed by Susan Ives, Alamo PC

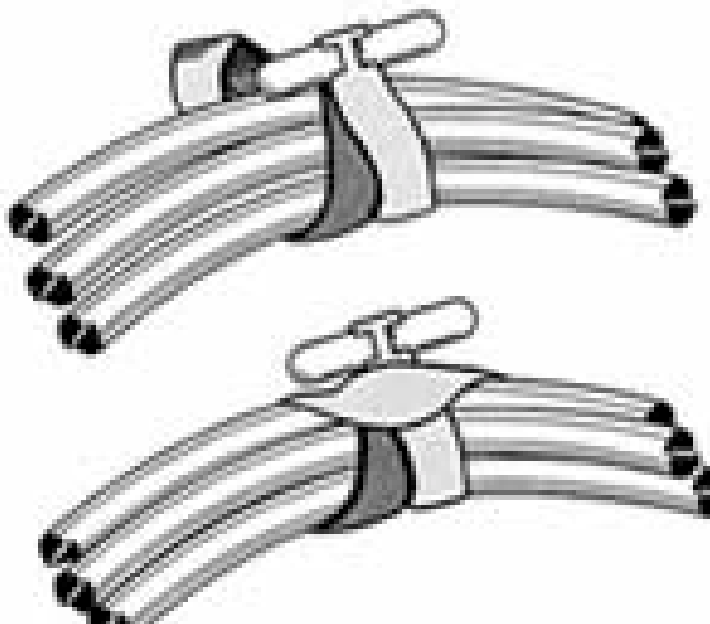
These handy little doo-dads are high-quality rubber bands with toggles on the end that you use to hold cables together.

I decided to use them in my camera bag to tidy up all of the loose cables that are jumbled in there and they worked like a charm. You can also use them for computer and video cables: bundle the cables together while in use or for storage. They are non-conducting and contain no metal, so they don't induce line noise or cross talk.

There's a light gray strip on each of the wrapz so that you can write on it; I found this very useful for my camera cables, as they all look alike but are for specific cameras. Heaven forbid I should use a Sony cable on the Minolta or the Pentax!

The price is right: a pack of six 4" small wrapz or four 7" medium wrapz has a suggested retail price of \$3.49. You can daisy-chain them together if you need a bigger one, or they sell a pack of four 10" large ones, designed for things like coiled garden hoses, for \$3.49.

You can get them locally at CompUSA or order them directly from the Alliance Rubber Company Web site, <www.rubberband.com>.



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Hardware Review

Power Mac G5: Second Look

\$3.49 US

By Macintosh

Reviewed by Lawrence I. Charters, Washington Apple Pi

In January, Washington Apple Pi Labs had a short, brief, but much-cherished affair with a Power Mac G5 single-processor 1.8 GHz machine (see Washington Apple Pi Journal, January/February 2004, pp. 17-24). After little more than a week, however, this gleaming aluminum beauty left us. She had astonished us with her charm, her grace, her speed and raw power. We went into mourning.

Twice the fun

But the mourning was brief. The same benevolent entity that loaned us the first Power Mac G5 foolishly courageously generously loaned us a second, this time a Power Mac G5 with two 2.0 GHz processors. How lucky can you get?

This second windfall was not without some confusion. We first learned about the loan when a small brown box, about the size of a trade paperback book, arrived via FedEx. Opening it, we found a note that claimed the cardboard box was a G5, and two memory modules. Holding the box in one hand, one Lab guru commented that it was amazing how they'd managed to miniaturize the machine. We assumed, correctly, that a larger box would soon be arriving, and a couple days later one did.

Unlike the first G5 we reviewed, this one arrived in a brown box, and the dramatic Power Mac G5 packaging was hidden away inside the more mundane carton. Power Mac G5s were still so rare - especially twin processor models - that Apple had apparently succumbed to pressure from FedEx and UPS and started shipping them in less obvious containers.

Naturally, the first thing we did after unpacking the machine was open it up. Sure enough, there were two processors! Oh, we'll have fun, fun, fun till Daddy takes the G5 awa-a-ay...

The next thing we did was plug it into an ancient Sony Trinitron display (the same one used in the first review) and power it up. We immediately checked under the Apple menu for *About This Mac*, and discovered the machine came with Mac OS X 10.2.8, and had 2 GB (two billion bytes) of RAM. Cool! Before we could do anything else, the System Update popped up and prompted us to update some stuff. We tried, but every update failed.

Bittersweet memories

This was somewhat curious. These same software updates had been installed successfully on other machines, so what made them fail on the Power Mac G5? We decided to launch System Profiler (in the Applications/Utilities directory) and - the machine promptly crashed with a kernel panic. We panicked, too: as Professor Venkman once said, *Generally, you don't see that kind of behavior in a major appliance.*

Wondering if we had a problem with the hard disk, we launched Disk Utility (in the Applications/Utilities directory), and this promptly crashed the machine with another kernel panic. One of the Lab gurus repeated the famous words of Professor Indiana Jones: *il think we got a big problem.*

At this point, a brief conference of Lab gurus suggested it might be a memory problem. (*Conference* means one person had one idea, so we went with it.) And since our generous benefactor had shipped us two memory modules, why didn't we try substituting them for those in the machine?

This worked out surprisingly well: the machine booted properly, it ran System Profiler without any problems, and it ran Disk Utility without any problems. On the down side, the two memory modules proved to be 256 MB each, so we now had 512 MB - one quarter of what we started with. Bummer.

Finding aliens redux

Given the choice of playing with a dual-processor Power Mac G5 with 512 MB, or one with four times as much memory that wouldn't actually work, we decided to reluctantly make do. As with our first test machine, we fired up SETI 3.08, and had it find some aliens for us (see the original article for details). The results:

Power Mac G4/400: 21-22 hours per SETI work unit

Power Mac G4/dual 1000: 11-11 1/2 hours per SETI work unit

Power Mac G5/1800: 5 1/2 hours per SETI work unit

t Power Mac G5/dual 2000: 3 hours, 15 minutes per SETI work unit

This impressive: SETI is just one application, and one that isn't even optimized for the Power Mac G5. Yet in our first try, the dual processor G5 was just shy of 1.7 times faster than the single processor G5 we'd tested earlier, and more than 6.5 times faster than a Power Mac G4/400 of just a couple years ago.

SETI work unit times, as mentioned in the previous article, tend to vary, depending on the data being analyzed. But over the course of a week, the dual processor G5 seemed to consistently turn in times of between three and 3 1/2 hours per work unit. We were giving some thought to trying some other processor intensive tasks, but we got distracted by a cat: Panther.

Moving to Mac OS X 10.3

We knew we'd have to give up the machine quite soon, and we knew the machine was faster than a single processor Power Mac G5. Further benchmarks seemed pointless. On the other hand, we were curious to see how the G5 worked with Apple's latest operating system, so we decided to upgrade.

