

SAN FRANCISCO PERSONAL COMPUTER
USERS GROUP

eBLUE
NOTES

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Who We Are, What We Do and How You Can Join the Fun!

The San Francisco PC Users Group, founded in 1982, serves as a regional volunteer forum for the exchange of ideas, industry insights and solutions to problems, etc. related to members using personal computers having the Intel x86 or compatible processor.

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Annual membership in The San Francisco PC Users Group includes, among other things, monthly meetings, a one year subscription to **Blue Notes** and Internet access. Cost: \$40 for individuals, \$50 for families and \$75 for businesses. E-mail our Membership Registrar, membership@mail.sfpcug.org, or attend a monthly meeting (see details inside and calendar). An application form can be found on the last page of this issue. Once completed, mail it with your payment to the SFPCUG Membership Director, 3145 Geary Blvd, Box 284, San Francisco, CA 94118-3300

Internet Services for All Members

Internet access is a major incentive for SFPCUG membership. Visit our web site: <http://www.sfpcug.org> where you will find, among other things, information about **Blue Notes**, the club's dial-up Internet services, activities of our various Special Interest Groups, etc. SLIP or PPP accounts are available by request @ e-mail: help@mail.sfpcug.org or contact our WebMaster at webmaster@mail.sfpcug.org. or 415-564-7730.

The Internet SIG offers access to a shared account for experimenting with Web technology, including CGI scripting. Contact the WebMaster for details.

Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

Users gather in SIGs to explore and solve specific problems related to software and/or hardware. The Calendar will list dates and venues. If a SIG addressing your interest(s)

does not exist, call 415-665-3599 to organize one.

Write a Review on New Software and it's Yours, Free!!

Vendors frequently offer new software or books to the SFPCUG so that an interested member can give it a test run and keep the product in exchange for a published review in **Blue Notes**. Our Product Review Coordinator can arrange to obtain software you might want to review. Guidelines for reviews appear regularly in **Blue Notes** or ask the Product Review Coordinator for a copy.

Steering Committee Meetings

The SFPCUG Steering Committee's Meeting are held on the first Tuesday of each month at the upstairs meeting room of Round Table Pizza on Geary Blvd and 16th Ave.

The SFPCUG Steering Committee discusses issues of immediate importance to the Group and makes plans for future activities. Steering Committee meetings are open to all SFPCUG members. Any Group member having attended two of four preceding Steering Committee meetings is eligible to vote.

General meetings

General meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month. Doors open at 6:15 PM for SIGs and the general meeting begins at 7:00PM

Location: Meetings now take place in the auditorium of the Community College District Office, 33 Gough Street, (a half-block south of Market Street) San Francisco, CA There is ample free parking in front of the building.

The latest information on programs and location for upcoming general and steering committee meetings is available on our web site <http://www.sfpcug.org>. Always check for late breaking news.

Publication in BlueNotes

Follow the structure of a previous article in *Blue Notes*.

- ! **Name/version of the subject program/book.** What does the program do and on what operating platform (s)? Does it satisfactorily fill a genuine need, e.g. task, entertainment, utility, etc?
- ! **Reviewer:** name and telephone number, latter optional.
Name and reputation of the company distributing the product.
Available mail address and phone number(s).
- ! **At A Glance:** A 1-to 4 rating.
- ! **Price:** MSRP, retail or street?"
- ! **System Requirements:** (self-explanatory.)
- ! **Pros:** Ease of use, learning, etc? Documentation: comprehensive, intelligible? Support? Does it deliver as advertised? If a book, is the author's style smooth or challenging? Is the Index useful?
- ! **Cons:** Shortfalls, if any
- ! The body of your review.
- ! Graphics are a welcome addition

When addressing technical, complex issues, endeavor to be as comprehensive and street-level clear as possible.

- ! Use one space between sentences, two carriage returns at the end of each paragraph.
- ! Re-read your work carefully, objectively, checking word, sentence and logic flow to ensure you say precisely what you mean to say, clearly.
- ! Do not use indents or tabs.
- ! Spell check your work.

Procedure for submitting articles for publication.

Save your article as a pure ASCII file with line breaks, and a **.TXT** extension. You may alternately save your files in Rich Text Format (.rtf extension) then send them to bluenotes@mail.sfpcug.org . Should special formatting be necessary, forward a hard copy to the Editor. Contact *Blue Notes* staff, email, bluenotes@sfpcug.org

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President's Column

by Ron Feiertag



Election Day is coming! We know who the candidates will be for political office on March 7th, but we do not know who will be running for our Users Group's leadership. We need candidates for the offices of President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The President provides leadership. The Vice President hopefully provides support. The Secretary takes notes of what is said at the monthly Steering Committee meeting. And the Treasurer manages the Group's funds. If you are interested in running for one of these volunteer positions, please contact one of these people on our search committee: David Caldwell (davidc777@netzero.net), Lee Most (leemost@slip.net), or Butler Crittenden (butlerc@pacbell.net). We will vote for our next group of officers as part of our April 19th general meeting. Some of the current officers will run for reelection and some will not, but we encourage your participation.

When I see something that is successful elsewhere, I try to see if it offers any lessons that can benefit our Computer Users Group. Twenty-three million Americans watched the television show "Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire?" That show had fifty women semi-finalists who agreed to marry themselves off to a man, who they never saw or communicated with previously, in front of a television audience if he chose her. How can that benefit us? If you know of unmarried multi-

millionaires who want to get married, persuade them to join the San Francisco Personal Computer Users Group and we could have a live "Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire?" format for one or more of our monthly meetings. Considering our low price of only forty dollars per year for an annual membership, you do not have to be a multi-millionaire to join us.

We lost one of our membership benefits for awhile: our web site was unavailable earlier this year. In recognition of this, I will ask our Steering Committee to approve extending every member's membership for free for roughly the amount of time that the web site was down. Our Steering Committee meets on the first Tuesday of every month at Round Table Pizza, which is located at Geary Blvd. and 16th Avenue. You are invited to attend any of our Steering Committee meetings.

This column is being written shortly after I attended the Windows 2000 product launch in San Francisco's Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, which is the same location where we participated in last year's Youth Empowerment Conference. On the stage, facing the audience but raised at an angle, was a huge rectangular object. When the event began, that object was opened to reveal that it was supposed to be a notebook computer, except that it was about sixty feet wide. Its screen functioned for their presentation in the same way that a movie screen does. Patrick Stewart, of Star Trek, walked on stage and said "What does this actor know about the future? I've been there! And I have the frequent flier miles to prove it." He then introduced Microsoft's Chairman and Chief Software Architect Bill Gates. Bill Gates pointed to the computer and said "It's about the right size for my desk." He and his staff spent the next two hours showing us what Windows 2000 can do. This software is for business applications because it supports business needs but not some of the needs of the home user market. The most current version of Microsoft's operating system for home use is still Windows 98. But this event, which was part of the Windows 2000 Conference & Expo, was all

about Windows 2000. There will be other Expos in San Francisco later this year, all leading up to the largest and best Expo of them all: the Comdex Computer Show in November 2000, in Las Vegas, Nevada. After Microsoft's presentation ended, the huge notebook computer closed, but instead of the cover folding down to meet the base, the base of the computer was raised to meet the cover. This revealed Carlos Santana and his band, in person, and they ended this demo by playing their latest and biggest hit: "Smooth". That was the perfect finishing touch to Microsoft's presentation.



Editor's Notes

by Tom McLoughlin

We are two months into the Year 2000 and the sky has not fallen on our heads. Stay Tuned!!!

In this issue we have interesting articles from our regulars: Ken Fermoyle and Bob Click. Also, Carol Lee has written three reviews for us. Thanks again Carol.

Personally, I have been struggling with Linux in the name of RedHat 6.1. It seems that RedHat on their Standard version has declined to put GUI program in their standard installation. In order to install X-Windows in the standard version, one has to write several programs to the kernel. When one is not at ease to C-Programming, writing to the kernel becomes a challenge.

And then there is the tale that leaving a cell phone unattended for a few moments means that there is a good chance that it can grow legs and walk away. This happened last week and is just now getting back in order with another phone. Added to the fact that, this morning, when connecting to DSL I found that I had no service. I called tech support to find that in the course of starting up the service, last month, I had assigned to me three DSL accounts rather than one and on Mar 3^d, my ISP canceled all three. (On Mar 7th, I have at least one back.)

Maybe the Y2K sky has fallen in!!!

If you wish to contact me you may do so at bluenotes@pacbell.net.