About this time we got an E-mail that suggested the two 1 GB memory modules we'd removed might work just fine if we left the original 256 MB modules in place and added the higher capacity modules in vacant slots. We tried this, and it worked. We ran lots of test, and it still seemed to work. Exactly why it worked, nobody seemed to know (Apple claims the slots must be used in pairs, but are otherwise pretty much identical.) Now armed with 2.5 billion bytes of memory, we prepared the Power Mac G5 for Panther.

A clean install seemed like the best idea. The two kernel panics we experienced right after getting the machine might have caused some kind of corruption, so we decided to erase the hard disk. We also wanted to retain the option of using Classic, so followed this protocol:

After booting from the Power Mac G5 install disk (it came with Mac OS X 10.2.8), we erased the hard drive. We took the additional step of zeroing all sectors. This greatly increases the length of time necessary to format the drive, but it ensures that every byte on the drive is written over and tested.

We then did a complete restore of the original Power Mac G5 software distribution, including Mac OS X 10.2.8, Classic, and the various iPhoto, iMovie, iCal, etc., applications.

We then booted from the Mac OS X 10.3 Disc 1, and ran Disk Utility to check the drive. The drive claimed it was perfectly happy.

We then did a complete install of Mac OS X 10.3, including all the foreign language files, all the programming libraries, Xcode Tools - everything. We doubted we'd need a tenth of the stuff installed, but we had the drive space.

We then booted the machine, and had Software Update grab a whole mass of assorted updates.

This took the better part of an afternoon (zeroing the drive to test for defects can take a long time, especially with a large drive), so we then decided to, reluctantly, go home.

Blinding speed and power. Ho-hum

For the next few days, we had great fun playing with the G5 under Mac



Nobody in Washington Apple Pi Labs is the least bit skeptical. Nope, not a bit. So why did we immediately rip the cover plate off the G5 and check to see if the box was correct? Did it really have two processors? Yes, it did! It also had twice as many fans, too. (Photo by Lawrence I. Charters, taken with a Canon PowerShot G3 digital camera.)

OS X 10.3. While we could prove, via various measurements, that the dual 2 GHz model is faster than the 1.8 GHz model, in routine use you soon just take the speed for granted.

What was more noteworthy was the ease of running concurrent tasks: no matter how processor intensive (or, with 2.5 billion bytes of RAM, memory intensive) the tasks, you could run lots of things at once, and for all practical purposes not worry about one task slowing down another. Sort large databases? Do complex transformations with Photoshop? Crunch down a million points of data in a statistical package? Find aliens? Render video clips? All at the same time? A piece of cake.

With some trepidation, we decided to try it with Macromedia's Dreamweaver MX 2004. The first release of this software was widely reviled for being so slow that it was all but unusable, even on high-end dual-processor Power Mac G4 machines.

On a dual processor Power Mac G5, however, Dreamweaver MX 2004 seems at least as quick and crisp as the previous versions on older Macs. [Macromedia has since released an update that allegedly makes Dreamweaver MX 2004 much faster. This came out too late to test.]

One obvious problem with such speed: you need more screen real estate. Running several complex programs at once is very hard to do on an ancient 17" Sony Trinitron. A couple 23" Cinema displays, on the other hand, would be perfect. Absurdly beyond the means of most mortals, but perfect.

We reluctantly returned the dual 2 GHz Power Mac G5 to its owner. Then we turned to our piggy banks, and dreamed aluminum tower dreams.

Hardware Review

Computer Memory

by Brian K. Lewis, Ph.D.

Member of the Sarasota Personal Computer Users Group, Inc., Florida

Occasionally the question arises as to how much memory can be put in a computer. The answer is "it depends". It depends on just what you mean by memory (RAM or hard disk), what operating system you are using and the capabilities of your computer's motherboard and its chipset.

When I talk about memory I am not referring to the permanent storage of programs and data on the hard disk. Rather, I refer to the random-access memory or RAM. This is the memory provided by memory chips seated in slots on the motherboard of today's computers. Anything stored in RAM disappears when the power is turned off, so it is referred to as volatile, or temporary, memory.

If you want to upgrade the memory in your computer you have to be able to determine the memory type as well as the size, pins and speed, the number of slots available on your motherboard and the maximum amount of memory that your system can address.

In general, this varies with the age of your computer. So let's look at these components in a little more detail. (Please note that although my remarks refer to Intel's Pentium series central processors, they also generally apply to the equivalent AMD processors.)

Early Pentium based computers had a CPU bus speed of 66 MHz (megahertz) and a PCI I/O bus speed of 33 MHz. These values relate to the speed of data movement within the central processor and transmission to and from peripherals such as the memory bank. In some cases transfer to and from memory was at 50 MHz.

Pentium computers generally had four slots which were arranged as two banks. This meant that memory had to be installed in units of two. The memory chips were 72 pin DRAM (dynamic RAM) or SIMM (single in-line memory modules) modules. Many of these computers could support four

DRAM modules of 32 MB (megabytes) for a maximum of 128 MB of RAM. There were some motherboards built for Pentium 5 systems that had 2 or 3-168 bit DIMM slots in addition to the 72 pin slots. However, you could not use both the 72 pin and 168 pin slots, only one or the other.

These systems would support either 128 or 256 MB of memory. However, at the time, many Pentium/Pentium II computers were sold with only 16 MB of RAM and Windows 95. Later, with Windows 98 the basic memory was 32 MB. In both cases, this is a less than optimum amount of memory for these operating systems. The first Pentium computers had a 32 bit address space which was theoretically capable of addressing 4 GB (gigabytes) of memory. However, none of the motherboards manufactured for these computers carried any such memory capacity.

The next generation of computers carried faster CPUs and chipsets along with faster bus speeds. For example the Intel 440 series chipsets were capable of working with CPUs with speed of 233 - 333 MHz at a bus speed of 66 MHz or with 350-450 MHz processors at a bus speed of 100 MHz.

These motherboards generally had 3- 168 pin slots and would support a maximum of 384 MB of RAM. As the address space of the CPU was increased to 36 bit, the maximum addressable memory was 64 GB. However, in practice some computers running Win98 would not recognize more than 256 or 384 MB of RAM. This problem has been ascribed to the chipset design and problem with the L-2 cache. So some caution is recommended if you intend to upgrade the memory in a Pentium II or older system. With some of the Pentium III class computers there was an additional increment in bus speed to 133 MHz. The motherboards had 2 to 4 168-pin memory slots.

The maximum usable memory of such systems ranges from 512 MB to 1 GB. These motherboards for this CPU class are generally able to use 100 - 133 MHz DIMMs. The 133 MHz DIMMs are capable of working at the 100 MHz speed. The Pentium 4 motherboards came with

a whole new array of chipsets and memory chip types and speeds. The maximum memory now ranges up to 4 GB. Intel's initial Pentium 4 motherboards required the use of RDRAM or Rambus DRAM memory chips. RDRAM is a serial memory technology that arrived in three speeds, PC600, PC700, and PC800. RDRAM designs with multiple channels, such as those in Pentium 4 motherboards, are currently the fastest in memory throughput, especially when paired with the newer PC1066 RDRAM memory.