Ken's Korner Commentary

Steve Case Has Two Faces; Both Speak with Forked Tongues

by Ken Fermoye



I don't know how many hats Steve Case will wear in his new role as chairman of America Online (AOL) and Time Warner (TW), but he has shown at least two faces to the world over the years. He has always been more than willing to change positions drastically if it appears profitable -- and I fully expect another major flip-flop as a result of the megadeal.

Case was one of the early and most strident critics who accused Microsoft of monopolistic practices. Then, of course, he made a deal in which AOL and Microsoft would include each other's software in customer offerings.

More recently, he has been a passionate advocate for open access to the Internet, with special emphasis on AT&T's burgeoning cable system

(formerly TCI). AOL was the major financial backer of efforts to force such access across the U.S. Case & Co. have bankrolled major lobbying efforts to convince federal and local government officials they should require cable companies to allow access by Internet Service Providers (ISPs). In effect, Case wanted government to intervene on his behalf.

If the merger goes through as planned, and apparently it will, Case will have access to a high-speed network in Time Warner's Road Runner cable modem service. My first thought when I heard news of the deal was: "What will Case have to say about open access now?"

Surprise, Surprise! Within a few days of the announcement, consumer groups who had joined in the open access effort noted a change in attitude from AOL.

"America Online has been a terrific advocate of open access . . . but [AOL Chairman] Steve Case now is being very ambiguous," said Erik Sten, a city commissioner in Portland, Ore. Portland is trying to force cable operators to open their networks to rival Internet operators. "So this merger underscores the fact that government action is absolutely needed to ensure open access and a fair playing field."

Now, instead of asking local governments to help open cable access, spokespersons were talking about taking the open-access debate "out of Washington and out of City Hall" and putting it in "the marketplace."

Open-access advocates were alarmed. AOL "has spent millions of dollars to lobby city councils, the Federal Communications Commission and Congress on open access," said Gene Kimmelman, co-director of the

Washington office of Consumers Union. "This is clearly a pullback from their previous stance."

As expected, Case and cohorts protested and pledged to open Time Warner's cable networks to rival Internet providers and to back open access.

But when it comes to open access to AOL Instant Messenger, Case speaks out of the other side of his mouth. There, too, he asserted his support of standard protocols for instant messaging -- but that was as far as it went. Read on...

He is fond of telling us that AOL believes fervently in building a "global medium... a service that could bring people together to share common interests and passions and to build communities based on them. We've worked hard to make it as easy as possible for people to stay in touch, renew old ties and form new relationships."

Great sentiment, that. But does he really mean it? His idea of bringing people together appears to stop at AOL's boundaries.

When Microsoft and Yahoo released instant-messaging software in July 1999, Case and AOL moved quickly to block access to their 40 million users of AOL Instant Messenger (AIM). When AT&T released its IM Here instant messaging service in December 1999, AOL again threw up barricades to "protect" its customers from communication with the outside world.

This is a great way to bring people together, right?

AOL issued blizzards of press releases claiming "it only wants to preserve its customers' privacy" and that efforts by other companies to create interoperable messaging services amount to "hacking into AIM." This is utter hypocrisy. The only thing Case wants to preserve is AOL's dominance of instant messaging for as long as he can.

If this isn't so, why has AOL dragged its feet on joining the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) efforts to develop standard protocols for instant messaging?

Again, Case has said AOL supports the concept but there has been no action to back up his words. An Open Letter sent to Case in July 1999 by eight companies (AT&T, Activerse, ExciteAtHome, Infoseek, Microsoft, Prodigy, Tribal Voice and Yahoo) requesting AOL to join an effort to create a single industry-wide standard for instant messaging failed to draw a positive response Result: a big zero.

Personally, I expect AOL's support for access via Time Warner's cable networks to evaporate. Except for AOL and CompuServe, which is part of the Case empire.

To sum up this Case, an expression from the old cowboy-and-Indian westerns seems to fit best: "He speaks with forked tongue."

Ken's Korner

CD-RW Drives Unseat Other Media For Removable Storage, Backup, Archives

by Ken Fermoye

The king is dead! Long live the king! (Until a successor ascends the throne.) The "dead king" in this case is the traditional 3.5-inch floppy disk drive and its cousins: Zip drives, Super Drives, tape backups and other removable storage media.

The new king is the CD-RW (Compact Disk-ReWriteable) drive. The successor, already waiting in the wings, is the DVD-RW (Digital Versatile Disc or Digital Video Disk, depending on your orientation). Portable USB hard drives may be pretenders to the throne.

Of course I'm exaggerating a bit. You can't count out the lowly 1.44-megabyte floppy drive just yet. It is adequate for typical word processing and other applications that don't produce big files. Prices are low enough for both drives and diskettes to keep them alive for the near term. Shipments should peak in 2001, then start a slow decline.

Iomega's Zip and Jaz products, Super floppies, tape drives and their kin won't disappear overnight either, but they all have drawbacks that will make it hard for them to compete with CD-RW drives in the long term. Generally, they have more limited capacity, higher media costs, and aren't priced all that much lower than the CD products. (Note that Iomega recognizes the inevitable and introduced its own CD-RW drive, the ZipCD, in June 1999.)

For example, a 100MB Zip drive costs about \$100 to \$130, depending on type (internal, external, SCSI, parallel, USB). Disk prices range from about \$8 to \$15 as this is written in mid-January, 2000. A 1GB Jaz drive costs about \$200, with disks going for \$90 to \$100.

By comparison, CD-RW drives hold 650MB and sell for anywhere from \$170 to about \$400, with most in the \$200-250 range. That means their disks hold as much as 6.5 Zip 100 disks and roughly 66% as much as the 1-gig Jaz disk. The kicker is the cost of media.

CD-R disks cost just \$1 to \$2 each. You can only write files to them once, no rewriting, but you can write to them in increments; adding files until the disk is full. This makes them ideal for permanent backup or archiving files. They are easily portable, since they are compatible with all CD-ROM drives of recent years. And they're so cheap you can use a lot of them without busting the budget.

CD-RW disks cost more, about \$5 to \$6, but you can write and rewrite to them just as you would a floppy or Zip drive. Generally there are more compatibility issues than with CD-R disks; they may not be readable in any CD-ROM, or even other CD-RW, drives. They are best used for day-to-day backup.

The nice thing is that a CD-RW drive gives you the best of both worlds, since you can burn CD-R disks or use CD-RW disks in one.

Let me tell you about my experiences with two quite different types of CD-RW drives I've been using for four months, since Sept. 1999. One is a Verbatim brand, Model 4420a (4X Record, 4X Rewrite, 20X Read): the drive itself is made by Mitsubishi. The other is more exotic: a Compro external drive from ACS Innovations. Made specifically for use with notebook computers, it weighs just over a pound and connects to a notebook PCMCIA slot or USB port.

Necessity led me to the CD-RW drives. I was preparing to do my Media Workshop in Orlando, FL last fall and realized the PowerPoint slide show I use to support my presentation was far too big to fit on a floppy. Putting it on a CD-ROM disk was the logical way to go. I began by investigating CD-R (record only) drives. They were cheap (\$160 or less) but I learned this was because they were being phased out. I was advised to go for a CD-RW drive instead -- and settled on the Verbatim 4420a as one of the fastest in my price range.

Installing it was simplicity itself. I merely disconnected my existing CD-ROM drive and plugged in the new drive in its place, using the existing cable. It came with just!burn software from CeQuadrat (taken over by Adaptec in mid-1999), which I found very easy to use after an initial goof. I ruined several disks by trying to format them not realizing that they were preformatted by Verbatim!

The just!burn Wizard makes it easy to create backup, audio or data disks. The CD-ROM disks I've burned with the CeQuadrat software have been readable by every CD drive in which I have tested them. The tests have included drives in a half-dozen desktop computers and three notebook computers. I should mention that none of the drives was more than 24 to 30 months old. I can't vouch for compatibility with older drives.

The Compro notebook CD-RW drive is a real gem, the world's first CD Rewriter with CD 4X recording, 4X rewriting and 20X reading function all in a slim 23mm height housing. Bare drive weight is only 18 oz. Other weights are: battery pack w/5 AA batteries (Alkaline or Nicad and NiMH 1.2V rechargeable), 7 oz; AC adapter, 8 oz; PCMCIA card/cable, 5 oz; USB cable, 4oz. Current price is \$269.

The whole works adds up to 42 oz., but one normally would use either the PCMCIA or USB cable so actual weight, including a few disks, is less than 2.5 lbs.

The amazing thing is how well this little drive works. It performs so well I don't use it only with my notebook. It is connected via USB port to one of the desktop machines in our office when I'm not traveling.

The Compro slimline came with Adaptec's Easy CD Creator, which most experts consider the top CD creation program. It includes DirectCD, which lets you treat CD-RW drive like a floppy drive. You can copy information in small packets and erase separate files ("random erase") instead of having to erase the entire CD. Packet writing allows sending of small amounts of data or "packets" to CD-R and CD-RW drives without wasted overhead and without risk of data transfer interruptions (buffer underruns).

Easy CD Creator makes it simple to create music, photo, video, and data CDs. You can even make bootable CDs. I have V.3.5 but plan to upgrade soon to V.4.0 which has some desirable features added. (Check it out at www.adaptec.com/products/overview/ecdc.html).

As always, your comments and experiences with these or similar products are welcome. I also invite you visit my website: www.zyworld.com/wordsmithken.

Ken's Korner

Computing Faces Major Changes As We Move Into the Year 2000

by Ken Fermoye

Now that "Y2K" is behind us and we are actually into the year 2000, it's time to look at the changes we can expect in computers and how we use them. Predictions are risky, but two things are certain. First, there will be major alterations in the very structure of computing. Second, some will benefit grassroots computer users-but many will not. In fact, they probably will have just the opposite effect.

Microsoft will be the focal point for many of the changes. Some will result from the Department of Justice (DOJ) and state attorneys general suit against the company. Also pending are suits against Microsoft by Sun Microsystems, Bristol Technology and other companies, not to mention several class actions that have been filed.

Findings already made by Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson in the DOJ case guarantee shifts in the way Gates & Co. do business. The questions are when and how. Other changes will come from within Microsoft itself.

Long Struggle or Compromise?

On the legal front, opinion is divided as to whether Microsoft and DOJ can reach a compromise settlement. Most observers felt this would not happen, than Bill Gates would fight any decision by Judge Jackson all the way through the appeal process up to the Supreme Court. This kind of delaying action could take years. It would be very expensive, but Microsoft has deep pockets and Gates has shown in the past that he can be a stubborn, difficult adversary.

Those hoping for a settlement were encouraged when Judge Jackson tapped Judge Richard A. Posner, chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit in Chicago, to mediate between the Department of Justice, state attorneys general and Microsoft. Posner is a well-respected jurist and an expert in economics and antitrust law. He has looked with favor on corporate arguments in other antitrust situations. The computer press and other media regard his appointment as an attempt to assure Microsoft that it will get a fair hearing from a mediator who is not a fervent supporter of antitrust actions.

Microsoft spokesman Jim Cullinan said the company looks forward to working with Posner toward a fair resolution to the case. "We think this is potentially a very positive step. Both sides voluntarily agreed to it," Cullinan added. "What will happen eventually? Microsoft could be hit by anything from a large fine to a court order requiring that it spin off one

or more individual companies. Almost certainly, it will have to stop treating Internet Explorer as an integral part of the operating system (OS) and change its high-handed dealings with PC vendors, which has virtually forced those vendors to use the Window OS.

However, it's done, the DOJ and attorneys general seem determined to "restore competition" by nullifying Microsoft's "monopolistic practices."

That would be good news for Linux and other Open Source software, as well as for resurgent Apple. Market share for them is still tiny compared to the Windows OS, of course.

Buy or Lease?

Perhaps more disturbing for many of us are indications that Microsoft and other software companies plan a dramatic change in the way software is distributed. It seems the trend will be to the system increasingly used by automobile companies: leasing of products rather than selling them outright.

This has obvious benefits for the vendors. Microsoft and others could reduce packaging and distribution costs and perhaps reduce the piracy potential. It could also insure a smoother cash flow than results from the peaks that now occur when new software versions are introduced and valleys as sales decrease over time. It also solves the growing problem of people and companies who refuse to upgrade slavishly when a new software version debuts.

It provides benefits for corporate uses too, as we will see, but what does it mean for us grassroots users working in our home offices or small

businesses? My feeling is that such a trend does not look good from our standpoint.

Corporations should love it, especially the Information Technology (IT) people. They will be able to get rid of those pesky PCs, which employees insist on customizing to suit themselves and their jobs. Dumb machines, not much different from the terminals that were my introduction to computing some 20 years ago.

Application Service Providers (ASPs) will provide programs. An ASP is defined in a Spotlight Service Report as "a third-party service firm, which deploys, manages and remotely hosts a pre-packaged software application through centrally located servers in a 'rental' or lease arrangement. In exchange for accessing the application, the client renders rental-like payments."

(The report also notes that independent software vendor (ISV) could bypass a third party and act as its own ASP. Don't you think Bill Gates would find it attractive to eliminate the middleman completely?)

Death of the PC?

Note the terms "remotely hosts" and "centrally located servers." That means accessing software via the Internet, or perhaps a gigantic corporate Wide Area Network (WAN) or an Extranet. Whatever, it essentially leaves grassroots users out in the cold.

Can you imagine trying to use a modem and dial-up access use all your software if it was located on the Internet? It boggles the mind! Most of us don't have the broadband Internet access available to big corporations.

But if leasing of software becomes the norm, how else could vendors control their user base other than by having them access it from a central host that could be monitored easily?

Not to worry, corporate spokesmen hasten to assure us, the PC is dead anyway. Oh really, and when did this happen? Last time I looked PC sales were up last year over the previous year-which were higher than the year before, etcetera, etcetera-despite shortages of chips and other components caused by the Taiwan earthquakes.

IBM's 1998 annual report issued last spring had a whole section titled "The PC Era Is Over." Major PC antagonists such as Sun Microsystems' Scott McNealy and Oracle's Larry Ellison have been singing the same song for several years. But how much of that is sour grapes? Are McNealy and Ellison still pouting because their vision of the Net PC died on the vine?

IBM CEO Lou Gerstner believes that "new personal computing devices, such as personal digital assistants, Web-enabled TVs, screen phones, smart cards, and a host of products we have yet to imagine" will gradually replace the personal computer.

Maybe so, but I don't expect to be tossing my PCs on the scrap heap anytime soon. I do expect to be upgrading and/or replacing them with new, faster, more capable machines well into the 21st century, which will not start officially until January 1, 2001, of course.

What's your opinion? I'd love to hear from you on these points. I will revisit this subject of more computing changes we can expect in an upcoming column-and I will include insightful comments from readers.

From the DealsGuy

Greater Orlando Computer User Group

How about this saga -- I tried to get the "one" tech support call PageMill entitles you to from Adobe. I waited in the queue three times and was dropped off the line each time after 20 minutes. I finally called customer service and was told they are having problems with their phones. I asked them to call me back and have been waiting since with no response. I suppose I could give in and call the \$25.00 per call one. I'll bet that one works great.

Deals Still Good MicroVision's "WebExpress" is just \$59.95 by calling 800-998-4555 or 1-760-438-7781 or via e-mail at [sales@mvd.com]. I hope to have a sample home page using WebExpress uploaded by February at [<http://www.bobclick.com>]. To get this discount, mention your User Group name. Shipping is \$5.00 US and \$7.50 Canadian. Also Maxon's "Cinema 4D to Go" for \$149.00 - SE version for \$495.00 - XL version for (only) \$695.00. This software is on a professional level as seen by the prices. Call toll-free 1-877-226-4628 in US (1-805-494-0718 in Canada) to order, and be sure to mention you read it in the "DealsGuy" column. Shipping is \$8.00 US and \$20.00 Canadian. Don't forget the "Communicate Pro" PIM for \$69.00 if you download from their Web site [www.01com.com].

And Now, A Word From Alien Skin! "User groups are important to us at Alien Skin, and we'd like to show it by offering UG members a major discount on Eye Candy 3.0 and Xenofex 1.0, our popular special effects collections. These plug-ins are now available to members for \$89.00 each, \$40 off the street price and \$10 below normal user group discount. Both Eye Candy and Xenofex are industry-standard tools for creating dazzling special effects, with filters like fire, smoke, lightning, perspective shadow, little fluffy clouds, bevels, glass and more. We're offering each of these plug-ins for \$89 to user group members. Eye Candy and Xenofex are compatible with PhotoShop, Paint Shop Pro, Photo-Paint and other graphics hosts (see the Alien Skin Web site for full info). Also, a discount on Eye Candy 3.1 for After Effects, our plug-in for Adobe's After Effects motion graphics program, is now \$299 (a savings of \$200). Mention special deal code "UGUS1199" to get the discount. To order, visit [<http://www.alienskin.com/specialdeal.html>] and enter deal code UGUS1199. You can download the software right away. Also order via toll-free phone 1-888-921-SKIN (7546) (Non-U.S. customers dial 1-919-832-4124), Fax: 1-919-832-4065, e-mail [sales@alienskin.com]. Mention the deal code UGUS1199 to get the special discount! Offer expires on February 29th, 2000." I have not tried these. It's very hard to reach anyone there. I tried three times to obtain more info about platforms, leaving messages, tech support included, but with no response. Good luck ordering. Sales must be great!