A Rambus channel is 2-bytes wide, so we get a maximum 1.6GB/s transfer rate for a single RDRAM channel using PC800 RDRAM or 2.1GB/s for PC1066. The other form of memory chip is the double data rate DRAM. Intel and other manufacturers now have motherboards and chipsets that can utilize these memory modules.

They are less expensive than the RDRAM. DDR memory modules are named after their peak bandwidth - the maximum amount of data they can deliver per second - rather than their clock rates. This is calculated by multiplying the amount of data a module can send at once (called the data path or bandwidth) by the speed of the front side bus (FSB). The bandwidth is measured in bits, and the FSB in MHz. Note that the RDRAM bandwidth is in bytes. One byte is equal to 8 bits.

A PC1600 DDR memory module can deliver bandwidth of 1600Mbps. PC2100 (the DDR version of PC133 SDRAM) has a bandwidth of 2100Mbps. PC2700 modules use DDR333 chips to deliver 2700Mbps of bandwidth and PC3200 - the fastest widely used form in late 2003 uses DDR400 chips to deliver 3200Mbps (3.2 Gbps) of bandwidth.

You may see the term "dual channel" applied to memory. When properly used, the term refers to a DDR motherboard's chipset that's designed with two memory channels instead of one.

The two channels handle memory-processing more efficiently by utilizing the theoretical bandwidth of the two modules, thus reducing system latencies, the

timing delays that inherently occur with one memory module. For example, one controller reads and writes data while the second controller prepares for the next access, hence, eliminating the reset and setup delays that occur before one memory module can begin the read/write process all over again.

Consider a model in which data is filled into a container (memory), which then directs the data to the CPU. Singlechannel memory would feed the data to the processor via a single pathway at a maximum rate of 64 bits at a time.

Dualchannel memory, on the other hand, utilizes two pathways, thereby having the capability to deliver data twice as fast or up to 128 bits at a time. The process works the same way when data is transferred from the processor by reversing the flow of data. A "memory controller" chip is responsible for handling all data transfers involving the memory modules and the processor.

This controls the flow of data through the pathways, preventing them from being over-filled with data. Now that you are totally confused by all this memory type and speed terminology, let's look at the next question.

How much memory should you have in your computer? The answer is: probably

as much as your motherboard and chipset can handle. For the newest motherboards, that may be excessive unless you are involved in digital video editing or graphic design. For most home users running WinXP or Win2K I would recommend 512MB up to 1GB. So why those figures? I have found that WinXP uses over 200 MB of RAM for its own files, if that much is available. So on a 256 MB system that leaves very little for other applications and data.

The net result is a lot of swapping with the virtual memory space on the hard drive. That slows everything down. In WinXP the Windows Task Manager (bring up by pressing CTRLALT-DEL) shows your current performance and the amount of memory available in real time. With 512 MB and several programs running,

I have over 300 MB of real RAM available. That greatly increases the responsiveness (speed) of the system as moving data to and from RAM is many times faster than using a hard disk. The Page File window shows you the virtual memory swapping your system is doing. At the moment, mine is zero.

You can do similar analyses on Win98/WinMe systems. The System Monitor application that comes with Windows can supply this information.

However, you may need to modify it to get the memory info you want. Go to Start-Programs-Accessories-System Tools and select System Monitor. If this selection is not available on your menu, then you need to install the program from your original Windows disk or from \WindowsOptions\Cabs file.

You do that from the Control Panel (Add/ Remove Software) and Windows Setup. Once you have the system monitor you can ADD memory information by clicking on Edit, then add item. Select Memory Manager. The individual items that will be the most helpful are: allocated memory, unused physical memory, page files in/ out, swapfile in use or swappable memory.

The kernel reading tells you how much of your CPU capacity is being used. Generally, Win98/WinME will do very well with 256 MB - 384 MB of RAM. You just have to be certain that your motherboard and chipset can support this much RAM. Most of the home computers I have worked on really don't have enough RAM for the most efficient operation. Does Yours?

Dr. Lewis is a former university & medical school professor. He has been working with personal computers for more than thirty years. He can be reached via e-mail at <bwsail@yahoo.com> or voice mail at 941/925-3047.

Hardware Review

In search of "VCR for radio"

\$350 approximate estimate from various sources

by Frank Bollinger, ORCOPUG

I recently began recording radio programs on my computer. Here's how it happened.

Background

This story began more than 40 years ago when I became addicted to talk radio. Over the ensuing years, I've enjoyed many hours of entertaining and informative programs. Topic oriented shows about personal finance, law, cars, and (of course) computers filled the weekends. Hog heaven until the radio stations rearranged their schedules. When the dust settled, three of my favorites were on simultaneously. On top of that, I'm also a baseball fan, so Dodger and Angel games

sometimes presented five alternatives at the same time. Bummer. Why couldn't there be a VCR for radio?

First Solution

I heard about a special radio and tape recorder from C Crane & Co. The tape recorder runs at 1/4 speed, so you can get a 3-4 hour program on one side of an audio cassette. Two problems are that the recorder is a bit bulky to lug around and the tapes won't play in typical tape players. So, I also acquired a portable player capable of recognizing the slow speed.

Now I could listen to one program and record another. But, there are three programs. One night, I heard about some-

thing called Radio YourWay. This is a radio with a built-in timer that saves programs on a memory card. It also has built-in memory. Radio YourWay turns out to be one of those neat ideas that works, but is so aggravating to use that you wonder if it is worth it. For example, programming it is clumsier than any VCR you can imagine (I've had many, and mastered them all fairly easily). A couple other quirks added to my frustration. Fast forwarding is exceedingly slow. It takes several minutes to get to the second or third hour of a 3-hour program. Even worse, if you pause playback more than a couple minutes, it resets to the beginning and you have to wait even longer to get to your new starting point.

It was quite a shock to discover how much harder it is to “time shift” radio than TV. But, even with these challenges, at least I could now record two and listen to the third live. Not perfect, but manageable, until the timer broke on the C Crane recorder. Now, I had to choose which program to miss. Not acceptable after being used to hearing all three.

The next solution

My next idea was to find a device like Radio YourWay, but easier to use. An Internet search led to something called “Replay Radio.” Since I have Tivo for recording TV, and Replay TV is a competing product, this name was quite intriguing. It turned out to be PC software that claims to work like “Tivo for Internet Radio.” I love my Tivo so I explored further, discovering that it could record programs and had an impressive list (several hundred) of radio shows to choose from. The only apparent drawback was that it recorded MP3 files. Remember, I’m a talk show junkie, not a music aficionado. So, selecting this approach would mean I’d need something to play back the recordings or be chained to my computer. (At this point, I wasn’t sure, but it sounded like I’d need an MP3 player).