A FREE Office Suite --- You're Kiddin!! Nope, this is absolutely free for the download. It's large and smarter to order the full media kit with CD - plus user documentation - for just \$39.95. S&H is \$6.00 US. Remember when a company was making it hot for Netscape by giving away a browser FREE? Seems to me that Netscape is now part of Sun and that happens to be where you get this deal. Sort of a turnabout, wouldn't you say, but I'm not worried about Microsoft. It contains a word processor, spreadsheet, presentations, 3D draw module, data management, scheduler, office mail and more. I've read good things about it too. Works on Solaris operating systems (Spark and Intel platforms), Windows, OS/2 and Linux. You need 80 megs available on your hard drive, so this is no small potatoes (Dan helped me with that word). Also supports eight languages. Go to

www.sun.com/products/staroffice/

to get this incredible deal.

Wait a Minute - Long Distance Calling FREE -- Get Otta Here! I'll bet you thought www.BigZoo.com was a great deal for long distance calling at 3.9 cents per minute, and it is because it's good anywhere in the world at low rates. But at www.dialpad.com you call for absolutely NOTHING to all 50 states if you are properly equipped. You need a sound card with a mike, preferably a full-duplex sound card, and I'm sorry to say it's presently good only for the Windows platform. They hope to expand platforms soon. You need Java Virtual Machine installed, and a late version of IE or Netscape. Just sign up and you're in business. Their page has all the info. I had a problem with a

Java script error, so at this writing I have not tried it. When I get the time, I'll look into that problem. My version of Netscape may be a problem. Check into it for yourself. Since I don't have much going this month, lets discuss free ISPs. Everybody likes freebies, and I'm splitting what I have on free ISPs between this month and next.

You Mean I Can Surf The Web For Free??? Yup; It can happen if you play your cards, or cursors, right. I've known about two free ISPs for a while, but I'm always gun-shy after having tried a couple and being left high and dry. I lost \$49.00 on one and \$25.00 on the other. My timing was so bad that I never even got on before they went under, and others had been using them. However, lets delve into all this. The reason I previously featured Web4Life's "WebCombo" with the one-time setup fee is because they approached me, and after looking it over, I thought they would probably give you better service than the free ISPs, with a minimum of advertising. WebCombo's been around for a while too. It also had an excellent phone number access selection. WebCombo does have reasonably good tech support, even though it is not open 24 hours. My service was a comp so I could check it out, and their tech support was very helpful when I called. They also offer five megs for your Web Page. I believe that old saw about there being no free lunch. You generally get what you pay for. I haven't given up my Mindspring service because of their excellent service and great tech support. Of course Mindspring is about to change to EarthLink. Actually, I feel WebCombo's access number list is better than Mindspring's.

NetZero This one's been around for a year or so and didn't have the best name here. I read reviews on NetZero in a couple newsletters so it may be improved. Access numbers are a bit limited. However, you do get Internet access and all you do is endure the ads. Click an ad every little while or it cuts you off. Check it at [<http://www.netzero.com>]. Good in US & Canada. 56K modem service. Launched over a year ago, it has a small advertising window that's not removable, but can be moved any place on your screen. It is necessary to fill out a demographics form about hobbies, etc., to become a subscriber. E-mail accounts are available. No Web page space at this time. One complaint is getting dropped off when trying to connect.

Freewwwweb Some local user group members use this one. While they say the service is not great; limited tech support and lack of access numbers, they use it but keep their service-for-pay ISP. Must click on advertising occasionally. Oh well, I put up with that when I had Prodigy and got used to it. In AOL I can at least turn some of the advertising off in preferences. They provide service at up to 56K to 95% of the US and Canada and they're in their fourth year of service. It is owned by a company called "Smart" which sells cellular telephone service. They provide Netscape "Communicator." Check this free ISP at [<http://www.freewwwweb.com>]. Tech support is by e-mail or a pay phone number, and they say you don't wait. Access number selection is not as good as some others. No Web page space and I don't know about e-mail accounts.

AltaVista I'll bet you think I'm talking about the search engine. Weelll ... , they also offer free Internet service. You must have MS DirectX 7.0 to use this ISP so you may have to download that from the Microsoft site. Go to [www.microav.com] to sign up. Access number selection was not bad. Supports up to 56.6 modem. E-mail available on AltaVista, but does not currently offer e-mail based on POP e-mail accounts. Also good in US and Canada and the download is 600K. It includes "AltaVista Live" for your own personalized home page, as well as "MicroPortal," your constant connection to current information, and the powerful AltaVista search functionality. There are no usage limits on this free ISP. For Windows and Mac. That's about it for February. I'll continue the information on free ISPs next month. One site I'll give is a wealth of information. This column is written to make user group members aware of special pricing I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of products, no matter how enthused I sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [dealsguy@mindspring.com]. Visit my new Web site at [www.dealsguy.com].

From the Dealsguy
Greater Orlando Computer User Group

Bob Click

If you're thinking about a motherboard upgrade only, consider this: many of the new motherboards now offer only PCI slots. That might mean that if your old motherboard has any ISA boards in it, they would be unusable in the new motherboard unless it has ISA slots as well as PCI. What a great excuse for upgrading other peripherals. Like I always say, do your homework. Wish I always took my own advice. How about this for a vicious circle ... I bought a Matsonic motherboard for a good price at Comdex a couple years ago that gave me problems and eventually died. Since it was guaranteed for two years, I sent it back to the company via US Postal Service insured. After no response from Matsonic, I inquired at the post office. I was told to obtain a letter from the company saying they never received the package. Then I could apply for the insurance. I called the company, and after persisting, I was asked who signed for it, but was told, point blank, that without a return authorization, I was probably out of luck. Since I hadn't asked for a return receipt, I didn't know who had signed and received no cooperation. Back at the Post Office, I was told that an insured package had to have been



signed for. To find out who it was, I must apply for that information at a cost of \$7.00 to research it. All that runaround because I didn't spend the extra money for a return receipt. I seem to learn everything the hard way. No doubt it was signed for so, forget the insurance. I think I can forget any action from Matsonic as well. I won't forget that name very soon. Perhaps next month I'll talk about Best Buy with whom I am in a dispute right now, and it looks like I may take them to court over the warranty on my laptop. Now, let's get on with the column.

Attention Mac People, This Just In From Aladdin. "Attention Mac UG Leaders: Aladdin has teamed up with www.eMacsoftware.com to put together an Aladdin User Group Web page with special pricing for user groups. These offers are only available to UGs and their members!! Spread the word quickly, as the Aladdin pricing and special bundles are only good through February 29, 2000. Visit [<http://www.emacsoftware/emac/cd.asp?cd=AHGY2MBTA>] to receive special UG pricing on Aladdin software!! All products are available for immediate download and use. Again, these special offers expire February 29, 2000, so act now!! The Aladdin pricing via eMacsoftware's special UG Web site is as follows: StuffIt Deluxe 5.5: \$49.95 Spring Cleaning 3.0: \$29.95 Aladdin FlashBack 1.1: \$19.95 DragStrip 3.7.1: \$14.95 MacTicker 1.6: \$19.95 NEW! IntelliNews 2.0: \$14.95 MacTicker & IntelliNews bundle: \$29.95 - A SUPER DEAL! StuffIt Deluxe 5.5 & DragStrip bundle: \$59.95 - A SUPER DEAL! Visit [<http://www.emacsoftware.com/emac/cd.asp?cd=AHGY2MBTA>] to take advantage of these special offers!!" Their Web address is [<http://www.aladdinsys.com/>] for more info.

Assistance For Web Surfers "SurfSaver 2.0" from "askSam" simplifies gathering information from the Web and turning it into a searchable database on your PC. New feature lets you save selected links (or an entire page), and all linked pages, easily turning any list of hypertext links on the Web into a searchable database on your computer. SurfSaver 2.0 includes several powerful new features for organizing Web pages. In addition, the new version is available as a free download at [<http://www.surfsaver.com>] thanks to advertising included in the software. Download multiple levels of a Web site and browse (or search) the site off-line. Organize information using a Filing Cabinet and Folder metaphor. Create your own filing cabinets, and place folders in these cabinets, then search across multiple folders in multiple filing cabinets. A professional version, SurfSaver Pro, adds the ability to share SurfSaver folders in a network. SurfSaver Pro does not contain advertising and costs \$29.95 per user. I'll check on the possibility of a special for the Pro version next month. Visit askSam at [<http://www.askSam.com/>] or call 1-800-800-1997 for more info. My thanks to Bea McKinney of askSam for notifying me of this.

Things You Didn't Want to Know When You Were a Kid, Besides Other Stuff Jay Hogan sent me this one and I don't know his user group. Go to [<http://www.learn2.com>] to find out all the things your parents didn't remember to teach you. In fact, send your kids there because one of the courses teaches you how to brush your teeth. I didn't have time to dig down, but he said they offer user group discounts. Thanks Jay. .

Help For Photoshop Users O'Reilly & Associates have announced the release of a new edition of the book "Photoshop for the Web." In this new edition, author Mikkel Aaland includes important new techniques and workarounds for the latest release of Photoshop version 5.5. You can check their Web site to find out more. [<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/photoweb2/>] Remember that O'Reilly Publishing always offers user group discounts. Free GIFs are available at [<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/photoweb2/chapter/ch03.html>]. Call O'Reilly & Associates at 1-800-998-9938 and mention your user group, or e-mail them at [order@oreilly.com]

Let's Continue With The Free ISP Discussion I Started Last Month

NetGenie This service hopes to have a new promotion started by February, so check it out at [<http://www.netgenie.com/>] which will be about when you read this. I was unable to get any more information from their site.

Juno Has Joined The Crowd Yes, the venerable Juno is now offering free access to the Internet. A person I talked to says it has its' quirks but it works. You have to develop a technique for using your browsers or it cuts you off. That was from just one person I knew using the free version. I didn't check their access numbers but I think Juno will do OK in that regard because of it has been around. I assume from what it says that there is a better selection of access numbers for the Premium version. The regular service is free and offers free "online" tech support and 12 megs (more than my Mindspring) for your Web site. The Premium version costs \$9.95 per month and offers free phone tech support. Both offer file attachments and fax and voicemail capability in

the mailbox. Look for it at [<http://www.juno.com>]. Current subscribers need not fill out any forms.

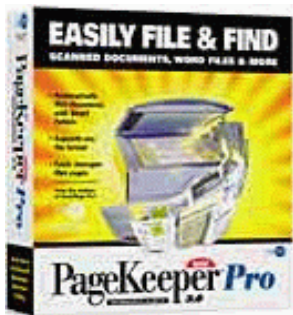
How About a Blue-Light Special! You guessed it, Kmart has enlisted the help of Yahoo for it's new FREE Internet service. While it is certainly meant for your shopping, it actually looked pretty good. I felt it had a fairly good selection of access numbers, especially for rural towns. Blue Light also offers e-mail accounts and space for your home page. They even offer tech support by e-mail or a phone call. There is not much information on the Web site but it costs nothing to try it out. You can even download it to floppies instead of your hard drive. With the help of Yahoo, you should find plenty of resources. You can download the software, or order it at Bluelight CD Request, P.O. Box 468, Lake Orion, MI. 48361. Kmart is so well known that they wouldn't actually need much advertising. When you see the familiar red Kmart logo flash by, it is a sort of "subliminal" reminder. The same as when your car seems to pull it on its own when you pass your favorite store (or tavern).

Tritium Network Tritium offers free access to the Internet through a nationwide network of local access numbers. You can find this one at [<http://www.tritium.net>]. I found access numbers only in the major cities. Only supports Windows presently. Offers limited tech support. Supports 56K/V90 modems. They plan to increase access number availability. E-mail accounts available.

Jump.to/FreeISP This one may have been sent to other user group officers when it was sent to me recently. I thought it had an impressive Web site. Look this one up at [<http://jump.to/FreeISP>].

This site is both comprehensive and up-to-date (their words) and there's also a good Web ring for Free Internet Access: [<http://move.to/FreeISP>]. This site is very interesting, so I suggest you visit it and draw your own conclusions. It actually lists dozens of free ISPs that you can check out, as well as many other free services. Some are just for a certain area. One service listing surprised me, but I guess it shouldn't have these days. You'll see it, I'm sure. There is plenty of information, too much to categorize here.

Last Minute Special From JASC Just in time for tax season, if you upgrade to JASC Paint Shop Pro 6 and buy the book "Creating Paint Shop Pro Web Graphics" for only \$79, you'll get TaxCut, the #1 Rated tax prep software from H&R Block FREE! This offer is a \$114 value - a savings of over 30% off the suggested price! To order, go to: [<http://www.jasc.com/jascstore/22722>]. This month's column was sure done hastily but I hope you get something out of it. Next month I'll continue with some free ISPs and perhaps even talk about an upcoming FREE DSL service. My thanks to Central Florida Computer Society President "Bud" Stonaker for searching out a few of these and passing them on to me. This column is written to make user group members aware of special pricing I have found or arranged, and my comments should not be interpreted to encourage, or discourage, the purchase of products, no matter how enthused I sound. Bob (The Cheapskate) Click [dealsguy@mindspring.com]. Visit my Web site at [<http://www.dealsguy.com>] for past columns.



PageKeeper Pro 3.0

Reviewed by Carol Lee

Caere Corporation
100 Cooper Court
Los Gatos, CA 95030
(408) 395-7000
<http://www.caere.com>

At A Glance Rating: **

Price: \$49 retail (or \$29.99, if call (800) 736-5730 with offer code 755)

System Requirements: IBM PC or compatible with Pentium or higher processor, Windows 95 or above, 16 MB minimum RAM (32 MB recommended), 32 MB Ram, 200 MB hard disk space, CD-ROM drive, VGA or higher, and scanner and/or digital camera.

Pros: Good idea.

Cons: Bad execution of good idea.

When I got PageKeeper Pro 3 to review, I thought it was a similar to Scansoft's Paxis Pro program. However, it is a different type of electronic documents management product. Paxis Pro is a database, which uses proprietary file formats to organize and manage electronic documents. PageKeeper is a "virtual" database, which employs pointers that track documents from their original stored location. As a result, documents are not physically imported into PageKeeper for organization; they are left unchanged in their original location and in their original file formats.

Documents can be added from scanner, disk, or the web using PageKeeper's Action Toolbar. After documents are added, PageKeeper shows a preview of the document by creating a thumbnail representation, an electronic pointer (of the location where the file is stored), and index for the file. PageKeeper uses "virtual folders" to organize documents. These folders are "virtual" folders, as they are independent of the physical structure of the hard drive and they do not contain any files. These "virtual" folders contain pointers to the original document. Because the folders are virtual, a single document in multiple "virtual" folders can be referenced without duplicating the actual documents multiple times. Once a document is added to PageKeeper, it will be automatically updated when the document is changed, moved or renamed. Consequently, changes made to documents are updated (including the content or the thumbnail, for example) within PageKeeper, because PageKeeper's indexing feature is always running in the background.

It is indeed a consequence, when PageKeeper's indexing feature is running in the background, because it takes up system resources and slows everything down. During the actually processing of an index "job", my hard drive was constantly accessed. I tried turning off the indexing

feature but it was almost impossible to do without causing a general fault protection (GFP) error. Upon reboot of my system (after the GFP error), PageKeeper's index would fail to work and instead post another GFP error. The only way I could figure out to fix this problem was to uninstall and reinstall the program and only start using the program for the first time when I had time to allow it to index undisturbed. More on this later....

PageKeeper includes several automation features. One is Folder watch, which allows the user to identify file folder directories to watch for new documents. When new documents are added to these "Folder watch" folders, PageKeeper automatically adds them to PageKeeper's virtual database. Folder Watch can be customized to exclude certain file types, such as .bak, .tmp, .exe, and .dll extensions. Once these "Folder watch" folders are set up, PageKeeper's index feature starts to process the job.

PageKeeper uses "Smart Folders" to create new folders to which documents are automatically filed based on key words, their document properties (such as date), and their image properties (such as type and size). PageKeeper offers the option of having new documents that fit the criteria of a Smart Folder to be moved to the Smart Folder or to have the document copied to the Smart Folder while also leaving the document in the default folder. Again, once these "Smart Folders" are set up, PageKeeper's index feature starts to process this new job.