Alas, Replay Radio has a serious flaw – it can only record one program at a time (As noted above, I want to do three). An exchange of emails confirmed this shortcoming and led me to another program, called WM Recorder. Fortunately, its on-line documentation explicitly stated it can do

up to eight concurrent recordings. One potential glitch – it doesn’t create MP3 files. The same documentation did recommend a program to convert the recordings.

So, I downloaded the software and ordered an Apple iPod (MP3 player) from Amazon.com. Since I don’t like using earphones, I also ordered a speaker apparatus that the iPod can plug into for playback.

Mission accomplished, right? Not quite. I successfully recorded several radio programs. All played well on my PC. The next step was to convert them to MP3 files. Guess what? The “recommended” conversion program didn’t recognize the .asf files created by the recording software. Being the audio “expert” I am, my first question was “What the @#%\$ is an asf file?” Back to the Internet, where I researched audio file formats and found alternative software. Two allowed trial downloads that were able to handle the asf files. Curiously, after another email exchange, I found out that I could simply change the asf file extensions to wma and the recommended program would make the conversions. Apparently, asf and wma are two different Microsoft audio formats. Still, it’s easier to use a conversion program, since it can batch many at once.

With that problem solved, I’m now able to record several programs on a predetermined schedule. I can use the iPod with earphones when out walking and with my speaker apparatus around my home. I’ve even used the speaker gadget in my car.

This trip was a roller coaster containing numerous ups and downs with continuing challenges. For example, I found out where one of the originating radio stations is located when Bob Brinker’s Money Talk turned out to be a Kansas City Chief’s football game. Sometimes the recordings don’t work, and one of the programs I want doesn’t have an Internet broadcast.

Despite all that, it was a grand adventure, I had a lot of fun doing it, and am enjoying listening to programs I was missing before. The time from the cassette recorder failure to having all the components assembled and functioning successfully was about two weeks. Oh, yes. What about music? Can’t say. I may be the only person who bought an MP3 player NOT to play music.

Here’s the final hardware and software configuration:

1. WM Recorder (Records the programs) (\$29.95 from www.wmrecorder.com)
2. WM VCR (Schedules the recordings) (\$9.95 from www.wmrecorder.com)
3. River Past Audio Converter (Converts the asf files to MP3) (\$29.95 from www.riverpast.com)
4. Apple iPod (MP3 Player) (Approximately \$230 and up, depending on source and model)
5. Altec Lansing InMotion Portable Audio (Speaker gadget for the iPod) (Approximately \$110, from various sources)

Hardware Review

More Power to You

Bill Garfield, wdg@hal-pc.org

One cause of computer data loss is the momentary power failure. It’s been said the potential for damage to your computer or the data that’s on it falls into two general categories; damage that has already happened and damage that will eventually happen. If you’ve ever considered a backup power supply for your computer and not really understood the lingo, or even wondered what size you need, this article may help.

The technical definition of a “UPS” is an Uninterruptible Power Source.

These vary both in size (capacity) as well as in quality and features. Most of the cheapies out there serve only as a minimal barebones backup power source while others provide a filtered, pure sine wave output, over voltage & under voltage (brownout) protection, as well as surge protection. As with most any product, features vary and you get what you pay for.

Choosing the right UPS depends on what you expect your standby power system to provide. Most of us would be satisfied with a small unit around

400-VA, just big enough for our PC and monitor, to save us from those annoying momentary flickers or allow us to perform a quick orderly shutdown if the power happens to stay off for more than a few seconds. Other computer “addicts” might want to be able to continue using their computer for as long as possible. The difference is in the VA ratings, how much load you plan to put on it and of course, your budget.

A small unit sufficient to carry you through those brief momentary flickers and keep you going for a couple of

minutes during a brief outage can actually be found for less than \$50. Expect to pay more for higher capacity and longer run times. There are also 3 general types:

the basic UPS with little or no surge protection and no brownout or over voltage protection which simply switches over and picks up the load in the event of a power interruption;

an advanced model which adds over voltage protection and

high-end professional grade systems which provide pure sine wave and constant voltage output (brownout & over voltage protection).

You're apt to find little price difference between the "a" and "b" variety, so when shopping, always look for one that includes surge protection built-in. The good news is they're becoming very affordable. Surge protection is expressed in "Joules" and the more, the better. You'll want at least 800 Joules of surge protection.

The small \$50 variety UPS will operate most home computers (CPU and monitor only) for only a couple of minutes. If you plan on including your printer and a small desk lamp, or need a little more time, you'll need something a bit larger than the bare bones model.

For the average computer user, a 600 VA (about \$100) model will provide around 15 minutes run time (depending on actual load). Just remember, size (capacity) equates to cost. My 1400 VA model cost \$400, but it will keep my entire desktop going for over an hour. That includes a small desk lamp, two separate 2 Ghz towers, 19" LCD monitor, flatbed scanner, router, DSL modem, printer, powered speakers and the answering machine. (I really hate having to reprogram my answering machine)

Watts vs. Volt-Amperes (VA), what do the numbers mean? I'm not going to get technical here, buy many years ago everything to do with electrical power was expressed in watts.

This made it easy for the layperson to understand because we could all relate to the various wattage appliances and light bulbs in our homes. But then somewhere along the way electrical product manufacturers started playing the numbers game, expressing things in a brand new term, "Volt-Amperes" or just VA. Unfortunately, watts and volt-amperes are not interchangeable terms.

You'll need to know the approximate average conversion factor (1.6). What this means is 100 VA equals approximately 60 watts. That's not precisely accurate, as there are other things thrown in to complicate the formula, but still using a conversion of 1.6 should get us inside the ballpark.

Complicating things, nowhere on the back of your computer or monitor or desk lamp, etc. will you find a VA rating. All of the appliances, computers, etc. in our homes and businesses are still rated in watts.

A good rule of thumb when selecting a UPS is to buy twice the capacity you actually need. This is for two reasons; First of all, having extra capacity ensures that we're always operating down in the comfort zone, well within the sweet spot of the manufacturer's design curve.

Secondly, it gives us that extra margin to allow for plugging in something extra that we overlooked or maybe adding something later. When sizing your UPS requirements, add up all of the wattage ratings of everything you plan to plug in, then double it and multiply that total by 1.6.

This will give you the "VA" rating of an appropriately sized UPS for your application with plenty of reserve. If your math works out to be somewhere between two UPS models, opt for the larger of the two, affordability notwithstanding.

Exercise the battery? No, never. The battery experts say not with a UPS. However, purchasing and installing a UPS doesn't necessarily mean that you'll always have reserve power available. Everyone knows that all batteries eventually fail.

However, there's really nothing we can do to extend the life expectancy of our UPS. In my experience I have found that the capacity of my hefty 1400-VA UPS dwindles down gradually over time and loses about 20% of its reserve capacity (run time) per year. In fact, batteries in many UPS systems sometimes fail a lot sooner than expected due to over use.