An alternative organizational method to folders in PageKeeper is document "clipping", which is similar to "paper clipping" multiple pieces of paper together (in Pagis Pro, it is called "stacking"). PageKeeper allows all document types to be clipped together. Each clipped group can be managed like a single document. If the document is added by use of a scanner, PageKeeper has built-in Optical Character Recognition (OCR)

software available for use to convert the document into a word processing file format.

I had installed PageKeeper at my work computer so it could keep track of the multitude of reports and letters I had to write. After my first mistrial of using PageKeeper (which required me to uninstall and reinstall the program), I set up my Folder Watch folder to my word processing folder on my work's network drives. 3,860 files were to be processed by PageKeeper. I left the indexing feature to run overnight (approximately 14 hours). When I returned to work, the next morning I found that the index feature had finished. I then proceeded to search for documents within PageKeeper to see how well the search feature worked.

In addition to fuzzy, Boolean and proximity searches, PageKeeper offers the ability to search on document properties (like file/image type, document size, dpi, date created) and search for similar documents. PageKeeper provides a color-coded relevancy ranking of the search results. PageKeeper also allows a search to be further refined. The searches can be saved for later use or used as parameters for a new Smart Folder. PageKeeper find includes Hit Highlighting of search words and phrases to make it easier to find the search words within the text documents in PageKeeper View. I used Alta Vista Personal 97 (a free search program from Alta Vista) to search for files and compared PageKeeper's searching performance to Alta Vista. Alta Vista kicked butt.

Although AltaVista Personal 97 (like its Internet search engine) is not as exact as PageKeeper Pro in finding documents, it finds a multitude of them fast (within 10 seconds), while it took PageKeeper literally 10-15 minutes to find the documents with the key words I had indicated. It was

quicker to manually pinpoint the document I wanted among the documents found using AltaVista Personal 97 than it was to wait for PageKeeper to finish its search. Even the search feature within Microsoft Word seemed faster than that of PageKeeper. In addition, while PageKeeper was searching, system performance was slowed to a crawl. I ran into difficulty when I tried to stop the search and got instead a GFP error.

I uninstalled the program from work and went home to install the program to see if it could take the place of Pagis Pro, which is my electronic document manager. I discovered that my proprietary files in Pagis Pro could not be read in PageKeeper View. Although PageKeeper View includes many conversion filters such that documents can be viewed in non-native applications, it does not include those for Pagis Pro. However, a PDF file can be viewed within Microsoft Word using the PageKeeper View. PageKeeper can also be used to convert documents into other open, non-proprietary formats. As for proprietary databases, PageKeeper Pro can convert the proprietary databases from PaperPort 4.0 and 5.0 and PageKeeper 2.0 (and upgrade the databases of PageKeeper Lite and Standard).

To make my existing database work with PageKeeper required two conversions. I first manually converted my Pagis Pro database to a PaperPort database using the converter provided by Paperport. It took approximately 8 hours (spread over three nights) to convert to the PaperPort format. The size of my PaperPort database and the size of my Pagis Pro database were similar (approximately 230 MB). I then ran the PageKeeper converter feature overnight to convert my PaperPort database to the PageKeeper database. The next morning I discovered that

the PageKeeper conversion had stopped because I had run out of disk space. My 230-MB of proprietary file format when converted to a non-proprietary TIFF file format had grown to exceed 2.5 GB of hard drive space! The converted non-proprietary TIFF files that PageKeeper recognizes are approximately 10 times larger than the proprietary formats used by Pagis Pro and PaperPort. There is a good reason to have proprietary file formats – the conservation of SPACE.

I stopped the conversion process from going any further and freed up approximately 200 MB of space to allow PageKeeper to work. PageKeeper proceeded to index the converted TIFF files to setup the PageKeeper's "virtual database" of these files. After awhile, my hard drive again filled up and required that more space be provided. I tried to stop the indexing feature from continuing and again got a GFP error for my efforts. When I tried to reboot, my system froze and after a lot of effort of trying to fix the problem, I decided that a complete reinstallation of my system files was required, and so I reformatted my hard drive and reinstalled everything except PageKeeper.

I do not recommend PageKeeper. Although its intent is good, its execution is problematic.



PAGIS PRO 3.0

Reviewed by Carol Lee

ScanSoft, Inc.
9 Centennial Drive
Peabody, Massachusetts 01960
(978) 977-2000

<http://www.scansoft.com>

At A Glance Rating: ***

Price: \$119.00

System Requirements: IBM PC or compatible with Pentium 200 MHz or higher processor Windows 95/98-compatible computer system, 32 MB minimum RAM, CD-ROM drive, video card running in 256-bit color at 800 x 600 minimum resolution, 60 MB of hard disk space, 100% Microsoft compatible mouse.

Pros: Good, comprehensive scanning suite.

Carol Lee (415-749-4689) is a staff engineer for a local regulatory agency in San Francisco. Her hobbies include tennis, investing, and playing with her computer. She looks forward to other reviewing opportunities (in exchange for free software and hardware).

Cons: Software is buggy.

Designed for the Small Office Home Office user, Pagis Pro 3.0 is the a scanning suite for both photos and documents with features like visual filing, Textbridge Pro 9.0 Optical Character Recognition (OCR), photo-editing, faxing, e-mailing of color photos and more. I had reviewed Pagis Pro 2.0 last year and found that earlier product extremely useful for managing my scanned documents. I was eager to see what new improvements were added with this new version.

When I opened the box, I discovered that the manual that comes with the software has been greatly reduced. Pagis Pro 2.0 came with a 1-inch thick user's guide for both Pagis Pro 2.0 and Textbridge Pro 8.0, while Pagis Pro 3.0 comes with a thin installation guide while the more comprehensive user's guides are now in electronic .pdf format on the software CD-ROM.

Because the installation program does not allow for two separate versions of Pagis Pro to be installed (nor did I want two different versions installed), I uninstalled Pagis Pro 2.0 before I installed Pagis Pro 3.0. Installation went without a hitch. After the computer rebooted, I noticed that the Pagis Pro 3.0 Inbox Control Center has been slightly improved by specifying the names with the icons of the various programs linked to Pagis Send-To-Bar rather than just displaying the program's icons. A Web Capture Tool has been added to allow the specifying of a URL address for an Internet shortcut which is saved in the Pagis Inbox or Pagis Folder and rendered as a URL Thumbnail. By double clicking on the URL Thumbnail, the browser can go right to the selected URL address.

Another difference between the Pagis Pro 2.0 and Pagis Pro 3.0 is the updating index feature – it actually works. I never could get the updating index feature to work because it seemed to take an eternity to index my

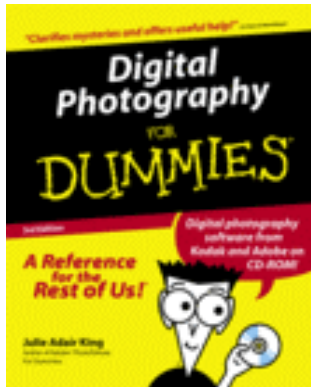
Pagis Pro 2.0 Inbox. With Pagis Pro 3.0, indexing is much faster. It only took 8 hours (yes, that is still a long time, but at least it works) to update the Pagis Pro 3.0 Inbox for the first time. Although indexing is time consuming, I could run it in the background while using other programs without any problems. With this index, I can search for documents using keywords, title or author information.

I discovered a bug when I tried to use the Stack Documents feature. Stacking of a document allows multiple electronic documents to be combined into one record. When I tried to stack documents in the detail view mode, an error message would pop up indicating that I was trying to stack incorrect file formatted documents. After about 2 hours in trial and error and after installing the service release for the program, I discovered that I could stack documents in Thumbnail view, but not in Detail view. However, sometimes, I can stack in Detail view although I could not predict when and why. Contacting customer service offered no solutions other than reporting this problem to them. Due to an unrelated problem with PageKeeper Pro 3 (look for my review), I had to reformat my hard drive and reinstall everything on my computer (good thing I always backup my data). Even after this fresh installation, this stacking problem with Pagis Pro 3 reoccurred. Consequently, I am quite certain that it is indeed a bug with the program and not with my computer. Because of this irritating bug, I do not wholeheartedly recommend this product.