A UPS is not a portable power system like a generator. Rather it's an "emergency" system designed to be used only in brief, intermittent situations. Certain rechargeable batteries like those used in cellular phones need to be exercised. However, this is not the case with the sealed lead-acid (or gel-cell) batteries used in a UPS.

The battery in a conventional UPS is very similar to a car battery, which can easily be damaged by deep-cycling (running it all the way down). We also know that our car battery will eventually one day fail to start our car, regardless of how we baby it. Preventing this inconvenience means periodic replacement of the battery before it fails.

Replacing the battery (or batteries) in a UPS system can sometimes be a daunting task. Some models have an access panel on the bottom making it relatively easy. Alas, I've never found one of these easy-access panels on many of the inexpensive models and they're not that common even on the more expensive models.

It's obvious that battery replacement wasn't on the top of the manufacturer's design criteria. In fact, in some UPS units it is clear the manufacturer never intended for the battery to be a "user-serviceable item".

However, with varying amounts of manual dexterity, muscle and some common sense electrical safety precautions, all UPS batteries can usually be replaced for about 1/4 of the replacement cost of a whole new unit, provided you can do it yourself.

By the way, finding a replacement battery isn't always easy. Around Houston, Fry's Electronics and Altex carry them, so does Interstate Battery. Just avoid surplus/salvage stores

In closing, I don't want to recommend any specific brand UPS in this article. If you'd like to email me I'd be happy to point you toward my personal favorite. Actually they're all pretty good and vary mainly in features (and cost). Also, when shopping for a UPS you may notice that none of the stores selling them carry replacement batteries.

That's no accident. The reason I'm told is that there is very little market for the batteries. They can sometimes be difficult to replace and the task of replacing batteries brings with it some EPA concerns regarding disposal.

- Reprinted from *HAL PC Magazine*, November 2004

Hardware Review

Necessities for That New Computer

By Ira Wilsker, APCUG Board of Directors

Recently, I noticed a lot of people were buying new computers. In overhearing some conversations at a variety of local stores, it appeared that some computers were intended to replace older models, and others were for "first-time" users, both youngsters and senior citizens. If the new user, as well as the experienced user, would follow some simple steps and obtain and use some necessary hardware and software, then he will likely have several years of happy computing. If the user fails to heed safe computing guidelines, he will likely result in dissatisfaction with the new machine.

First, do not plug that new computer directly into the wall socket. It is imperative that the new computer is plugged into either a surge suppressor (the minimum protection) or a good uninterruptible power supply with automatic voltage regulation (UPS-AVR), of appropriate capacity, which would be ideal. Users need to be aware that the warranties of most new computers do not cover damage from power related problems, and plenty of users have had their new computers "fried" by power surges or spikes. The resistance to power surges and spikes is measured in joules, and generally the more joules the better. A good UPS with AVR that has adequate capacity to power the computer for several minutes generally offers far superior protection to a surge suppressor. If a surge suppressor is selected, be sure that it has a UL1449 rating at a minimum. Some users think that a common inexpensive power strip is adequate, but other than maybe having a circuit breaker, a power strip offers no protection from power problems.

Once the computer is assembled, plugged into an appropriate protective device, and turned on, other threats and needs appear. First is antivirus protection: many new computers come with a short term trial version of an antivirus program, installed with the hope that the user will pay the annual registration fee prior to expiration. I have had users tell me that they do not need antivirus software because they never go online with that computer, and that

can be a dangerous misconception. Computer viruses can also be transmitted by infected floppies, CDs, and DVDs, necessitating an updated antivirus product. Several antivirus products are available at retail and by download. Before purchasing antivirus software, consider the free antivirus software available from a variety of sources, including the free antivirus software that some of the internet service providers give their subscribers. One decent free program is the EHZ Trust Suite, consisting of antivirus software, a firewall to restrict hacker access, and a popup blocker, can be downloaded at www.my-etrust.com/microsoft.

Relatively few users do not go on line, and since almost all do, Internet access will be required. Almost all new computers come pre-installed with a variety of software from several national internet service providers (ISPs). Microsoft tries to push users into using its MSN paid Internet access, and AOL, EarthLink, and others are commonly installed and featured on the desktop. The smart user desiring dial-up Internet access can probably save money and get superior service by using a local ISP for Internet access (such as Eonet, or EXP), rather than the big national carriers. If the user subscribes to a local ISP, then the directories containing the software for the national carriers can be safely deleted from the hard drive. If the user will be using the Internet extensively, then high speed "broadband" Internet access would be desirable. Choices of broadband providers include cable, DSL, and satellite broadband. They are generally price competitive with each other, but some

offer better service than the others, and this varies locally. One warning: be sure that you understand any contracts that may be required, as some broadband providers have a hefty cancellation fee for terminating an account prematurely.

A printer will be necessary to print documents, photos, and other items. Almost all modern printers will do a decent job for household use, but be aware of what new inkjet or laser cartridges can cost. The user can save a lot of money by recycling and recharging his used inkjet and laser toner cartridges (such as from Laser Recon), or by purchasing refilled or generic cartridges. Be aware that inexpensive but good quality generic cartridges are generally available for some brands (Epson, Canon), but difficult to find for others (Lexmark, HP). A good deal and a high rebate on one brand of printer may turn out to be a false economy when the cost of replacement cartridges is factored in to the overall cost.

The user replacing his old computer with a new one may want to move files and programs to the new computer. Data files can be copied to CD, or moved via a direct network connection, but program files can generally not be simply copied from one computer to another. It would be best to reinstall desired programs from the original discs, but if they are not available, a utility sometimes included with new computers, or a utility such as "Aloha Bob" can move program files properly.

Enjoy that new computer, but be sure to practice "safe hex".



Senior Comp
 A program of Seniors teaching Seniors
 Classes starting every few weeks.
 No previous experience necessary.
 Small Classes with hands on training.
 We hope to "empower" our Seniors to be
 active participants in the information age.



SWRI is Hiring!

Software Engineering (Division 10)

Southwest Research Institute is in need of 40 computer programmers; prefer Degreed in Computer Science to be hired between now and April. GPA of 3.5+ if no experience, or 3.3+ with 5 years or more experience.

If anyone is qualified and interested, contact:

Bernard J. Siegel
senior research analyst
6220 Culebra Rd
San Antonio, Tx
phone 210 522-2347
fax 210-522-5885
<bernard.siegel@swi.org>



Alamo Area Community Information System

Creating opportunities for our community to connect to the **new technologies**, rich **information** resources and the educational, economic and social **opportunities** that follow.