It should be noted that Textbridge Pro 9.0 that comes with Pagis Pro 3.0 has been improved. More text was recognized correctly than before (compared to Textbridge Pro 8.0 in Pagis Pro 2.0). The text recognition capability has been improved from the last version. In addition, I can now save in Microsoft Word .doc format while before (in Textbridge Pro 8.0)

documents could only be saved in .rtf format. Unfortunately, formatting is not always kept.

Because there are few feature improvements (such as a functional indexing feature and the saving of URL shortcuts), I would not recommend upgrading to Pagis Pro 3.0 because of the irritating stacking bug, unless an improved version of Textbridge Pro 9.0 or improved indexing is desired. The bug for the stacking of documents overshadows the improvements in features, because I use stacking more than the improved indexing or saving of URL shortcuts.



DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY FOR DUMMIES

by Julie Adair King

Reviewed by Carol Lee

IDG Books Worldwide, Inc.
919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., Suite 400
Foster City, CA 94404
www.dummies.com

At A Glance Rating: *****

Price: \$24.99

System Requirements: None – This is a book.

Pros: Good beginner's guide to digital photography.

Cons: Too basic for advanced digital photographers.

I got a digital camera (Kodak DC240) last year and am still learning the ins and outs of using it and taking the best pictures possible and displaying or printing them to their best outcome. Although not a true

“dummy” when it comes to this photography and digital images, I am instead a “newbie”. I read Digital Photography for Dummies hoping to learn something that I did not already know.

The book is written in the same fashion as all “dummies” books. Everything is explained briefly and to the point in a clear-to-understand fashion. I learned the difference between pixel and resolution. In addition, the book provided a review of the different camera components and their uses. The book also provides some guidance on photo composition and use of image-editing software.

The book comes with a CD-ROM containing a full working version of Kodak Pictures Now and a freeware version of MediaCenter (from PictureWorks Technology), demo and trial versions of other image-editing and image-cataloging software and a sampling of original digital images that were included in the book. In addition, supplemental reference information from the Kodak Digital Learning Center is included on the CD-ROM.

Although the book is not for advanced digital photographers, it is a handy reference for beginning digital photographers.

Distributed Denial Of Service

by Jeffrey R. Harrow

As of a couple of week ago, that term, which used to be reserved for discussions between Internet security experts and network administrators, has made the six o'clock news and the paper headlines. It's due to several high-profile Web sites disappearing into cyberspace for hours at a time; if you clicked on a link to ZDNet, E*Trade, Yahoo, Amazon.com, CNN.com, and others -- nothing happened.

What is a Distributed Denial Of Service attack? Basically, in a D.D.O.S. attack the attacker hides software "time bombs" in many unsuspecting computers around the Internet. Then, when he or she is ready, those "time bombs" are given the address of the computer to be attacked and they begin establishing a massive number of bogus connections with the target -- all at once -- generating as much as 1 gigabit/second of data in the case of the attack on Yahoo. Because the target is trying its best to complete these connection requests but can't do so, all of the computer's resources get tied up and legitimate connections can't be made.

More detail is available from CERT at <http://www.cert.org/advisories/CA-2000-01.html> and http://www.cert.org/reports/dsit_workshop.pdf, and from PCWorld at <http://www.pcworld.com/cgi-bin/pcwtoday?ID=15199>. And there's a very understandable explanation of this type of attack, and why its so difficult to protect against, in the Feb. 15 Crypto-gram at

<http://www.counterpane.com/crypto-gram-0002.html> Distributed Denial-of-Service Attacks .

D.D.O.S. attacks are not new, but two things are rather new: the high profile nature of the targets; and the growing importance, both for access to information and for commerce, that the general public is now placing on having uninterrupted access to these Web services. Also, there's the economic impact: Yankee Group estimates that the real loss from these attacks, including market capitalization losses for the firms attacked, was "in excess of \$1.2 billion" <http://www.pcworld.com/cgi-bin/pcwtoday/ID=15219>. And that is not small change.

And so the government's response is significant as well: Attorney General Janet Reno has tasked the FBI to get involved, "... tracking those who are responsible," according to the Feb. 8 ZDNet News <http://www.zdnet.com/pcweek/stories/news/0.4153.2435149.00.html>. If the FBI is successful in finding the perpetrators, they may not be very happy, since the Feb. 9 TechWeb

<http://www.techweb.com/wire/story/TWB20000209S0011> describes penalties as high as \$250,000 and five years in jail for the first offense, and 10 years for offense number two, plus civil fines and twice the amount of damages suffered by the owners of the attacked Web sites.

I heard President Clinton talking about the issue on the radio, and a meeting has taken place between Clinton, his Chief of Staff, Reno, the Commerce Secretary, the National Security Advisor (quite a lineup!), and Internet executives

www.abcnews.go.com/sections/tech/DailyNews/netsummit_000215a. Clinton, calling these events "a needed wake-up call," has requested \$2 billion, plus a \$9 million supplement to this year's budget, to "...protect

the nation's computer networks from attack." And Congressional committees are discussing the issue as well. You just don't get any higher-level attention.

(Why is the government so concerned? It goes beyond the economic issues we've experienced with this attack -- it's more an issue of far more serious "cyber-warfare." For an insight into where this could conceivably lead, check out the Feb. 16 BBC article at news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/sci/tech/newsid_642000/642867.stm, brought to our attention by RCFoC reader Kenneth LaCrosse.)

I see these apparently coordinated attacks, and Internet users' and the government's responses to them (and their further concerns), as a clear recognition of the already significant, and growing, importance of the Internet to our society. If the Internet were still just a research network, or had little importance to how we do business, this might have been a "ho hum" event and certainly wouldn't have gotten the Attorney General on TV. But as the Internet continues to innervate how we work, live, and play, the loss of its services, even temporarily, becomes significant. Both socially, and economically.

Of course other kinds of attacks can have a direct effect on cold hard cash (or its credit card equivalent): For example, RealNames, a company that provides a form of Web addressing service, had its server compromised, and it appears that all of their customers' credit card and related personal information may now be in the hands of the vandals <http://news.cnet.com/news/0-1005-200-1547688.html>. If you registered a RealName, this should bring these issues very close to home for you. (Kudos, though, to RealNames for going public with this immediately, and for taking aggressive action to advise its customers.)

As with most "problems," looked at a different way, these security problems also represent "opportunities." Insurance firms such as J.S. Wurzler Underwriting Managers, American International Group, Cigna,

and J&H Marsh & McLennan, offer "Hack Attack" insurance! The price is around \$10K - \$25K for a million dollars of coverage. Although, according to the Feb. 11 Inter@ctive Week <http://www.zdnet.com/zdnn/stories/news/0,4586,2436984,00.html>, Wurzler's CEO said they may now have to raise the price...

So what I take away from these events is a recognition that the Internet is indeed "growing up," that it is clearly headed towards becoming the next "utility," and that its operation has become important enough that the government will do its best to keep the Internet on an even keel. It's a shame to come to these recognitions through such negative events, but perhaps, as with so many things, we only begin to really realize the Internet's importance once it's (even temporarily) not there.

About the "Rapidly Changing Face of Computing..."

The RCFoC is written by Jeffrey R. Harrow, a Senior Consulting Engineer with the Technology & Corporate Development organization of Compaq Computer Corporation. The RCFoC is published as a service of, but not necessarily reflecting the opinions of, Compaq Computer Corporation. Copyright © 1996-2000, Compaq Computer Corporation. All rights reserved.

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My Comdex

by Ron Feiertag

Every November there is a spectacular computer show in Las Vegas, Nevada. That show is named Comdex, which is short for Computer Dealers' Expo and it is the largest, and in my opinion, the best computer show in the world. Everyone is welcome there and the show includes something that anyone can benefit from experiencing. This article gives my impressions of last year's Comdex and it could help you decide whether you would like to visit the next Fall Comdex in November 2000. More information can be found at www.comdex.com

No one can tell you exactly what Comdex is like because everyone's Comdex experience is different. One difference has to do with when you choose to be there. Comdex lasts for one week, from Monday through Friday, but some people are so busy that they attend it for less than the full five days. Other people cannot get enough of Comdex, so they arrive early. Sometimes a special keynote speech by someone like Bill Gates happens on the Sunday immediately before the rest of Comdex begins. There are several interesting keynote addresses by computer industry leaders during Comdex. The price you pay to attend each one is the time you spend waiting in a long line leading to the large room where the speech will take place.