Wanted: Contract Computer Trainers

AACIS is looking for experienced TRAINERS to teach introductory computer courses on a contract basis (up to \$20/hour, depending upon experience). Topics include:

Intro to the PC, Internet
(and E-mail), Word, Excel.
Bi-lingual a plus. Please
send a letter of interest and
resume to:

fvalle@sanantonio.gov
or call 210.207.6007



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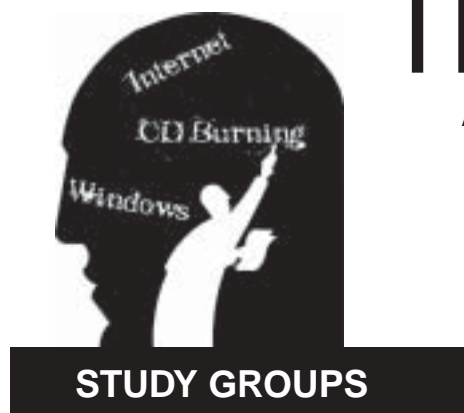
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<http://www.sanantoniojobs.com>

Alamo PC Monthly Planner

March 2005

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The Learning Center

Alamo PC Organization classes and study groups

STUDY GROUPS

Advanced Access Study Group

This study group is designed for people with experience with Microsoft Access who wish to learn and share ideas on advanced forms, VBA code, reports, queries, etc. Attendees should already be familiar with database design basics and the basics of building forms, reports and queries in Access. Topics include using graphs, database security, SQL Server connectivity, customer functions or other topics of interest.

Contact: Joseph Kubon
<joseph.kubon@padgett-cpa.com>
210-828-6281 x 1554

When: Fourth Thursday, 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★★★

C/C++ Study Group

Please note we are currently a study group and no longer a Class. C/C++ Study Group Our group consists of 3 to 6 regular members who meet twice a month to discuss their plans and progress on development of software for experimental use. We do not plan to offer C or C++ courses in this study group. To join the study group, get acquainted with some of its members and consider preparing a brief presentation of your planned or current efforts.

Contact:
Bruce McAlexander
<mcalexb@satx.rr.com> 210-680-0231

Murry Adams
<mnadams@texas.net> 210-696-0047

Carl Deneke
<cdeneke@Texas.net> 210-496-6397

When: First and Third Saturday, 2:30 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★★ - ★★★

Commodore Users of SA

Contact: Diana Jones
830-303-1220

When: Second Saturday, 1-4 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★ - ★★★★★

Genealogy Study Group

For everyone interested in using their computer for genealogy. We will discuss currently available genealogy software, their pros and cons and meeting participants views as to best software to use for both beginners and advanced genealogists.

Contact: Jim Collier
<jcinquiry@earthlink.net>
210-710-5660

When: First Monday, 7-9 pm

Where: Learning Center.

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★ - ★★

HGSI Study Group

The premise of the HGS Investor SIG is, "Knowledge is stronger when passed on to others." We have created an environment for continuing education and open discussion between well informed members and guest speakers in matters of using Fundamental and Technical Analysis for the buying and selling of equities. Meetings are held on the First Thursday of the month in the UBS Conference Room, 200 Concord Plaza Drive, Suite 300 at 6:30PM to 8:30PM. If you wish to be added to our mailing list or for more information, contact below.

Contact: Maynard Burstein
<maynardb@juno.com> 735-3288

When: 1st Thursday, 6:30-8:30pm

Where: UBS/Paine Webber, 200 Concord Plaza Dr. Suite 300

Pre-registration: Call Maynard
Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

.NET Study Group

A study group for those interested in developing Windows and Web applications using Microsoft's .NET technology. We will focus on VB.NET and C# to build Web applications that interact with a SQL Server database (ASP.NET & ADO.NET). Tools used will include the .NET Framework SDK and WebMatrix. Additional discussions and use of Visual Studio.NET will be included.

Contact: Joe Brazell 688-9508

When: 1st Thursday, 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★★★

MCSE Advanced Study Group

The MCSE Advanced SIG, affectionately known as 'The Geeks', has just completed its study for the Exchange Server 2003 design exam to qualify for the MCSE : Messaging on Windows 2003. In January we will begin learning about either ISA Server 2004 or studying for the Windows XP exam. The MCSE Advanced SIG is designed for those who already have their MCSE certification. Space is limited. Therefore membership is restricted. The SIG meets every Saturday morning from 8:30 until noon. Please contact Larry Lentz before attempting to attend.

Larry Lentz, MCSE on NT, W2K, MCDBA, MCSA: Messaging
<Larry@LentzComputer.Net>

When: Every Saturday, 8:30-noon

Where: Contact Larry

Pre-registration: Yes - contact Larry
Technical Rating ★★★★★

Small Business Server Study Group

The Alamo PC Small Business Server Special Interest Group held its December meeting on Friday, December 3rd at the Alamo PC Learning Center. After the Taco Social, we had a great presentation by Ken Strain, The Montopolis Group, on Remote Web Workplace. Next Larry Lentz, Lentz Computer Services, explored the SBS User Group Resource DVD provided by Mike Iem at Microsoft. Next month we're hoping to have Dr. Tom Shinder, ISA Server guru and author (isaserver.org), come down to kick off the MCSE Advanced SIGs study of ISA Server 2004. 17 were in attendance this month. The Alamo PC SBS SIG meets the first Friday of each month at 8 AM at the Alamo PC Learning Center in Crossroads Mall, San Antonio, Texas. For more information contact SIG Chairman Larry Lentz, <Larry@LentzComputer.net>

Photoshop Study Group

Visit the Learning Center every Thursday (except holidays) from 1pm - 5pm for advanced Photoshop practice. Basic Photoshop practice will be held every Friday (except holidays) from 1pm - 5pm during even numbered months. **Only students who have attended the Photoshop Basics class are eligible to attend.**

Contact: Beverly Bihn <bihndolls@att.net>

When: Thursdays & even month Fridays

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: no
Technical Rating ★★ - ★★★★★

STUDY GROUPS (cont.)

Power Internet Study Group

This year we are covering eight subjects: PC-to-PC data transfer, third party data transfer, DSL and direct cable broadband connectivity, e-mail, browser use, MS Outlook and virus protection in communications.

Contact: John Woody
<jwoody@texas.net>
210-494-5684

When: 2nd Wednesday, 10am-noon

Where: Learning Center

Preregistration: No

Technical Rating ★★

Quicken

Each month the Quicken Study Group leaders will provide tips, techniques, answer questions, solve problems, and present an in-depth discussion of some aspect of Quicken for Windows. Have questions about how to do something in Quicken? Come to the Study Group and have questions answered.

Contact:

Larry Mathews

<clm.sat@iname.com>

Yael Friedlander

<yaelf@sbcglobal.net> 210-492-1163

When: 3rd Monday, 7-8pm (No Dec. meeting)

Where: Learning Center

Preregistration: Not required but preferred. Call Yael Friedlander between 8am & 5pm.

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

WordPerfect Evening Study Group

We demonstrate projects and features of the latest version of WordPerfect. We also like to work on real life situations with our members who have questions. Co-chairs Frances Pape and Paul Chevalier.