The Saturday and Sunday before Comdex also features workshops, luncheons and other events held by the Association of Personal Computer Users Groups (APCUG). This is held for User Group officers and includes discussions about User Group programs, newsletters, and other items of interest to people who share what they know about the challenges and successes that they experienced while working for their

own Users Groups during the past year. One special workshop featured a panel of people who had been officers of APCUG in the early days of that organization and they discussed high points of the nearly two decades that APCUG has been around serving the needs of its member User Groups. The panel included Richard Katz, who used to be the Vice President of our Users Group and who now holds an important position at Intuit, where he is an Evangelist for Quicken. During breaks for luncheons and other meals, companies showed us the features of their latest products. At the end of their presentations, there are often door prizes for the people in their audience, in the same way that happens at our general meetings. APCUG arranges for additional presentations and meals during the week of Comdex.

There are many computer shows nationwide and worldwide, and each of them feature one small segment of the computer industry. Comdex includes just about everything concerning computers or the Internet that is successful or that is expected to become successful. One great advantage that this gives to anyone who attends Comdex is that, with more than two thousand companies showing their products, you will probably be able to find at Comdex whatever company or product you want to know about. The other great advantage that you receive as an attendee is that you can ask the most basic question to any company representative without any embarrassment because he or she will assume that you are an expert in some other aspect of computing.

Even if you and I attend Comdex every day from Monday through Friday of Comdex week, my Comdex experience will be different than your Comdex experience. This is partly because everyone has different interests, so you would spend more time at one company's booth and I would find another company's products more interesting to me. Also, any two people will ask different questions based on what we already know about a subject. With more than 200,000 people attending Comdex each year, it is certainly possible that one of them will have the same interests and approximately the same knowledge as I do. We would still have different Comdex experiences because what companies you see, and what order you see them in, can have an amazing affect on your Comdex

experience. For example, one of the first booths I visited belonged to SimpleSearch.com. I was immediately attracted by the free Internet access they provided there. It allowed me to check my e-mail. Even though I later learned that some other companies also provided this service, I decided to keep returning to this booth whenever I wanted to check my e-mail, in order to avoid typing in my password on the computer of more than one company. While I was there, I watched their demo and I was so favorably impressed by their service that I made SimpleSearch.com my home page. This is because I found that their search engine gave me the answers that I was looking for while the search engines of other companies failed the test that I gave them. If you visit SimpleSearch.com and click on the words "Free Stuff", you will find a large variety of free offers. Today I saw offers that included contests, free catalogs, ECoupons, and ERebates. Their booth at Comdex offered other free stuff, including free coffee, a free mug, and a free massage. More information can be found at www.simplesearch.com

Sony had the most impressive technology that I saw at Comdex. They had Memory Sticks that went from device to device. You can dictate a letter in a hand held device and transfer the Memory Stick to a computer to see it and to a printer to print it. You can take photographs with a digital camera and transfer the Memory Stick to a computer to see the pictures or video and then use them in a presentation. These are just two of several different Memory Stick applications. The Memory Stick comes in 4, 8, 16, 32, and 64 megabyte sizes and they are working on a one gigabyte sized Memory Stick. A 64 MB Memory Stick has more than forty times the capacity of a 3.5 inch floppy disk. There is also a Memory Stick floppy disk adapter that can be used in any standard 3.5 inch floppy disk slot to transfer stored images and data to your computer. More information can be found at www.sony.com

The most useful low tech item that I saw was the LapStand. When it folds up, it is very small and light weight. When you unfold it, you have a stand that can hold your notebook computer while you use that computer. This allows you to use your computer even when you are stuck in a

doctor's waiting room or an airport's waiting area. More information, plus computer humor, can be found at www.lapstand.com

While other companies had more expensive booths, PowerQuest had the most effective presentation. It provided a clever mixture of entertainment and information that attracted especially large audiences, kept their attention, created name recognition and goodwill for PowerQuest, and at the same time explained several different software products that they sell. This was done by the skillful use of a skillful magician to entertainingly demo their product line. Because he dressed and acted just like the rest of their staff, I thought that he was a PowerQuest employee, but I later learned that he goes by the name of Joe Mystic and he can be reached at www.joemystic.com PowerQuest is also a strong supporter of APCUG and its computer User Groups. More information can be found at www.powerquest.com

Other entertainment by other companies on the show floor included a "Live at The Improv" comedy routine, singing by The Alley Cats, and an entertaining world-class gymnastic performance by Nadia Comaneci and Bart Connor that was sponsored by Xerox. More information can be found at www.thealleycats.com and www.NadiaComaneci.com

As you can probably tell, I greatly enjoyed the Comdex Computer Show and from what I wrote I think you now have a better idea of whether you would enjoy it too. It will be held again this year from November 13th through November 17th in Las Vegas. Comdex ended perfectly for me: the bus that took me and other people from the Las Vegas Convention Center played "I'm your vehicle, baby. I'll take you anywhere you want to go...Great God in Heaven, you know I love you!"

Ron Feiertag is President of the San Francisco Personal Computer Users Group. He was an accountant and now is retired

Tue., Mar 7, @ 7PM

Steering Committee meeting

Upstairs meeting room of Round Table Pizza, Geary Blvd and 16th Ave

Tue Mar 21, 2000

EastBay Technologies

Television, radio and the Internet

MARCH 2000						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Tue., Apr 4, 7PM

Steering Committee meeting

Upstairs meeting room of Round Table Pizza, Geary Blvd and 16th Ave

Tue Apr 18, 2000

Elections of Officers

TBA (to be announced)

APRIL 2000						
Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

SAN FRANCISCO PC USERS GROUP

STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Tuesday, January 4, 2000

The notes for the minutes were lost ...

Tuesday, February 1, 2000

The meeting was called to order by President Ron Feiertag at Round Table Pizza, 16th Avenue and Geary Boulevard, San Francisco at 7:07 PM

Members present were: David Caldwell, Harold Charms, Butler Critenden, Ron Feiertag, Diana Gregory, Pierre Hahn, Lee Most, Joseph Puig, Vic Saravia.

December minutes were approved,

January minutes: no minutes yet; notes taken by Jon Warmerdem were turned over to Ron who will write them in about 2 weeks and circulate to Steering Committee for review and approval.

Treasurer's Report: We now have an account at Cal Fed. The previous account will be phased out over the next few months. Phone bill has an item about ATT LongDistance calls, this will be removed as we ONLY have local calls, Report approved - one abstention.

No Vice President report.

Program: February Adobe, March East Bay Technology, nothing confirmed beyond that.

Webmaster Report: Mail server is up we have for primary DNS ATLAS and secondary DNS WETWARE, working on getting web page up.

President's report:

Ron asked about moving the meeting times up by ½ hour, general agreement and will ask the same question at the next general meeting.

Ron appointed a nominating committee, David Caldwell (Chair), Lee Most and Butler Critenden.

Meeting adjourned about 8:15PM

Temporary secretary, Pierre M. Hahn

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VICE-PRESIDENT	vice-president@mail.sfpcug.org	Blue Notes -	bluenotes@mail.sfpcug.org
Vic Saravia	415-242-0429		
SECRETARY	secretary@mail.sfpcug.org	Editors	
Open		Pierre M. Hahn	415-474-1587
		Tom McLoughlin	510-654-4027
TREASURER	treasurer@mail.sfpcug.org	Blue Notes FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED	
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Assistant TREASURER	treasurer@mail.sfpcug.org	MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR	jbpuig@mail.sfpcug.org
David Caldwell	415-777-1935	Joseph Puig	415-564-7730
WEBMASTER	WebMaster@mail.sfpcug.org	PROGRAM DIRECTOR	programs@mail.sfpcug.org
Joseph Puig	415-564-7730	Ron Feiertag	415-391-4905
PRODUCT REVIEW COORDINATOR	butlerc@hooked.net	SIG COORDINATOR	tommcl@mail.sfpcug.org
Butler Crittenden	415-346-9321	Tom McLoughlin	510-654-4027
24 hour recording for meeting information	415-346-2644		

San Francisco PC Users Group Application/Renewal/Address Change

Name: _____
(Please type or print legibly.)

Date: _____

Address: _____

Home phone: (____) _____

Work phone: (____) _____

City, State, Zip: _____

FAX phone: (____) _____

e-Mail Address: _____

Please check: Renewal member # _____ New Member

Check type of membership:

please send your check to:

G Individual \$40
G Family \$50
G Business \$75
G Outside US \$50

SF PC Users Group
Attn: Membership Director
3145 Geary Blvd, Box 284
San Francisco, CA 94118-3300

Please be patient it may take up to 5 weeks to enable the account

Amount enclosed: \$ _____ (Please do not mail cash.)