Contact: Cynthia Thompson

210-655-1058

When: 3rd Wednesday, 7-9pm

Where: Call Cynthia for directions

Pre-registration: Yes - Call Cynthia

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Call for New Instructor

A Computer Literacy class leader is needed for an additional class. Please contact John Gaddis at <education@alamopc.org> or 494-9449.

FREE CLASSES

Computer Literacy Class

This course is designed for beginners and those who want to brush up their computer skills. Students learn about the parts of the computer, acquire keyboard and mouse skills used in many software programs, and gain a basic understanding of surfing the Web and using e-mail. The course prepares students to enroll in a variety of second level courses.

Contact: David Henry <oobootes@juno.com>

When: First three Saturdays of every month, 1-3pm

Where: Resource Center

Pre-registration: Yes - Call the

Learning, 210-736-0080

Technical Rating ★

CorelDRAW I Class

This basic class discusses basic tools and effects, concentrating on fills, blends, envelopes and other special effects for the next few months.

Contact: Steve Tech

<stephentechjr@yahoo.com>

210-675-2880

When: 4th Monday, 6-8pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★★

DotNetNuke Configuration and Management

This is a class on using the DotNetNuke portal software for hosting your website. The class will focus on hands-on configuration and use of the DNN 2.x portal. This portal is a service available to Alamo PC members. The class will setup web pages, insert modules on the pages. Modify and edit the look of the pages as well as the data in the pages. Modules will include: Calendar, Announcements, Forums, Blogger, Contacts, Links, Surveys and HTML.

Contact: Joe Brazell,

<ejbrazell@satx.rr.com>, 345-2207

When: August 31 7PM - 9PM

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating: ★

eBay - Bid with Confidence: An Introduction to Internet Auctions

This 4-session class shows you how to buy and sell at Internet auctions using the eBay system (excludes real estate and automobiles).

Contact: Learning Center 736-0080

<learncenter@alamopc.org>

When: 7-9pm on Wednesdays.

2nd, 9th, 16th and 23rd February

Where: Learning Center, Room 1

Pre-registration: Yes

Technical Rating: ★

Excel 2000 Class

Students will become familiar with and understand Excel 2000's basic functionality, menus, toolbars, icons, and shortcut keys. Students will learn how to create, format, save and print an Excel spreadsheet. Also, understand and use formulas, work with worksheets and workbooks import files and insert pictures and objects

Contact: Bill Eastridge

<weastridge@satx.rr.com>

When: First four Tuesdays of odd numbered months (Jan, Mar, May) 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

HTML Class

Learn how to design, build and manage your own web site using HTML. Some of the topics discussed include formatting text, links and forms. Additional non-HTML topics include planning, design and management, color and graphics, CSS, FTP and dealing with search engines. The 10 week class will begin a new cycle each January, May and September.

Contact: Mike Bianchi

<webmaster@alamopc.org>

When: every Friday 7-9 pm

Where: Alamo PC Learning Center

Prerequisite:

Home Page Jumpstart
familiarity with Windows

Pre-registration: yes

To register e-mail Mike at

<webmaster@alamopc.org>

Technical Rating: ★

Home Page Jumpstart

A general introduction to developing your own Internet web page. It is *not* a course on HTML. Includes a 20+ page manual and a training disk. Not hands-on.

Contact:

Susan Ives <suives@texas.net>

210-694-4582

When: 2nd Wednesday, 5:30-7pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★ - ★★

Internet Jumpstart Class

This class is intended for people who have never seen the Internet, who have not been on the Internet or who are on the Internet but are just beginning to find their way around.

Contact:

Sandy Knight <sknight@satx.rr.com>

When: 2nd & 4th Saturday of even numbered months, 9am-noon. **No Jan. meeting.**

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No

Technical Rating ★

Introduction to Photo Editing

Due to member interest, two back-to-back classes will be held the 2nd Saturday of each month. Requirements are the attendee should be an intermediate computer user (no beginners, please) and should already have a graphics software program on their PC. We will primarily use Photoshop Elements software, although we will also use Corel PhotoPaint and ArcSoft Photostudio occasionally.

Contact: Clarke Bird
<cbird@satx.rr.com>

When: 2nd Saturday, 8-10am, 10am-noon

Pre-registration: Yes - Learning Center
Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Power Point class

A new PowerPoint class will start in January 2005. See Significant Happenings Page 8. Pre-registration is required.

Contact: Learning Center 736-0700

When: call

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes
Technical Rating: ★

Windows XP Class

This class is intended to help you make the transition to Windows XP the latest version of Microsoft's Operating System. Subjects covered include the features of and how to configure Windows XP.

Contact: Sandy Knight
<sknight@satx.rr.com>

When: 2nd & 4th Saturdays of odd numbered months, 9am - noon.

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: Yes
Technical Rating ★ - ★★

Word 2000 Class

Become familiar with Word 2000's basic functionality, menus, toolbars and shortcut keys. Students will learn how to create, view, format, save and print a Word document. Also work with templates, multiple documents, insert files, objects and pictures. Optional textbook: Word 2000 Step by Step book (this will be helpful but is not required). Student should have basic knowledge of Windows and be familiar with operating the mouse and keyboard.

Contact: Joe Haggard, 342-5373

When: First four Tuesdays of even-numbered months (Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct, Dec), 7-9pm

Where: Learning Center

Pre-registration: No
Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

FEE-BASED CLASSES

Photoshop Elements & Photoshop 7 Class - \$

2005 Schedule:

March thru April - Elements 2 instruction classes (9 weeks on Fridays, 1 - 5 P.M. basics thru photo editing)

May thru June - Photoshop 7 instruction classes (8 weeks on Fridays, 1 - 5 P.M. basics thru photo editing)

July thru August - Elements 2 instruction classes (9 weeks on Fridays, 1 - 5 P.M. basics thru photo editing)

September thru October - Photoshop 7 instruction classes (9 weeks on Fridays, 1 - 5 P.M. basics thru photo editing)

Contact: Beverly Bihn <bihndolls@att.net>

When: Fridays 1pm - 5pm except holidays

Where: Learning Center

Fees: (includes textbook) \$120 non members (includes one year membership to Alamo PC), \$90 Alamo PC members

Pre-registration: Yes - call the Learning Center at 210-736-0080.
Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Photoshop Workshops - \$

March thru December - Open to anyone who has previously taken the basic Photoshop 7 classes at Alamo PC

Contact: Beverly Bihn <bihndolls@att.net>

When: Thursdays 1pm - 5pm except holidays

Where: Learning Center

Fees: (includes written instructions) \$20 per month for Alamo PC members only
Pre-registration: Yes - call the Learning Center at 210-736-0080.

Technical Rating ★ - ★★★

Senior Comp Class - \$

Introductory classes for people 45 and over. New classes begin approximately every two months. Classes are held at the Resource Center Lab and meet for two hours once a week for six weeks. Courses offered: Intro to Computers 1&2 and MS Word and Internet/E-mail.

Contact: Ed & Audry Henkin
www.seniorcomp.org

When: see page 10 for schedule

Where: Learning Center

Fees: \$60 includes textbook
Pre-registration: Yes - call 736-0080
Technical Rating ★ - ★★

Introduction to MS Access Databases Class - \$

This class is a hands-on beginner's class on Microsoft Access offered in four 4-hour sessions (16 hours total) over four consecutive weekends. The focus is on designing and building database applications. The fee includes a syllabus and a textbook. Prerequisites: Experience using Microsoft Office programs such as Word and Excel.

Contact: Joe Brazell,
<ejbrazell@satx.rr.com>, 210-345-2207

When: contact Learning Center

Where: Learning Center

Fees: \$60 Alamo PC Members; \$75 Non-Members

Pre-Registration: Required - Call the Learning Center at 210-736-0080. Technical Rating: ★★

Private or Semi-Private Tutorials - \$

Develop your skills at your own pace and at a time that fits your schedule. Introductory private tutorials for one, two, or three students. Choose from:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Basic Computer Skills, or
- Keyboarding/Typing

Contact: Learning Center (210) 736-0080 or 736-0700

When: Days and hours are arranged between the student(s) and teacher.

Where: Learning Center

Fees: 1 student: \$35 per hour, 10 hours for \$300. 2 or 3 students: per student—\$20 per hour, 10 hours for \$150

Pre-registration: Yes—call or visit the Learning Center

Technical Rating: *

Technical Content Ratings

- ★ For the beginner, no experience necessary and no prerequisite.
- ★★ Assumes some basic familiarity with the subject but is not a technical course.
- ★★★ Assumes that the student is somewhat familiar with the subject and will discuss.
- ★★★★ Assumes that the student is competent in the material and will be technical.

Help Numbers

Can you help a new member with a new computer? Are you proficient in software not listed? Can you help with a title currently showing only one volunteer? Call John Gaddis at 494-9449.

1 Look down the list for the software program you need help with; note the number in front of the title.

2 Then look down the list to the right for the corresponding number for the person who may be able to help you.

Please observe the times given by the volunteers name to call for phone help.

Step One

0	ACT!	28	Quattro Pro
1	Access	29	Quick Books
2	AlphaFour	30	Quicken
6	dBase	31	Photo Album
7	Delphi	32	Windows 98
8	Dreamweaver 3	35	WinFax Pro
9	Networking	36	MS Word Windows
10	Excel	37	WordPerfect
11	Family Origins for Win.	39	Visual Basic
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23	Paint Shop Pro	47	Mozilla
24	Adobe Photoshop	48	MySQL
25	Crystal Reports	49	.Net
26	PowerPoint	50	Windows XP

Step Two

Expertise	Name	Phone	Availability	E-mail
(2)	Tom Drawert	696-9601	M-F 6-9pm; S/S 9am-6pm	
(12,24)	Steve Northover	497-5750	M-F 7-9pm; S/S 12-3pm	
(6)	Bowen Moursund	736-1791	M-F 9am-4pm	
(7, 21)	Keith Marbach	(830)303-9344	M-F 9am-4pm	
(7, 21)	Ed Conner	696-0191	4-7pm	
(9, 10, 16, 23, 30, 32, 33, 35, 42)	John Bolton	658-3060	M-F 6-9pm;	
(0, 10, 11, 26, 29, 30, 35, 36, 42)	Jean Smith	822-1133	M-F 10am-8pm; Sun 12-8pm	
(11, 14)	Bob Harris	492-3683	M-F 7-9pm	
(14)	Bob Battaglia	651-5642	9am-7pm	
(18)	Lou Harris	492-3683	M-F 7-9pm	louharris@alumni.utexas.net
(18, 23, 31)	Herb Langthorp	651-6087	M-F 6-10pm; 6-9:30pm on S/S	pokeypub@satx.rr.com
(44, 45, 46, 47, 48)	Chris Montgomery	490-2415	M-F 7-9pm;S/S 12-6pm	
(21)	Paul Woods	653-8940	4-7pm	
(25)	Barry Woitena		M-F 9-5pm	dallasmx@swbell.net
(28)	Brian Collie	828-1505	M-Sat 10am-5pm	
(36)	Christel Villarreal			cvillarreal@stic.net
(37)	Cynthia Thompson	655-1058	9am-9pm	
(9,42, 43)	Frank Flores	344-2231	M-Sat 9am-1pm	frflores@grandecom.net
(10, 43)	Mario Flores	566-4048	10am-11pm. Leave name, number.	
(8, 13, 26)	Robert Carrasco			carrasco_r@yahoo.com
(1, 10, 25, 26, 36)	Joseph Kubon	828-6281 x 1554	12noon - 8pm M-F and S/S	
(1, 10, 36)	David de Leon	614-3100	1-4pm M/F 12noon-8pm Sat & Sun.	
(9, 14, 16, 32, 36, 40, 41,42, 43)	Bruce Cramer	865-2933	M-Sat 9am-3pm	service@pcpro4u.com
(40, 41, 50)	Ted Ressler			catechist@gmail.com

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Classified Ads

E-mail or snail mail (address on page 3) your ad to the Editor, PC Alamode at: editor@alamopc.org. Copy deadline is 10th of month preceeding publication. Classified ads are free to members of Alamo PC.

- For Sale** View Sonic Professional Series P75f+ Flat Screen CRT 17" monitor. Purchased June 1, 2004. Hot key to boost brightness levels for intense, vivid colors with video, DVD, graphics and gaming. Toggle back to normal brightness for text. Ultra-fine 0.25mm aperture grille pitch. \$99 call Sandy @ 372-9985 or sknight@satx.rr.com
- For Sale** Hewlett Packard Laser Jet 1100se black and white printer with extra unopened Laser Jet Toner Cartridge. Used occasionally for 3 months. No problems. \$65 total. Contact Doris at 494-2402
- For Sale** Sundisk compact flash card. Retail for \$150, asking \$100. Brand new and in wrapper. Contact David 889-2218.
- For Sale** Dell DM 4500/100 mhz, 20gig, 128 RAM XP Home
Dell DM 4500s/400 mhz, 80gig, 256 RAM XP Home
Each with Harmon/Kardon speakers, keyboards, mouse. Dell Monitors E772 and P992, APC Surge Arrest Pro included.
All for \$800 or best offer 822-5531 Charley
- Wanted** Router 4-8 port (plus cables, printer cables, parallel or USB, RAM, SDRAM 128, 256, or 512). Video camera also wanted. Will buy or please donate to great cause. Call Jean Smith @ 822-1133 or 737-9510 or e-mail: [<ejslearn@netscape.net>](mailto:ejslearn@netscape.net)
- Wanted** Someone to teach me Publisher and Access, will pay. Contact [<jwoody39@netzero.net>](mailto:jwoody39@netzero.net)



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